SOCIAL MARKETING EFFORTS TO BOOST BLOOD DONOR RATE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES – A CASE STUDY OF MAURITIUS

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ABSTRACT

The demand for blood and blood products in most countries continues to increase because of the rise in human life expectancy and the implementation of new and aggressive surgical methods requiring large quantities of blood and blood products. The fragile balance between blood supply and demand have forced blood banks to constantly search for more efficient ways to recruit blood donors. The method each country adopts to attract blood donors and to cover its needs in blood supplies varies as a function of its socio-economic structure. In spite of all research on the subject, however, the factors that would motivate most people to become blood donors should be further explored. Hence, the present paper explores the contribution of social marketing efforts to boost blood donor in Mauritius. The methodology used was through survey instruments administered to existing blood donors in Mauritius. The present research provides some useful insights on the contributing factors to boost blood donor rate in Mauritius. Donors’ attitudes and perceptions towards blood donation and its implications towards social marketing have been under-researched in Mauritius. Some recommendations are proposed to endorse more voluntary blood donors in Mauritius. Blood services associations should create greater awareness on blood donation events by capitalizing on effective communication mediums. Several measures should be implemented to attract and gratify blood donors, like for example, promoting adequate blood donation campaigns during crisis periods and at the same time, deploying loyalty plans to boost up the blood donor rate from repeated contributors in Mauritius. Blood services associations should also offer loyalty schemes and develop affective bonds with the existing blood donors in order to boost blood donor rate in Mauritius.

KEYWORDS: Blood Donation Rate, Contributing Factors, Social Marketing, Mauritius.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tremendous efforts are escalating to establish and maintain sufficient numbers of regular and volunteer blood donors to ensure adequate and safe blood supply worldwide. The constant concern to meet the demands for blood is mainly because a small percentage of the eligible population actually chooses to donate blood on a regular basis and a significant percentage of eligible donors are deferred temporarily or permanently because of strict deferral criteria continuously being added in the name of blood safety (Ferguson, 1996, Custer et al., 2004; Riley et al., 2007). Moreover, voluntary donors are generally associated with safer blood supplies in terms of transfusion-transmitted diseases (Maniatis et al., 1994; Liu et al., 1998). Indeed, World Health Organization and Council of Europe recommended that blood and blood components should be collected from voluntary and non-remunerated repeat donors (Dhingra, 2002; Council of Europe, 2003).

Over the recent years, National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS) in Mauritius has witnessed significant growth and amelioration in the dynamics of its functioning in the country. Solid statistical evidence clearly illustrates increasing demand for blood and blood products, in line with expanding demographical figures, and accentuated by introduction of novel, frequent high-end medical and surgical interventions like cardiac surgery and renal dialysis (Seegoolam, 2010). Presently, institutions are continuously striving to generate the utmost number of blood donors each year. However, it should be noted that only 2% of citizens are actual donors which implies a lower donation ratio as compared to the general population ratio in Mauritius (Seegoolam 2010, Mauritius Blood Donors Association, 2007). Likewise, Mauritius is aspiring become a medical tourism hub which will contribute to the economic pillar and cater for the demands of the natural expanding demography, increased complexity of interventions and increased disease burden. (Seegoolam, 2010).

This research explores the contributing factors for boosting blood donor rate in Mauritius. Several research works have explored the underlying factors motivating and hindering blood donation in developed countries (Liu et al., 1998, Provan, 1999, Boulware et al., 2002, Dhingra, 2002, Gillespie and Hillyer, 2002; Currie et al., 2004; Custer et al., 2004; Greinacher et al. 2007., Mathew et al., 2007, Riley et al., 2007). Considerable literature on factors influencing blood donation is available worldwide, but there is limited research which sheds light on the contributing for boosting blood donor rate in developing countries. Hence, this study aims to fill the gap in the existing body of literature pertaining to factors for enhancing blood donor rate in the context of a developing country like Mauritius. Thus, the results of this study will give a new impetus to the findings of previous studies on factors contributing to higher blood donor rate for developing nations.

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of the research is to explore the contribution of social marketing efforts to boost blood donor rate in Mauritius. The main objectives of the study are outlined below:

- To investigate the perceptions and attitudes of existing blood donors on blood donation in Mauritius
To determine the significant factors impacting on blood donors satisfaction in Mauritius.

To analyze the extent to which blood donor loyalty programs can lead to greater donor retention in Mauritius

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.2.1 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL MARKETING TO HEALTH RELATED AND SOCIAL ISSUES

The field of social marketing has developed over the past 40 years (Andreasen, 1995; Donovan and Henley, 2003; Kotler and Lee, 2008) and these tracks correspond to the contexts in which social marketing has evolved: its earliest and primary use in developing countries to foster the use of various health-related products and services (Manoff, 1985, Harvey, 1999) and its application in developed world contexts to reduce behavioral risk factors for diseases (Fine, 1981; Lefebvre and Flora, 1988; Walsh et al., 1993). Although non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors from developed countries have largely funded and devised social marketing activities in developing countries, observers and practitioners of social marketing do not realize that the majority of financial support for social marketing programs across the world is done by government and international aid organizations (United Nations Population Fund, 2002; DFID Health Systems Resource Centre, 2003; United States Agency for International Development, 2009). According to Kotler and Lee (2008), social marketing principles and techniques can be used to benefit the society in several ways and health promotion, injury prevention, environmental protection and community mobilization are the four arenas where social marketing efforts have focused over the years. Social marketing is the application of marketing principles and techniques to foster social change or improvement – whether the change is related to public health challenges, injury prevention (Smith, 2006), environmental issues (Maibach, 1993), transportation demand management (McGovern, 2005) or any other social needs. As pointed out by Kotler and Lee (2008), one of the significant community mobilization-related behavioural issues that could benefit from social marketing includes blood donation.

Knight (1983) has discussed the issue in the context of UK National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS). He found that the NBTS had a good public image and there was a high awareness of the need for blood donations. Although there was considerable “latent guilt” about not giving blood, a “cost” was perceived in terms of physical discomfort to the donor. Andaleeb and Basu (1995) reviewed US research regarding the relationship between demographic variables and blood donation. Several authors attempted to predict donor status largely on the basis of demographic characteristics such as marital status, occupation, income, race and religion (Condie and Maxwell, 1970; Bettinghaus and Milkovich, 1975; Oswalt, 1977, Rouger and Hossenlopp, 2005). Although, demographic variables were useful for identifying and segmenting potential donors, several authors found that these factors alone could not provide adequate insight into the reasons why people do or do not donate blood. Subsequent research tried to incorporate a variety of personality traits as alternate predictors of blood donation behavior (Condie et al., 1976, Burnett, 1982; Lemmens et al., 2005). Andaleeb and Basu's (1995) model included three
attitudinal variables namely trust in the blood bank; specific fears of health risks associated with the act of blood donation and general fears.

1.2.2 ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS ON BLOOD DONATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Europe-wide data on the issue of blood donation have been gathered a number of times, most recently in 2002 (Eurobarometer, 1995, 2003). These surveys examined the level of awareness of certain basic facts concerning blood donations and people's donation behavior. While awareness tends to be quite high, that is, around 70 percent, however, only 30 percent of Europeans donated; and of the remainder, who had never given blood, only 39 percent had considered donate blood. The majority of respondents have stated that those who donate blood should not receive anything and they should give blood just for the sake of giving (Burnett, 1982). Donors were found among all demographic groups with a slightly lower frequency among the ‘under 25 and over 55’ age groups. Higher levels of education and greater affluence also tended to be associated with blood donation (Eurobarometer, 1995). For non-donors, Andaleeb and Basu’s (1995), among the main reasons for not giving blood, apart from poor health and medical advice, was a fear of contracting HIV/AIDS during the donation process. On the other hand, about 70 percent of Europeans have argued that HIV/AIDS made them worry about the safety of the donated blood they might receive during transfusion (Eurobarometer, 1995). In fact, HIV/AIDS is a major issue for blood transfusion services. Blood donation procedures are covered by an EU directive (European Union, 2004), which lays down standards of quality and safety for human tissues and cells intended for human applications.

Furthermore, an online discussion was hosted on the theme, “Is refusal to donate blood immoral?” (Samizdata, 2003). Most respondents disagreed while some argued that the frequently cited ethical taboo against the sale “body parts” has no moral justification. Following classical economics, they argued that a free market for blood, just like a free market for food, would match supply and demand more efficiently without any need for moral suasion. Indeed, some accused blood banks of subsequently selling freely blood donated to private hospitals, that is, a practice they felt offended the charitable motivation behind the gift (Hillyer, 2002). Discussing general health-related issues, one contributor suggested that frequent blood donations might be bad, since they “cut into” the body's life-time capacity to regenerate. This view is contradicted by Jaarsveld and Pool (2002), who argued that blood donation, is actually beneficial to health.

While incentives in terms of gifts, vouchers and so on have little impact on new potential donors, they appeared to work as a means of maintaining the flow of donations among existing donors (Nonis et al., 1996). The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA, 2000) found a consensus on several key points reached by successful blood centers. Donor recognition is an important component of a successful social marketing program (Custer et al., 2004). However, recognition does not generally mean providing incentives or gifts to donors, it means acknowledging donors' altruistic contribution for each blood donation. Successful advertising campaigns should be emotionally-oriented rather than adopting practical appeals; for example, just showing pictures of empty blood shelves is not effective (FDA, 2000). Service managers should put a human face
on the transfusion recipient and the donor. On the contrary, while advertising increases awareness, it does not automatically generate more donors (Knight, 1983) and similarly, donors themselves want greater recognition compared to incentives (FDA, 2000).

The above literature review has provided an insightful review on the application of social marketing and the diverse attitudes towards blood donation. The factors for encouraging blood donation and blood donors’ attitudes and perceptions have been fully discussed. Moreover, the significance of incentives and recognition has also been explored to encourage blood donation.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data for this empirical study was collected through a survey questionnaire consisting of six sections and data were processed by using SPSS 16.0 software comprising of both descriptive and inferential analyses. The analytical results of the study and discussions of survey findings were fully explored. The items in the scale were developed by using the five-point likert scale. The accuracy of the translation was verified by using the back translation method (Zikmund, 2003). Prior to data collection, a pilot test was conducted to ensure comprehensiveness, clarity and reliability of the questionnaire. The pretesting of the questionnaire was done among 20 blood donors randomly, resulting in some minor modifications of the wordings of some survey items. Factor analysis was carried out on all the statements found in various sections of the questionnaire relating to effectiveness of communication media to generate awareness on blood donation, donors attitudes on blood donation process, factors influencing behavioural patterns of blood donors, influential criteria for an ideal blood donation event, factors influencing donation during blood crisis periods and determining factors impacting on donor loyalty programs. Moreover, internal consistency and reliability of the scale was measured by the use of Cronbach’s Alpha (Hair et al., 2000).

1.3.1 SAMPLING PLAN

The targeted population of the study consisted of all the citizens who are aged between 18 years and 60 years and were apt to donate safe blood on a continuous basis in Mauritius. Owing to the need for a relatively large sample size while at the same time keeping the research costs down, the sample size of this study amounted to 125 blood donors residing in Mauritius through convenience sampling technique. The response rate for the present study was 80 % and face to face interviews were carried with the respondents in specific locations where blood donation events were being conducted in Mauritius.

1.3.2 INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Cronbach’s Alpha overall value for the entire questionnaire was 0.784 and such a figure indicates that the questionnaire is a good indicator of what the researcher wants to investigate. According to Hair et al. (1995), a coefficient of less than 0.6 indicates marginal to low internal consistency and a value of 0.60 or more indicates satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Churchill, 1979).
1.4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

1.4.1 PART A: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

In terms of occupational classification, 40% of respondents representing the majority were Students, followed by Private and Public Employees (34%), Household Duties (25%) and Retired.

In terms of age classification of respondents, 48% were between 18 - 30 Years, followed by 28% between 31 – 40 Years, 10% between 41 – 50 Years and 14% are between 51 – 60 Years.

From a gender perspective, 52% which represent the majority are male and 48% are female.

In terms of marital status, 56% of respondents were married and 44% of respondents were single.
1.4.2 PART B: FACTOR ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO INCREASE BLOOD DONATION RATIO

A factor analysis was carried on all the statements found in the questionnaire in order to test the dimensionality of the survey instrument. A principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted on all 39 items. Only factors with eigenvalue equal to or greater than one were considered significant and chosen for interpretation. A variable with factor loadings of 0.40 was considered, that is, items less than 0.40 were excluded. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is 0.796 and it can be thus deduced that the sample is adequate. In addition, the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity has a significance of 0.00. In summary, it would mean that all the variables correlates fairly well with all others and none of the correlation coefficients are particular large; therefore there is no need to consider eliminating any question at this stage. Therefore, both the Keiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity shows that Factor analysis will be useful with the data. From the Varimax rotated matrix, 6 factors representing 75.7 percent of the explained variance were extracted from the 39 statements as shown in Table 1.0 below and some explanations are given regarding the labels assigned to them.

### TABLE 1.0- FACTOR ITEMS AND LOADINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Items</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
<th>Eigenvalues</th>
<th>% of Variance explained</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1 – Effectiveness of Communication Medium for Creating Blood Donation Awareness</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banners</td>
<td>0.974</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>0.938</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboards</td>
<td>0.926</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyers/Pamphlets</td>
<td>0.887</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>0.831</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>0.763</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>0.717</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Factor 2 – Influence of Contributing Factors for Blood Donors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donors are better informed about blood donation events and its safety in Mauritius</td>
<td>0.997</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors have enough information on how many persons need their blood type each month.</td>
<td>0.961</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates of recognition are given to donors after blood donation.</td>
<td>0.930</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood donors are remunerated in Mauritius.</td>
<td>0.901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The atmosphere of blood donation events is welcoming.</td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors get a unique attention from staff in charge of blood collection.</td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors have the privilege to meet the person receiving their blood.</td>
<td>0.799</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Factor 3 - Attitudes and Perceptions on blood donors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donors believe that blood donation makes them healthier</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood donors are of the opinion that they should seek more information from associations</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood donors inform and encourage their relatives and friends to donate blood.</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood donors firmly believe that donating blood is helpful to save human lives.</td>
<td>0.622</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors are more optimistic with blood donation events and its safety in Mauritius.</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Factor 4 - Influential Criteria to Enhance Donors Satisfaction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The proximity of blood donation event(s) is important for</td>
<td>0.986</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
blood donation.

Dissemination of accurate information from associations is an important consideration for donors in Mauritius 0.982

The positive assistance of staff from associations is vital for encouraging blood donors. 0.910

There should be regular follow-up from associations for next blood donation. 0.841

There need to be adequate assurance for health safety after the blood donation. 0.743

Donors believe timeliness in blood donation process is essential. 0.715

Donors feel that adequate motivation-before and after blood donation- needs to be maintained by the blood associations. 0.695

**Factor 5 – Loyalty among Blood Donors**

Donors receive “thank you” notes via electronic mail and short- message service after each blood donation 0.961

Loyalty cards are offered to blood donors for medical check ups 0.953

Donors are offered more gifts and incentives as loyal donors in Mauritius 0.943

Donors receive electronic mails and short message service to inform them of the next blood donation event in Mauritius. 0.923

Online blogs would help donors to develop affective bond with other donors and prospects. 0.878

Photographs and feedback of donors are published on newsletters and website. 0.750
**Factor 6 – Blood Crisis and Retention of Blood Donors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Factor Score</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donors should be remunerated for their blood being donated.</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized visits by motivators of blood services associations will encourage blood donation.</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>0.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors are offered with discount vouchers for free medical health check-ups.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors’ favorite icon and artist are hosting the blood donation events in Mauritius.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors get to know the level of demand and supply of blood in blood bank</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors believe that humanitarian request by blood services associations can prompt them for urgent blood donation during blood crisis periods</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>29.48</strong></td>
<td><strong>75.7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1.4.2.1 FACTOR 1 - EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION MEDIUM FOR CREATING BLOOD DONATION AWARENESS**

Factor 1 has an eigenvalue of 7.52 and explains 19.3 % of variance. This factor groups 8 attributes pertaining to the contribution of communication media in creating awareness on blood donation in Mauritius. These factors broadly evaluate the effectiveness of communication mediums and the research has depicted that ‘Banners’ (Loading = 0.974), ‘Newspapers’ (Loading = 0.947), ‘Radio’ (Loading = 0.938), ‘Billboards’ (Loading = 0.926) are effective communication mediums to generate awareness on blood donation in Mauritius. Similarly, ‘Flyers/Pamphlets’ (Loading = 0.887), ‘Television’ (Loading = 0.831), ‘Internet’ (Loading = 0.763), and ‘Posters’ (Loading = 0.717) are other communication mediums to generate blood donation awareness in the context of Mauritius.

**1.4.2.2 FACTOR 2 - INFLUENCE OF CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR BLOOD DONORS**

Factor 2 has an eigenvalue of 6.59 and explains 16.9 % of variance. This dimension groups 7 items which are related to influence blood donors in Mauritius. Donors want to be informed about blood donation and its safety in Mauritius (Loading = 0.997), they should possess enough information on how many persons need their blood type each month (Loading = 0.961), ‘Certificates of recognition after blood donation’ (Loading = 0.930), ‘Remuneration of blood donors’ (Loading = 0.901), ‘Welcoming atmosphere of blood donation events’ (Loading =
0.889), ‘Unique attention from staff in charge of blood collection’ (Loading = 0.889) and ‘Privilege to meet the person receiving their blood’ (Loading = 0.799) are other contributing factors to enhance blood donor rate in Mauritius.

1.4.2.3 FACTOR 3 - ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF BLOOD DONORS

Factor 3 has an eigenvalue of 4.531 and explains 11.6% of variance. This factor groups 5 attributes which explains the attitudes and perceptions of blood donors. Blood donors share the view that blood donation makes them healthier (Loading = 0.873), they feel the need for more information from blood associations (Loading = 0.867), they will equally inform and encourage their relatives and friends to donate blood in Mauritius (Loading = 0.781), they strongly believe that donating blood tries to save human lives (Loading = 0.622) and in turn, they are more optimistic with blood donation and its safety in Mauritius (Loading = 0.613).

1.4.2.4 FACTOR 4 - INFLUENTIAL CRITERIA TO ENHANCE DONORS SATISFACTION

Factor 4 has an eigenvalue of 4.12 and explains 10.7% of variance. This dimension groups 7 attributes which concerns ‘Proximity of blood donation event(s)’ (Loading = 0.986) and ‘Dissemination of accurate information’ (Loading = 0.982). In addition, ‘Positive assistance of staff’ (Loading = 0.910) and ‘Regular Follow-up from blood services associations for their next blood donation’ (Loading = 0.841). Moreover, blood donors would be more satisfied if they get assurance for their health safety after blood donation (Loading = 0.743) and ‘Timely blood donation process’ (Loading = 0.715) and adequate motivation - before and after blood donation - should be reinforced by respective blood services associations in Mauritius (Loading = 0.695).

1.4.2.5 FACTOR 5 – LOYALTY AMONG BLOOD DONORS

Factor 5 has an eigenvalue of 3.82 and explains 9.8% of variance. The 6 attributes under this dimension have an impact on present blood donors and their respective blood donor loyalty in Mauritius. Donors should receive thank you notes via electronic mail and short message service after each blood donation (Loading = 0.961). Furthermore, loyalty cards offered to blood donors for medical checkup discounts (Loading = 0.953) and loyal donors are offered gifts and incentives (Loading = 0.943) are important factors for encouraging blood donation in the context of Mauritius. Moreover, donors should receive further electronic mails and short-message service to inform them of the next blood donation event (Loading = 0.923). In addition, online blogs would help donors to develop affective bonds with other donors and prospects (Loading = 0.878). In addition, pictures and donors feedback should be published on newsletters and website (Loading = 0.750) in order to increase blood donor rate in Mauritius.

1.4.2.6 FACTOR 6 - BLOOD CRISIS AND REACTION OF BLOOD DONORS

Factor 6 has an eigenvalue of 2.9 and explains 7.4% of variance. There are 6 attributes under this dimension which pertains to blood crisis situations and reaction of blood donors. In fact, the factors persuading and motivating donors during blood scarcity are: ‘Donors Remuneration for blood donation’ (Loading = 0.962), ‘Personalized visits by motivators of blood services
associations’ (Loading = 0.956), ‘Provision of discount vouchers for free health check-ups’ (Loading = 0.920), Hosting of blood donation event by the donor’s favorite icons/artists (Loading = 0.860), ‘Adequate information provided to donors’ on the level of demand and supply of blood in blood bank (Loading = 0.813), and ‘Humanitarian request by blood services associations to prompt urgent blood donation during blood crisis periods’ in Mauritius (Loading = 0.740) are other factors for boosting blood donor rate in the context of Mauritius.

1.5 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the findings of the study, it is crucial for the blood services associations to boost blood donor rate in Mauritius. The empirical findings have depicted that ‘Banners’, ‘Newspapers’, ‘Radio’ and ‘Billboards’ are effective communication mediums to generate awareness on blood donations in Mauritius. Hence, blood services associations should capitalize on these communication mediums to generate greater awareness on blood donation events. The results have also addressed that donors want to be informed about blood donation events and its safety in Mauritius. They want additional information regarding how many persons need their blood type each month. Hence, a major implication for managers of blood services associations is to inform the donors on the safety measures associated with blood donation. They should be further empowered with detailed information concerning persons who need their blood in Mauritius.

The study has also depicted that ‘Certificates of recognition after blood donation’ and ‘Remuneration of blood donors’ are important factors to encourage blood donation decisions in Mauritius. In a similar vein, as suggested by Custer et al. (2004), donor recognition is an important component of a successful social marketing program. Therefore, blood services associations should design creative recognition certificates with an emotional appeal to nurture an affective bonding relationship with existing blood donors. Another positive finding of the present study is that blood donors are of the opinion that blood donation makes them healthier and they will equally inform and encourage their relatives and friends to donate blood in Mauritius. Research findings have also addressed that respondents strongly believe that donating blood tries to save human lives and in turn, blood services associations should further motivate existing donors to contribute to blood bank by informing them of their unique humanitarian involvement of donating blood.

The present study has also depicted ‘Proximity of blood donation event(s)’ and ‘Dissemination of accurate information from blood services associations’ as important factors to boost blood donor rate in Mauritius. This further supports that blood donation events should be organised in strategic locations in Mauritius. Another important implication of the study focuses on ‘Positive assistance of staff from blood donation associations’ and ‘Regular Follow-up for future blood donation. In this respect, staff should be empowered to assist blood donors in a professional and courteous manner. The staff should also conduct regular follow ups with the blood donors to educate them on future blood donation process. In addition, experienced medical representatives need to reassure the health safety of the blood contributors after their blood donation through effective one-to-one counseling sessions. Likewise, Jaarsveld and Pool (2002) have supported that blood donation is beneficial to health.
The empirical findings also demonstrate that donors would prefer to receive “thank you” notes via electronic mail and short-message service after each blood donation and loyalty cards should be offered to regular blood donors, for instance, discount vouchers for free health check-ups should be offered. In this respect, blood services associations should create and sustain enduring donor relationships to boost blood donor rate in the context of Mauritius. Moreover, the key health executives of Ministry of Health can organize ceremony of gratitude to recognize the precious efforts of donors and it is important to note that donors themselves want greater recognition compared to incentives (FDA, 2000). Donor loyalty can be further enhanced through appropriate incentives, like for example, free diabetes and hypertension tests. This result supports earlier research stating that incentives in terms of gifts and vouchers can have little impact on new potential donors; yet, they appeared to work as a means of maintaining the flow of donations among existing donors (Nonis et al., 1996). In addition, online blogs should be integrated to develop affective bonds with other donors and prospective donors. Some appealing testimonials of blood donors should be available online and emphasis should be laid on humanitarian values to save people’s lives. Likewise, photographs and donors feedback should be published on newsletters and website of blood associations in order to increase blood donation in Mauritius.

Another major implication of the present research relates to donors’ remuneration, hosting of blood donation event by donors’ favorite icons and artists in Mauritius. Hence, blood services associations should integrate some monetary incentives to encourage blood donation. Similarly, the choice of artists is equally important for the various blood donation events and these events should be well organised in order to appeal emotionally to blood donors. Indeed, the artist can further reinforce humanitarian values among the existing donors and thus, ensuring adequate donation during blood crisis periods in Mauritius.

1.6 CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Blood services associations should re-orient their social marketing strategies to encourage blood donation in the future. There is a powerful urge to educate, convince and retain blood donors by designing appropriate donor loyalty schemes. The present study has revealed that donors want certificate of recognition and they want to be more empowered with information pertaining to safety issues. There is also enough empirical evidence in the present study for blood services associations to better inform the blood donors on safety issues and at the same time, integrating blogs and communities where blood donors can post their comments. It is highly recommended that effective donor retention strategies are established to cultivate long-lasting relationships with the blood donors, which, in turn, will impact on blood donation decisions in the context of Mauritius.

1.6.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The present study has explored the contributing factors for boosting blood donor rate in Mauritius. The study had some potential limitations as focus was only on perceptions of existing blood donors in Mauritius. The overall perceptions of non-blood donors have not been incorporated in the existing survey.
1.6.2 FUTURE RESEARCH

In this respect, further research is clearly needed in order to enhance the understanding of the present study. Research should extend non-blood donors in order to allow a comparative analysis of the factors impacting on blood donation decisions in social marketing. In fact, supplementary qualitative research in terms of focus group discussions can provide additional evidence to support the existing findings on blood donation decisions in Mauritius. Cross sectional study will also enable to elucidate differences among the diverse samples concerning the preferences and attitudes of blood donors. It would also be interesting to investigate other variables used in the study with a gender-controlled sample so that derivations could be compared gender-wise. A case-controlled study could be carried out with age-stratified sample of blood and non-blood donors for greater representativeness.

1.7 REFERENCES


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