



**PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY AND PAYMENT
SOLUTION FOR DENGUE VACCINE PURCHASE
IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND**

BY

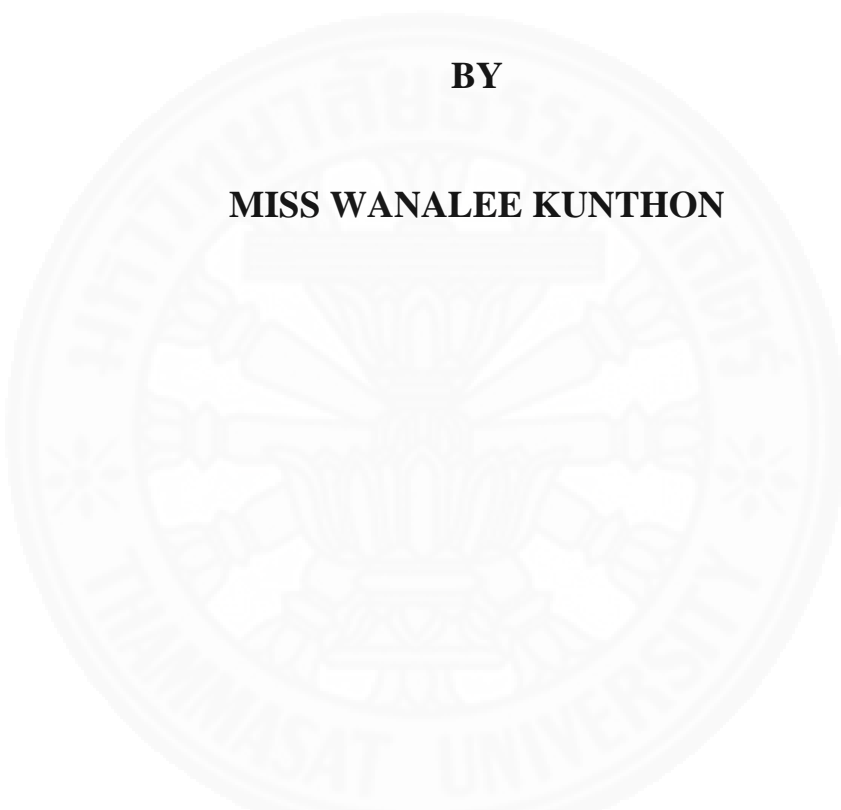
MISS WANALEE KUNTHON

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE PROGRAM IN MARKETING
(INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM)
FACULTY OF COMMERCE AND ACCOUNTANCY
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2016
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INDEPENDENT STUDY

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ENTITLED

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VACCINE PURCHASE IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS
IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Science Program in Marketing (International Program)

on..... 8 MAY 2017

Chairman



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Member and Advisor



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Independent Study Title	PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY AND PAYMENT SOLUTION FOR DENGUE VACCINE PURCHASE IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND
Author	Miss Wanalee Kunthon
Degree	Master of Science Program in Marketing (International Program)
Major Field/Faculty/University	Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy Thammasat University
Independent Study Advisor	Professor Malcolm C. Smith, Ph.D.
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ABSTRACT

“Dengvaxia”, the first Dengue vaccine in the world, was launched in Thailand in early 2017 by Sanofi Pasteur Company. It is used to prevent Dengue infection in children and adults (age 9-45) living in endemic areas (Dengue Vaccine Initiative, 2016). The Philippines was the first country to launch the Dengue vaccine, while Thailand was the third to launch this innovative vaccine. Due to its relatively expensive price, there have been some challenges in promoting this vaccine to the target customers, which are patients in private hospitals. Therefore, this study in applied marketing which focuses on health, aims to analyze and recommend effective promotional strategies and payment solutions. Secondary research and in-depth interviews with healthcare practitioners and marketing managers of private hospitals were conducted. The results and recommendations from this research will be beneficial to both the manufacturing company and private hospitals, enabling them to create effective promotional strategies and find an optimal payment solution for patients, in order to increase the sales of dengue vaccines in private hospitals and to prevent the spread of the Dengue virus.

The factors influencing the purchasing decision of vaccines in private hospitals include 1) Word of mouth 2) Efficacy of vaccine 3) Convenience and 4) Promotion. Based on these findings, the researcher was able to provide

recommendations on the promotional campaigns and payment method for dengue vaccination in private hospitals.

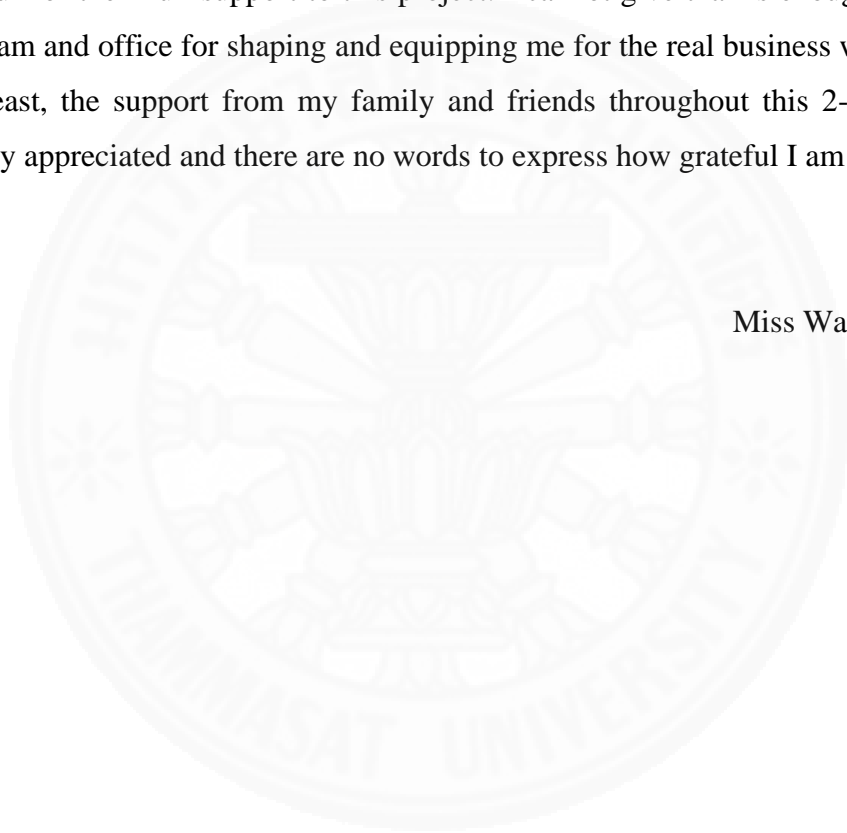
Keywords: Dengue vaccine, Private hospital, Patients in private hospital, Vaccination, Promotional strategy, Payment method



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Miss Wanalee Kunthon



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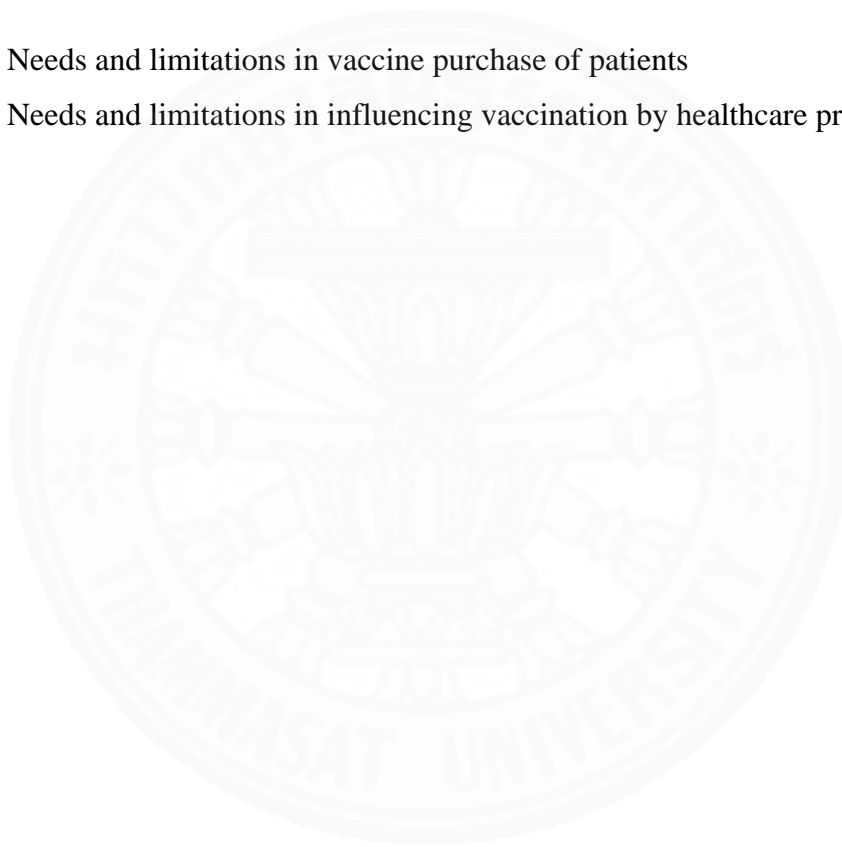
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Promotional strategy and payment solution for dengue vaccine in private hospitals in Bangkok, Thailand is a contemporary topic in applied marketing that focuses on the subject of health in Thailand. This study aims to provide recommendations to private hospitals in Bangkok on the appropriate marketing strategies for dengue vaccines, in order to encourage people to be vaccinated against dengue.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne viral infection. Its symptoms include high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pains, nausea, vomiting, swollen glands and rash. The symptoms usually last two to seven days after the incubation period. In some patients, dengue can develop into fatal complications called severe dengue. Three to seven days after the first symptoms appear, warning signs include a temperature decrease, severe abdominal pain, persistent vomiting, rapid breathing, bleeding gums, fatigue, restlessness, and blood in vomit. Over the past decade, the number of reported dengue cases has increased globally. Up to 50% of the world's population is at risk. Each year, it is expected that 500,000 people have severe dengue and require hospitalization. Most of them are children and 2.5% of them die (WHO, 2014). In 2015, there were 142,925 cases of dengue fever in Thailand, with 141 deaths (Bangkok Post, 2016). The most concerning point of dengue fever is that there is no specific treatment. Thus, prevention is extremely important.

The world's first dengue vaccine, "Dengvaxia", was cultivated and tested by a pharmaceutical company called Sanofi Pasteur in ten countries around the world, including Thailand. The vaccine shows 93% efficacy in decreasing the disease severity and 80% effectiveness in lowering the need for hospitalization. Manufactured in France, Dengvaxia will be officially launched in Thailand in early 2017. It is recommended for people aged between 9 – 45 years old. The full vaccination course comprises of three doses at six-month intervals. The full vaccination course is priced at THB 9,600, excluding doctor's fee and other fees (Bangkok Post, 2016). Due to its

relatively high price, it is questionable whether Thai people will voluntarily choose to be vaccinated. This then leads to the next question: who are the target consumers of this vaccine?

According to Kotler & Keller (2011), the four Ps of modern marketing are People, Processes, Programs, and Performance. This study will focus on two out of four Ps; People and Programs. People are consumers who purchase and consume products and services, while Programs reflect all the firm's consumer-directed activities. In the context of this research, People are patients in private hospitals, the target consumers for dengue vaccine, and Programs are promotional activities which have been implemented in private hospitals in order to encourage people to be vaccinated against dengue. However, due to the limitations in promoting healthcare products directly to the patients, this research will focus mainly on the healthcare practitioners.

The main objective of this study is to recommend effective promotional strategies and optimal payment solution for the dengue vaccine to private hospitals in Bangkok, Thailand. The recommendations will be taken into consideration by Sanofi Pasteur, for the official launch of Dengvaxia in 2017. This report comprises of i) an introduction which introduces the background of this independent study ii) review of the literature which provides related information from various sources iii) research methodology iv) results and discussion obtained from the research and v) conclusion and recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dengue is a mosquito-borne viral infection that can cause severe flu-like illnesses and can even potentially be lethal. It is the fastest-growing infectious disease. The rate of dengue increased by 30-fold between 1965 to 2015. Half of the world is at risk, with a yearly estimate of 96 million symptomatic cases and 500,000 hospitalizations globally (Bangkok Post, 2016). According to Bumrungrad International Hospital (2011), the most common symptoms of dengue fever include sudden chills and pain around the eyes, high fever, headaches, muscle pain and neck pain, unexplained lethargy, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and skin rash that usually starts around the abdomen and upper torso. Symptoms such as a high fever normally lasts between two to four days, followed by a quick drop in temperature and profuse sweating. Body temperature will then decrease back to normal and the regained health will normally last for a day. Then, the second cycle of high fever starts again, this time followed by a rash just as the fever breaks. The rash typically expands from the sides until it covers the whole body, but not including the face. Some patients would experience swelling and redness on the palms and soles of their feet. The World Health Organization advises five protocols be followed in order to reduce the risk of infections and death. First, the diagnosis and treatments must be done quickly. Secondly, the mosquito control must be executed. Then, a good database and disease surveillance must be implemented and a continuous research to adjust dengue care and treatments must be conducted. Lastly, vaccination must be administered (Bangkok Post, 2016).

There is no specific treatment for dengue, making prevention extremely important. Dengue vaccine, Dengvaxia, is the world's first dengue vaccine. The vaccine is manufactured in France by a world-leading pharmaceutical company, Sanofi Pasteur. This dengue vaccine is the result of over 20 years of scientific innovation and collaboration, as well as 25 clinical studies in 15 countries worldwide. The vaccine has been approved in Mexico, The Philippines, Brazil, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Guatemala, Peru, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore. The World

Health Organization recommends that countries with high infection rates consider an introduction of Dengvaxia as part of an integrated dengue management program.

According to Thai Drug Act B.E. 2510 (สำนักงานคณะกรรมการกฤษฎีกา, n.d.), vaccines must be distributed in hospitals and clinics. The promotional activities are only limited to healthcare practitioners. Thus, there are some limitations to the promotion of Dengvaxia directly to patients. For example, regular marketing activities (e.g. free samples) cannot be applied to the marketing strategy of healthcare products. Vaccines are mandated to be promoted through doctors, pharmacists and healthcare practitioners only. Furthermore, all claims must be supported by reliable sources.

In 2014, the market size of private hospitals in Thailand was THB 140 billion (Duangrattanaachaya, 2015). The leading private hospitals in Thailand are Bumrungrad international hospital, Bangkok hospital, BNH hospital, Samitivej hospital, and Phayathai hospital. In terms of the revenue structure, these hospitals receive the largest proportion of revenue from medicine charges (35%), followed by doctor fees (20%), laboratory and X-ray fees (13.7%), rooms for in-patients (8.5%) and others (22.6%). The majority of patients were Thai (93.5%), while the remaining are foreigners. The number of foreign patients has been growing steadily (up to 30-40% for some large hospitals), along with the number of expatriates working in Thailand and neighboring countries, as well as the growth of medical tourism (which makes up approximately 60% of the overseas market) (Sathapongpakdee, 2016).

Private hospitals offer their patients with various promotions in order to attract them. For example, Bangkok hospital offers “Chivawattana Membership”, a privilege loyalty program for its patients (Bangkok Hospital, 2015). This membership can be categorized into levels including Perfect Diamond, Prime Platinum Card, Value Gold Card and Junior Card. Each type of membership offers different benefits to the treatments and services at Bangkok hospital. Most of the private hospitals cooperate with financial organizations in order to provide privilege to their customers, such as Pay Lite program and discount programs. Pay Lite program allows customers to pay in installments with no interest charges (i.e., 0% interest payment plans). For discount programs, hospitals usually offer discount on their health check-up packages or aesthetic programs.

Google and HIMSS Analytics (2013) have conducted a study in May 2013 on the decision makers in hospitals. Approximately 749 hospital decision makers were surveyed and 60 were interviewed. The results from this study show that people are the main factors that influence the purchasing decision of healthcare products. Physicians are the major influencers and decision makers in hospitals. A hospital buyer's task is to balance between the quality and the cost of the purchase. Three out of five decision makers look to improve clinical outcomes when making purchasing decisions, and nearly half also seek to lower the costs. However, according to a recent study conducted by Santilli & Vogenberg (2015), today's healthcare market allows consumers to take charge of their health in a new way. Readily accessible data and information permits patients to have open dialogues with their doctors about diagnosis and treatment options. Therefore, patients are increasingly becoming the key decision maker for healthcare products and services.

Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living ASEAN (2015) presented a new perspective on the ASEAN middle class. As a result of economic growth, the proportion of those categorized as the middle class has grown and is estimated to become the majority in the consumer market. According to SEC definition, the middle class in Thailand has a monthly household income of THB 18,001-THB 85,000. The middle class represents 72% of the total population. However, there is a growing number of "self-perceived middle class" or those who find ways to afford the lifestyle they want, as opposed to live a lifestyle they can afford. This term "self-perceived middle class" is broader than SEC middle class. There are three main ways for them to achieve their ambitious lifestyle: increase of income; reduction of expense; and investment. This group of consumers is appealing to many types of business. Thailand has the highest average working hour per week at 50.9 hours (Marketeer, 2015). Due to the country's high average working hours per week, there are opportunities available for business start-ups in the services industry such as food, healthcare and entertainment. The data also show that 60% of Thai middle class are very health conscious (i.e. extremely concerned about germs and disease), while 74% of them buy only from reputable and reliable brands.

Dengue has a high number of reported cases and deaths in Thailand. Symptoms include high fever, headache, muscle pain, rash and etc. There is no

specific medication for dengue; thus, prevention from infection is highly recommended. After extensive research and development, Sanofi Pasteur introduced an effective dengue vaccine, Dengvaxia, to several countries worldwide. The vaccine helps to decrease the severity of the disease and reduce the number of medical treatments. However, the price of Dengvaxia is relatively high compared to other types of vaccines.

Due to Thai Drug Act B.E. 2510, all vaccines, including Dengvaxia, have to be sold in the hospitals and clinics only. There are also limitations in promoting the vaccines directly to the patients. Vaccines can provide an opportunity for hospitals to save many lives from dengue disease, while increasing their revenue, especially for private hospitals where medicine charges account for a major part of their revenue. Although the marketing of healthcare products in hospitals are strictly controlled by law, there are several healthcare-related programs currently available in the market being offered to customers, such as Pay Lite and privilege programs.

As patients become more information-oriented, they are increasingly becoming the key decision maker for healthcare products and services. Additionally, the increase in the number of the middle class in Thailand also mean that there are consumers who are willing to pay for the lifestyles they want and who are keen on taking care of their health. Thus, this study will focus specifically on the middle class as the target customers of dengue vaccines.

This study will examine the current marketing campaigns for vaccinations at private hospitals in Bangkok and the consumers' needs and limitations in purchasing healthcare products. Furthermore, the needs and limitations of healthcare practitioners will be analyzed, as they are the key influencers for vaccination of patients. The information gathered from this study can be used by private hospitals in Bangkok to formulate and implement effective marketing strategies for dengue vaccination.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Objectives

1. To examine the current marketing activities being conducted at private hospitals in Bangkok for different vaccinations
 - 1a. To understand the needs and limitations of stakeholders on the marketing activities for different vaccinations
 - 1b. To understand the advantages and disadvantages of the current marketing activities for different vaccinations
2. To examine the available payment methods for vaccinations in private hospitals in Bangkok
 - 2a. To understand the needs and limitations of stakeholders on the payment methods for vaccinations
 - 2b. To understand the advantages and disadvantages of the current payment methods for vaccinations
 - 2c. To investigate the key stakeholders involved in the current payment process for vaccinations
3. To understand factors influencing the purchasing decisions of vaccines in private hospitals in Bangkok
4. To understand the needs and limitations of patients in purchasing vaccines in private hospitals in Bangkok
5. To understand the underlying reasons of healthcare practitioners in recommending certain vaccinations to patients in private hospitals in Bangkok
6. To understand the needs and limitations of healthcare practitioners as key influencers for vaccinations in private hospitals in Bangkok
7. To provide recommendations to private hospitals in Bangkok on the effective marketing strategies for dengue vaccines
8. To provide recommendations to private hospitals in Bangkok on the optimal payment method for target customers for dengue vaccines

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Research Method

The researcher employed both market research and qualitative interviews, as they are the most effective tools for collecting secondary data and primary data.

This research was conducted in two parts. Firstly, the researcher performed comprehensive research to gain a better understanding of the industry and to make assumptions on possible successful marketing strategies and optimal payment methods for dengue vaccinations in private hospitals in Bangkok. Secondly, the researcher validated these assumptions with numerous qualitative interviews with marketing colleagues and healthcare practitioners of private hospitals. The research aimed to gather more insightful information for the marketing strategies and payment methods of dengue vaccine in private hospitals in Bangkok. However, since the research topic is specific and the time is limited, the researcher only employed qualitative research methods.

3.2.2 Data Collection

Secondary data

Before the collection of primary data, secondary data was obtained from highly credible sources. These sources include credible websites, academic publications, scholarly journals, newspapers, as well as existing research articles. Secondary data was obtained during 24 September 2016 to 14 December 2016. The data obtained helped to identify the current marketing strategies and payment methods of vaccinations in private hospitals in Bangkok. Details of the secondary data obtained are described in chapter 1 and chapter 2.

In-depth interviews

The in-depth interviews represent the most important part for this independent study. The one-on-one discussions contain several open-ended questions (see appendix A for List of questions in an in-depth interview). Through the application of Probing and Prompting techniques, meaningful information was obtained in order to achieve the objectives of this study. The Probing technique helps to encourage the

respondents to elaborate their point of views, thereby allowing the researcher to get to the core of the respondent's thoughts. The Prompting technique aids in uncovering specific details and was used when the respondents failed to mention specific or in-depth information with regards to the question.

For the in-depth interviews, the respondents were recruited through connections of Sanofi Pasteur's Marketing Manager. The interviews were conducted with 24 respondents between 4 October 2016 and 16 February 2017 (see Table 3.1 for Summary of the respondents' profile). The respondents included marketing managers, doctors, pharmacists and nurses. All of the respondents were employed by Bangkok's top 40 private hospitals and were involved in the vaccination process at their respective hospitals. Each interview took approximately 60 minutes. The approach included both face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews, depending on the convenience of the respondents. For face-to-face interviews, they were arranged at locations that were convenient to the respondents.

Table 3.1 Summary of respondents' profile

No.	Hospital	Occupation
1.	Phayathai 1 hospital	Marketing manager
2.	Phayathai 1 hospital	Doctor
3.	Phayathai 1 hospital	Pharmacist
4.	Phayathai 2 hospital	Marketing manager
5.	Phayathai 2 hospital	Doctor
6.	Phayathai 2 hospital	Nurse
7.	Vejthani hospital	Marketing manager

No.	Hospital	Occupation
8.	Vejthani hospital	Doctor
9.	Vejthani hospital	Pharmacist
10.	Ladprao hospital	Marketing manager
11.	Ladprao hospital	Doctor
12.	Ladprao hospital	Pharmacist
13.	Praram9 hospital	Marketing manager
14.	Praram9 hospital	Doctor
15.	Praram9 hospital	Pharmacist
16.	Praram9 hospital	Nurse
17.	Samitivej hospital	Marketing manager
18.	Samitivej hospital	Doctor
19.	Samitivej hospital	Pharmacist
20.	Samitivej hospital	Nurse
21.	BNH hospital	Marketing manager
22.	BNH hospital	Doctor
23.	BNH hospital	Pharmacist
24.	BNH hospital	Nurse

3.2.3 Sampling procedure

Segmentation

This research focuses specifically on marketing activities and payment methods for vaccinations in private hospitals located in Bangkok.

Qualification of respondent for in-depth interviews

Seven private hospitals were chosen out of the top 40 private hospitals in Bangkok. Marketing managers and healthcare practitioners (including doctors, pharmacists and nurses) of these private hospitals were eligible to be the respondents of the in-depth interviews. They were recruited through the connection of the marketing team of Sanofi Pasteur to provide insights regarding vaccinations in their hospitals.

3.2.4 Data Analysis

The data from the in-depth interviews was analyzed and summarized individually to define the key findings and insights. The data obtained are presented in the following manner:

Analysis Framework

- Summary of the factors influencing purchasing decisions of vaccines
- Summary of the needs, limitations and underlying reasons of healthcare practitioners in influencing the vaccination of patients in private hospitals
- Summary of the current marketing activities and payment methods for vaccinations in private hospitals
- Recommendations of effective marketing strategies and optimal payment method

Key Research Variables

According to the research objectives, the criteria determining important variables in this study are as follows:

General information: target customers and key stakeholders involved in the payment process for vaccinations in private hospitals

Strategies and tactics: marketing strategy and payments for vaccination in private hospitals



CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of a total of 24 respondents who were recruited in this study, seven are marketing managers, seven are doctors, six are pharmacists and four are nurses from seven private hospitals in Bangkok. The respondents are involved during different stages of the vaccination process at their hospitals. Each in-depth interview took approximately 60 minutes. The results from the interview were analyzed and can be summarized as follows:

4.1 Summary of the marketing activities for vaccination in private hospitals

Table 4.1 Marketing activities in private hospitals and their advantages and disadvantages

Marketing activities	Advantages	Disadvantages
Free premium gimmicks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attract patients - Become memorable - Create buzz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting a standard
Discounted prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attract patients - Increase sale - Create satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploit mentality of patients
Privilege for credit card holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create exclusivity - Boost reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some patients may feel dissatisfied

According to the in-depth interviews, one of the seven hospitals rarely implements marketing activities for different vaccinations. The patients of this hospital are high income earners and are loyal to the hospital. Therefore, the marketing team does not need to implement any marketing activity to attract them. However, the hospital occasionally gives out premium merchandise to the patients in order to show appreciation to their loyalty.

On the other hand, the other six hospitals implement marketing activities to varying degrees (see Table 4.1) in order to attract their patients to get the vaccinations. These hospitals give out free premium merchandise to patients who purchase vaccinations under the given terms and conditions. For example, one hospital gives complimentary teddy bears to families that purchase a course of pediatric vaccinations for their children, while another hospital gives neck pillows to patients who purchase a course of HPV vaccinations. The free merchandise does not only encourage patients to purchase vaccinations, but also serves as a reminder of the hospital brand and the reminder for the vaccinations. Also, it can help create a buzz among the patients and their family and friends. If the free merchandise meets the patients' expectations, they will recommend their family and friends to get the vaccinations. However, giving out free merchandise could cause the consumers to purchase the vaccinations only when the hospitals implement this type of marketing campaign.

Some hospitals offer price discounts in order to attract their patients to get the vaccinations at their hospitals. For instance, one hospital offers price discounts for HPV vaccinations if the patients purchase the full vaccination course (i.e., three injections). This marketing campaign can increase sales and also increase customer satisfaction. However, hospitals do not often offer price discounts.

Meanwhile, some hospitals partner up with credit card companies in order to provide extra benefits to the patients who are holders of the credit cards. Examples of the benefits include offering 0% interest payment plans or offering special discounts for medical expenses. These types of campaigns would provide a sense of exclusivity and can help boost the reputation of the hospitals. Nonetheless, it can also cause dissatisfaction among patients who are not holders of the credit cards.

“We rarely implement promotional activities in our hospital because most of our customers are loyal and have high purchasing power.”

BNH Hospital

“Vaccination is beneficial to the health of patients. They know this so we do not offer price discounts to attract them, especially for one-dose scheduled vaccines”

Ladprao Hospital

4.2 Summary of the payment methods for vaccinations in private hospitals

Table 4.2 Payment methods in private hospitals and their advantages & disadvantages

Payment method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Full payment in cash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liquidity for hospital's finance - No processing fee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inconvenient for patients
Full payment by credit card	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide convenience to the patients - Create satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Processing fee - Waiting time to receive money
Payment in installment by credit card	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create satisfaction - Attract patients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interest rate

According to the in-depth interviews with personnel from seven hospitals in Bangkok, the patients have the options of paying the medical expenses in full by cash or credit card, as described in Table 4.2. Full cash payment is beneficial to the hospitals in terms of cash flow. The hospitals can use the incoming cash to fund its operations, without having to wait months before receiving funds from the banks. Additionally, the hospitals are not burdened with transaction processing fees usually charged by banks. However, patients often find cash payments inconvenient, especially if the amount is significant.

For credit card payments, the hospitals can increase patients' satisfaction by offering a convenience method of payment. However, the hospitals would have to absorb the processing fees charged by banks. Moreover, it often takes months before the banks would transfer the funds to the hospital. Thus, this method of payment could impact the hospitals' cash flows.

Lastly, payment in installments can attract more patients as they can pay their medical expenses over a period of time. This will allow them to manage their monthly budget and make it easier for them to decide to the hospital services. However, the hospitals may have to absorb interests charged by banks on behalf of the customers. Therefore, this payment method is only offered by some hospitals. However, banks could be responsible for absorbing the interests if they are the ones who initiated the promotional activity. The key decision makers implementing this payment method could either be the marketing team of the hospitals or the banks. Agreements must be made as to which party will absorb the interest; the patients, the banks or the hospitals. In some cases, the hospitals are willing to absorb the interest in order to attract more patients. In other cases, the banks are willing to absorb the interest in order to attract patients to use their credit cards.

“Payment in installment method is attractive, especially for middle class patients as they have to manage their monthly expenses and ensure that the expenses are within their budget. Thus, this payment method will serve their needs when they are required to pay for medical fee”

4.3 Summary of the factors influencing patients' purchasing decisions for vaccinations in private hospitals

There are various factors that can influence patients' purchasing decision for vaccinations in private hospitals. The results from the in-depth interviews can be categorized into three main factors as follows:

4.3.1 Word of mouth

Word of mouth plays a critical role in patients' decision-making process. Nowadays, there are various health-related TV programs and websites. When patients are concerned with certain infectious diseases, they will call or visit the hospitals to request information regarding the prevention of such diseases. For example, when they learn about chicken pox from TV, they would call Drug Information Service (DIS) of the hospital to ask about the prevention of chicken pox. DIS would then recommend the vaccine for chicken pox and the patients later visit the hospital to be vaccinated against chicken pox.

Additionally, if their friends or family have been vaccinated and are satisfied, the patients often follow their decision to be vaccinated as well. The patients always trust word of mouth from their peers. Moreover, word of mouth from doctors, nurses, and pharmacists also has an important role on the decision of patients. Doctors are usually the ones who recommend patients to be vaccinated. For instance, doctors would recommend elders to be vaccinated for influenza once a year, in order to prevent them from getting the flu.

“While waiting to see a doctor, some patients would read brochures and become aware of certain diseases. The patients could then ask for additional information on how to prevent themselves from such diseases from the nurses and pharmacists.”

Praram9 Hospital

4.3.2 Efficacy of vaccine

Patients often make a decision to be vaccinated if they believe in the efficacy of the vaccine. They could learn about the efficacy of the vaccine from TV, the Internet or healthcare practitioners. If they become aware of certain infectious diseases or vaccines, they would seek for additional information either by themselves or consult with the experts on the prevention and efficacy of the vaccines.

4.3.3 Convenience

Some patients are concerned with the convenience in getting the vaccinations. They usually enquire about how many injections they are required to get per one course or how painful it will be during the process. They prefer a one-dose injection and prefer vaccines that are less painful, even though they have to pay a higher price.

4.3.4 Promotion

For high-income patients, promotional activities do not impact their decision making process. They usually consider only the three aforementioned factors when making decisions on whether to be vaccinated. However, middle class patients often take into account the promotional campaigns, especially when there are price discounts.

Occasionally, promotional activities could impact the decision-making process of all patients if there are two brands of vaccines available and if the vaccines have the same efficacy. The patients would often choose the brand that offers a promotional deal that serves their needs.

“When there are two brands of six-in-one children vaccine available, the parents would choose the brand that offers complimentary dolls that meets the preference of the children.”

4.4 Summary of the needs and limitations of patients in purchasing vaccines in private hospitals

Table 4.3 Needs and limitations in vaccine purchase of patients

Needs	Limitations
- Useful information	- Limited budget
- Discount	- Limited information
- Convenience	
- Free gimmicks	

According to the interviews with the marketing managers and healthcare practitioners, most of the patients would gather relevant information on the vaccines, as described in Table 4.3. Before making a decision, they would gather information such as the benefits to their health and the side effects from being vaccinated. Also, the patients often request for price discounts, especially those in the middle class, due to their limited budget. Moreover, they seek for convenience in both the vaccination process and purchasing process. They prefer the least number of injections and prefer to have more choices in the payment methods. Lastly, they also prefer to receive free merchandises.

For some patients, the main factor that could limit them from purchasing the vaccines is their financial budget for medical expenses. Due to their limited financial budget, these patients are more careful when deciding whether or not to be vaccinated. Another factor that could limit patients from purchasing the vaccines is that they do not have enough information on the vaccines to make an informed decision on whether or not to be vaccinated. As this decision relates to their health

and well-being, people often want to obtain as much information as possible before making a purchasing decision.

“The patients at our hospital do not have budget constraints. However, the most important factor for them when making a decision to be vaccinated is the amount of information they have regarding the vaccines and the convenience of the vaccination and payment processes.”

4.5 Summary of the underlying reasons of healthcare practitioners in recommending certain vaccinations to patients

According to the interviews, there are two main reasons as to why healthcare practitioners recommend certain vaccinations to their patients. These include the health benefits to the patients and the availability of the vaccines at their hospitals. Firstly, the healthcare practitioners would conduct necessary research and obtain clinical information on the vaccines from published articles, symposiums and medical representatives. Based on the information obtained and their personal experience, the healthcare practitioners would then determine the efficacy of the vaccines. If they believe that the vaccines are beneficial to the patients' health, they would recommend them to the patients.

Another reason is the availability of the vaccines. They will recommend vaccines that are readily available at their hospitals to the patients.

“If time permits, we would obtain information from published articles to determine the efficacy and side effects of the vaccines before recommending them to the patients. The information obtained from pharmaceutical companies is not enough.”

Phayathai 2 Hospital

4.6 Summary of the needs and limitations of healthcare practitioners as key influencers for vaccinations in private hospitals

Table 4.4 Needs and limitations of healthcare practitioners as key influencers for vaccinations

Needs	Limitations
- Trusted published articles about the vaccines	- Limited information
- Educational programs	- Limited time to talk to the patients
- Free gimmicks to the patients	

As described in Table 4.4, doctors and pharmacists would typically search for information on the efficacy and side-effects of the vaccines from credible sources, such as published articles and medical journals. They prefer to be objective when recommending the vaccines for the benefits of the patients.

In addition, these healthcare practitioners keep themselves informed and updated regarding new vaccines or new indication of the vaccines by attending symposiums or training. This allows them to provide their patients with appropriate information in a timely manner. Also, the practitioners prefer to get free merchandise to give out to their patients so they are reminded to be vaccinated.

In relation to the limitations, the information on the vaccines may not be available or sufficient for the healthcare practitioners to recommend certain vaccines to their patients. Moreover, the healthcare practitioners may not have sufficient time to provide full details on the efficacy and side-effects of the vaccines to the patients.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of the in-depth interviews with 24 respondents, it can be concluded that the key influencers for vaccinations include family members, friends, healthcare practitioners, TV, and websites. The healthcare practitioners are more likely to recommend the vaccines to their patients if i) they are certain that the vaccines would be beneficial to the health of their patients and ii) the vaccine is readily available at the hospital.

There are two main factors that could restrict healthcare practitioners in recommending vaccines to their patients which are limited information and limited time with the patients. Healthcare practitioners must have access to the relevant information in order to form an opinion on the efficacy and side-effects of a vaccine and determine whether or not to recommend such vaccine to patients. Moreover, the healthcare practitioners may not have sufficient time to communicate to the patients on the vaccination.

Patients are increasingly becoming the key decision maker for healthcare products and services and will decide to be vaccinated if they believe that the vaccine is good for their health. Convenience in getting the vaccination and payment methods also affect the decision making process of the patients. They prefer the least number of injections and prefer minimal side-effect from injections.

In relation to the payment methods, there are mainly three options available to the patients, including full payment in cash, full payment by credit card and payment in installments via credit card. The payment method chosen by each patient differs depending on their needs and preference.

Last but not least, promotional activities implemented by hospitals could also impact the purchasing decision of patients. Examples of promotional activities include giving out free gimmicks when the patients purchase vaccinations, price discounts on vaccination courses, and privileges for credit card holders. Patients prefer different

promotional activity that serves their needs.

5.2 Recommendations

According to the above conclusion, the researcher recommends that the Dengue vaccine distributor promote their new and relatively expensive vaccine (three injections per one course) by generating word of mouth among the patients. For the healthcare practitioners, the company should provide sufficient information on the Dengue vaccine to doctors, pharmacists and nurses in order for them to understand the benefits of Dengue vaccination. This is because if the practitioners are well-informed about the vaccine, they would be more willing to recommend the vaccine to their patients. For the general public, the company should implement dengue-related awareness campaigns so that people become aware of dengue disease. These activities will help generate word of mouth, which can consequently lead to purchasing decision.

Moreover, the company should partner with the hospitals in order to provide convenience to the patients when making payment for Dengue vaccination. For example, the patients should be able to pay for the course either in full or in installments (i.e., once they receive each injection). They should be given the option to pay by cash, by credit card or pay in installments with no interest charges.

Last but not least, the company and hospitals should implement promotional activities that encourage patients to be vaccinated. Examples would be providing price discounts to those who pay in full, offering free goods to families that purchase more than one vaccination course, and partnerships with banks to provide exclusive rights and benefits to the affiliated credit card holders.

5.3 Limitations of the study

There are two main limitations in this study; limited time to conduct the research and the difficulty in the recruitment of respondents. Based on these limitations, a convenience sampling technique was applied to this study. The respondents of this research are marketing colleagues and healthcare practitioners

from private hospitals in Bangkok and were recruited through the connection of the Marketing Manager of Sanofi Pasteur. The Marketing Manager facilitated in scheduling for the in-depth interviews with the respondents. Each interview took approximately one hour and there were three to four respondents from each of the seven hospitals.

5.4 Significance of the study

The main objective of this study is to encourage people to be vaccinated against Dengue and to prevent the public from being infected. The findings from this study will enable private hospitals to formulate and implement more effective marketing strategies for dengue vaccination and enable them to offer a more optimal payment solution for their patients. Consequently, hospitals would be able to attract more patients and increase their sales revenue in the long term.

Moreover, the patients will also benefit from more attractive marketing activities that meet their preferences and needs and also from more convenient payment methods. As people become encouraged to receive the vaccination, they would be able to prevent themselves from contracting this infectious disease. On a larger scale, this would mean that the nation's public spending on dengue cases will be reduced.

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APPENDIX A

THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

For marketing managers

1. Please share the marketing activities that you currently do for pursuing vaccination in your hospital.
2. Who does involve in designing each marketing activities in your hospital?
3. Please share the payment methods that your hospital currently offers to the patients.
4. Who does involve in assigning each payment methods in your hospital?
5. Who are target customers of your hospital? What are their characteristics?
6. What make your patients normally purchase vaccine?

For healthcare practitioners

1. What is the criteria to recommending vaccine to your patients?
2. What is the characteristics of vaccine that you want for your patients?
3. What can persuade you to recommend vaccine to your patients?
4. Who are target customers of your hospital? What are their characteristics?
5. What make your patients normally purchase vaccine?

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