

A STUDY ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS E-HEALTH

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ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

Doctor.e is a global healthcare diagnostics company that provides intellect enabled diagnostic care to the underserved populace through clinical competence and a proprietary network technology.

- Around the clock sample collection and testing.
- Making it possible for 20-30 bedded hospitals to provide diagnostic facilities.
- Advisory services to the patient.
- Minimizes turnaround time
- Facilitates early and easy availability of test results
- Second opinion consultations
- Unmatchable edge with virtual diagnostic system

INTRODUCTION

e-Health, as defined by the United Nations Foundation, is “using information and communication technology (ICT)—such as computers, mobile phones, and satellite communications—for health services and information.”

The Use of e-Health to the consumers is given below:

Health information: Providing information is the main or sole purpose of some tools that includes health information that is either easily accessible or searchable as well as properly defined.

Healthcare tools: Interaction between patients, professionals and organisations are facilitated by various e-health tools. The most common forms of healthcare tools are patient health records, patient portals and secure doctor-patient e-mail. These tools are an open gateway to many other e-health information functions and are the way that most Indians are introduced to e-health tools.

Disease management: These tools provide monitoring, recordkeeping, and communication devices to help consumers manage a specific disease, such as diabetes or cancer, typically in close interaction with healthcare providers.

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- **Health self-management:** Consumers use health self-management tools to achieve and maintain healthy behaviour in various lifestyle areas such as diet and fitness. Some are marketed online directly to consumers; others are distributed by employers, health plans, and insurance companies.
- **Online communities:** Internet-based communities facilitate interaction around common health concerns among consumers, patients, or informal caregivers. Many online communities have multiple capabilities—not only providing social support, but also exchanging health information and facilitating decision making. Many disease management tools and some with other functions offer users an online community option.
- **Decision support:** The tools in this category provide structured support to consumers. Some tools support treatment decisions, such as weighing the tradeoffs between different cancer treatments. “Demand management” tools help consumers choose and evaluate insurance programs or healthcare providers. Managing healthcare benefits is a related e-health tool function. Demand and benefits management tools are growing in prominence as a function of prevailing “consumer-driven” strategies, such as health savings accounts.
- **Behaviour change/prevention:** Some e-health tools are designed to support a specific behaviour change, such as stopping smoking or binge drinking, starting regular exercise, or getting a mammogram. Most prevention-related tools are developed through research with defined target audiences under controlled conditions

EXAMPLES OF E-HEALTH APPS IN INDIA

APPLICATION	SERVICES
Lybrate	•A huge database of over 90,000 doctors covering almost every discipline spread across 30 cities. •Easily access some of the finest doctors in your city and locality • Fix an appointment with minimal hassle. •Provision for online consultation. •Online medical help is available 24*7. •Healthcare tips are available from some of the country's top physicians
Practo	•Helps in connecting patients with doctors in their vicinity. •Services are currently available in over 35 cities. •Users can consult doctors online, order medicines and manage their health care records. •Practo also helps in connecting users to diagnostic labs, spas, salons and gyms.
Portea	•In-home healthcare(arranging home visits of doctors, physiotherapists and nurses) •Rent or purchase medical equipments that are delivered at your doorstep. •Portea has partnered with a number of leading hospitals and doctors to cater to the health care needs of patients in the comforts of their homes.
1mg	•No hassle of running from one chemist store to another in search of medicines. Once you upload a copy of your prescription, 1mg gives you the option of buying generic drugs that are cheaper than the branded medicines. Therefore, you can save on your medication bill. •Also offers a database of doctors available in your locality with option for booking appointments online. •1mg has limited coverage, catering only the metro cities and a few tier II cities.
NetMeds	•If you are residing in a second or third tier city or even in a village, the NetMeds app is a better option for you to buy medicines online and have them delivered at your doorstep. •Offers generic alternatives. •Works solely as an online pharmacy.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aims at understanding and studying the consumer behavior towards e-health

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the current level of consumer knowledge related to e-Health in the Indian Healthcare Sector.
- To understand the existing e-Health practices.
- Identifying the online sources of health information for the targeted customer.

METHODOLOGY

STUDY DESIGN:

A community-based cross-sectional descriptive survey. The survey included Well-Structured Questionnaire Contained close- ended Questions to achieve the specific objective of the study.

STUDY SETTING:

The study was conducted in New Delhi. It was designed and discussed at Doctor.e Health Services Private Limited which is located in Masjid Moth and the pretesting and sample collection was done at Akash Hospital, Malviya Nagar.

DURATION OF THE STUDY:

The study was conducted for a period of 90 days (three months), from February'2018, to May 2018, till the completion of the desired sample size.

SAMPLE SIZE:

200 patients

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE:

Primary data: The data was collected by Face to face interview using a structured questionnaire. The format of the schedule was adapted from similar studies conducted earlier. The schedule contained close-ended questions pertaining to knowledge, awareness and concerns and selling points related to e-health.

Secondary data: The secondary data for this project was gathered through different dependable articles.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE:

The data collected by respondents was analyzed using MS-Excel and the results of the data analysis is presented in the subsequent section of the report.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

An informed consent was taken before commencing the survey. The confidentiality of the respondents has been maintained. Respondents were assured that participation in the study is completely voluntary and participants can withdraw from study at any stage. The respondents were informed that the collected data would be shared only with the guide allotted for the study and that it is for academic purpose.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The time period of the study is limited to three months. The study may not be valid for a longer duration owing to rapid changes in the healthcare delivery systems and models.
2. Due to a limited amount of time and resources involved to carry out this study was restricted to a very limited sample size. The conclusions drawn from this study, hence, may have restrained application which means that it may be subject to biasness over regions but insights into a broader aspect of current healthcare trends pertaining to the elderly can be obtained from this study.

RESULTS

•Is this visit for yourself or are you accompanying someone?

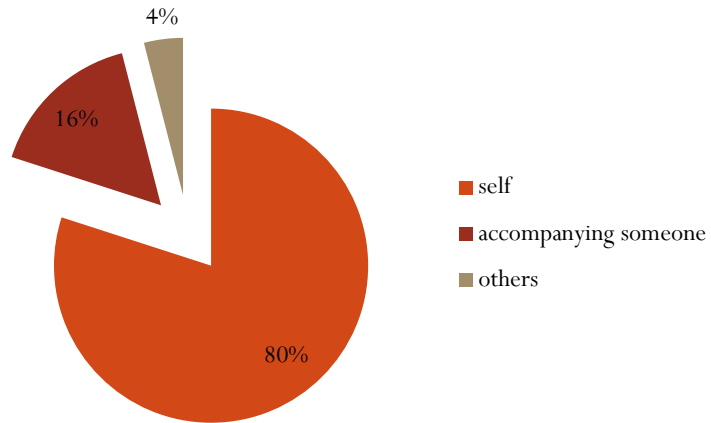


Figure 1: Percentage of categories of the respondents

•What is the reason of your visit?

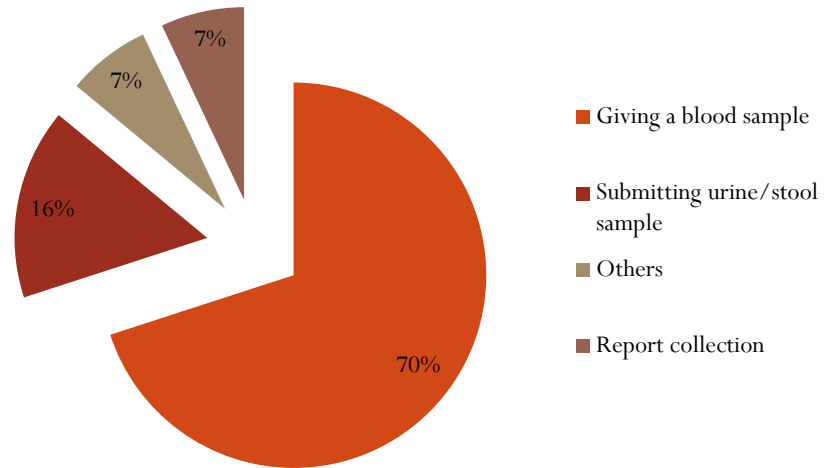


Figure 2: Reason of Visit of the Respondent

Before I mentioned it today, did you know that you could use software or online tools to manage your medical information such as appointments, lab test results, doctor's notes, etc?

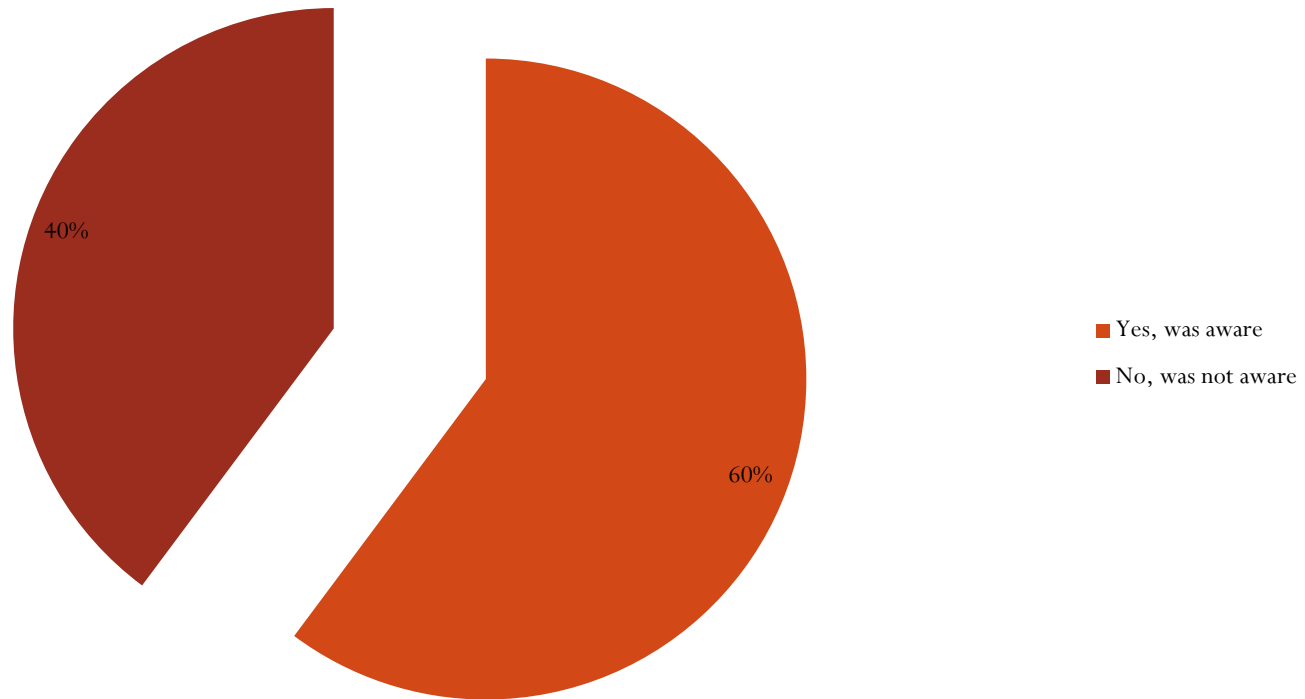


Figure 4: Respondents knowledge/awareness about e-health services/platforms

Have you ever ?

Consulted a doctor online

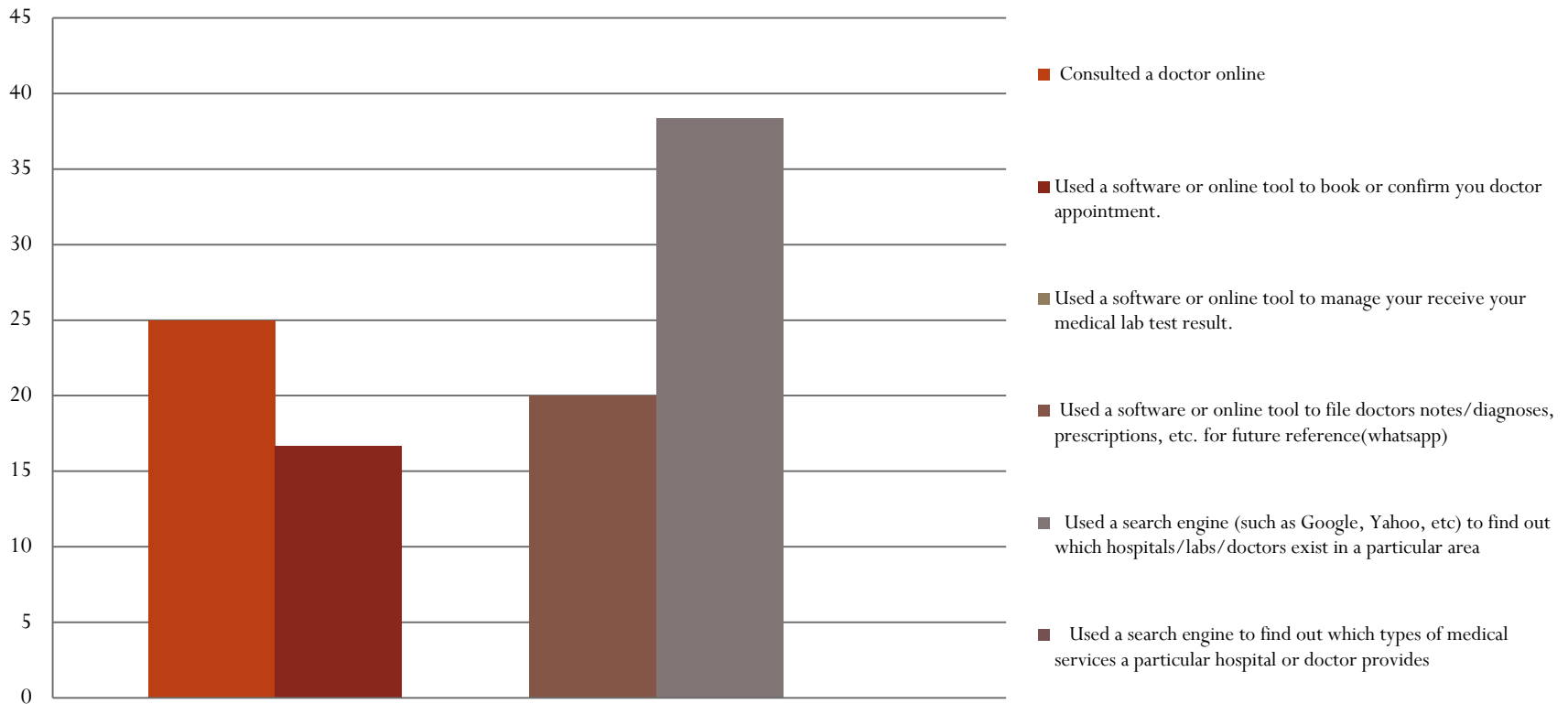
Used a software or online tool to book or confirm you doctor appointment.

Used a software or online tool to manage your receive your medical lab test result.

Used a software or online tool to file doctors notes/diagnoses, prescriptions, etc. for future reference(whatsapp)

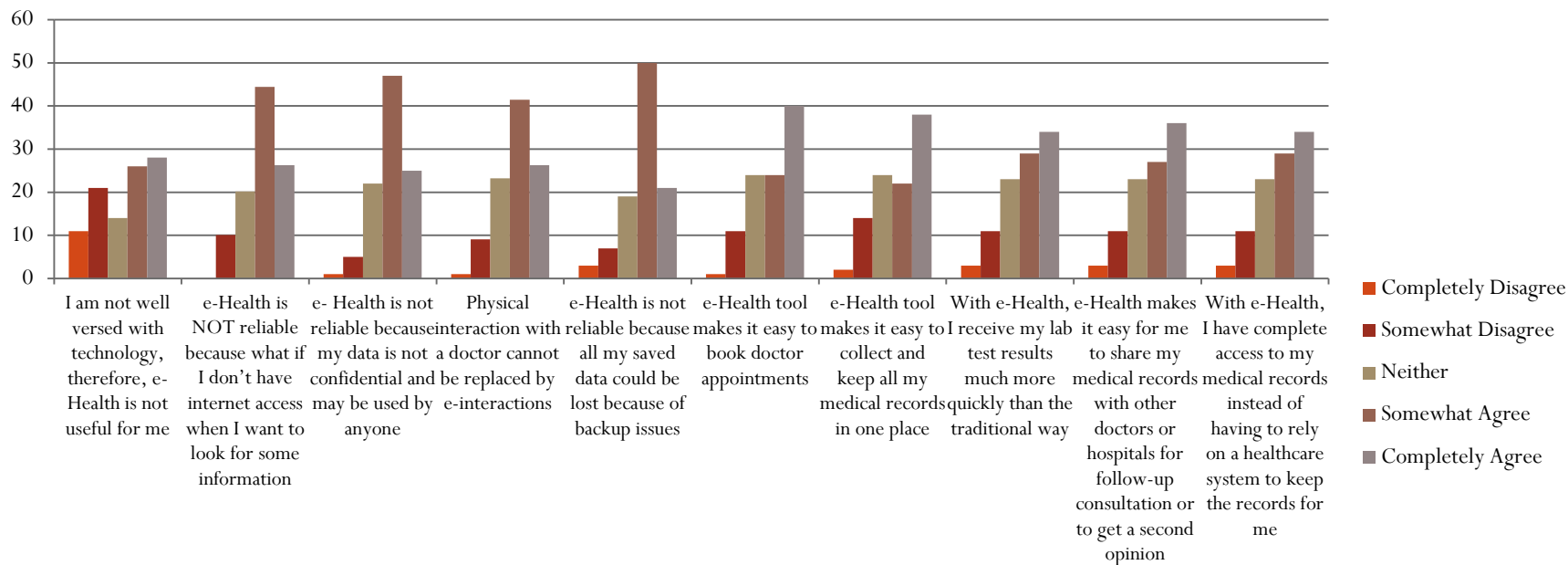
Used a search engine (such as Google, Yahoo, etc) to find out which hospitals/labs/doctors exist in a particular area

Used a search engine to find out which types of medical services a particular hospital or doctor provides



Next I'll read out several statements about such e-Health online tools. As I read each, please tell me whether you completely agree with it, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree or completely disagree with that statement.

	Completely Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
I am not well versed with technology, therefore, e-Health is not useful for me	11	21	14	26	28
e-Health is NOT reliable because what if I don't have internet access when I want to look for some information	0	10.1	20.2	44.43	26.26
e- Health is not reliable because my data is not confidential and may be used by anyone	1	5	22	47	25
Physical interaction with a doctor cannot be replaced by e-interactions	1.01	9.09	23.23	41.41	26.25
e-Health is not reliable because all my saved data could be lost because of backup issues	3	7	19	50	21
e-Health tool makes it easy to book doctor appointments	1	11	24	24	40
e-Health tool makes it easy to collect and keep all my medical records in one place	2	14	24	22	38
With e-Health, I receive my lab test results much more quickly than the traditional way	3	11	23	29	34
e-Health makes it easy for me to share my medical records with other doctors or hospitals for follow-up consultation or to get a second opinion	3	11	23	27	36
With e-Health, I have complete access to my medical records instead of having to rely on a healthcare system to keep the records for me	3	11	23	29	34



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Integrated healthcare delivery should be developed through efficient processes\workflows\marketing and positioning strategies with focus on improving customer experience

- AWARENESS:**

- The doctors should be made aware of the various benefits of using health apps and other tools so that they can further spread awareness amongst the consumers i.e. the patients.

- Concessions on various consultations, tests etc if appointment for doctors and lab tests are booked.

- The app should be informative and updated for consumer attention and attraction.

•**USER CONTROL:**

➤ Users define what information they want, when and how; owners of data decide who views it. A patient should be the ultimate owner of his or her medical records like prescriptions and lab tests and should have full control in deciding which third entity can access his or her records.

•**CONFIDENTIALITY POLICIES**

➤ Unique patient identification in different care settings to tackle the issue of confidentiality, for example Aadhar cards could be linked to specific e-health portals.

➤ Protocols that are extendible and based on industry standards so there is no discrepancy of protocols or policies

•**INTERNET CONNECTIVITY**

➤ The physical infrastructure should be targeted to use mobile connectivity in even if the network is not available. The ability to perform some basic functions while in offline mode and update the information with the main server as soon as it re-establishes a connection should exist.

CONCLUSION

There is a general lack of studies focusing on health information-seeking behaviour on the internet for citizens in the Indian context. Areas for research with health professionals and citizens from different population groupings, including those hard-to-reach, include:

- access to the internet, including skills for use;
- motivations for using the internet;
- how the search is done;
- barriers to use;
- evaluation of source credibility; and
- utilisation of information sourced.

Other areas include:

- Issues of trust and credibility related to internet-based health-related information; and
- The specific needs of consumers and the market, which should be identified in relation to developing websites targeting both professionals and citizens (as most available research relates to healthcare).

Therefore, In a country where access to affordable healthcare is still a looming issue and awareness of the consumer about his healthcare needs is still a factor that would need work, the consumer stands to gain immensely from the development of the e-Health industry.