



COOPERATIVE EDUCATION REPORT

IMPLEMENTING MARKETING STRATEGY TO INCREASE CUSTOMERS at SOWA HEALTHCARE

WRITTEN BY:

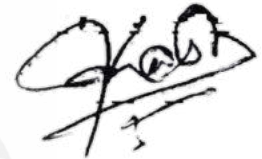
Rojen Narsingh Shakya

Student Id: 6208040066

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Title: Implementing Marketing Strategy to Increase Potential Customers at SOWA Healthcare
Written by: Rojen Narsingh Shakya
Department: Bachelor of Business Administration
Major: Marketing
Academic Advisor: Mr. Bikash Dhakal
Academic year: 2/2022

Oral Presentation Committees



(Mr. Bikash Dahal)

Academic Supervisor



(Mr. Ashutosh Mishra)

Oral Presentation Committee



(Mrs. Reecha Shrestha)

Job Supervisor



**(Asst. Prof. Maruj Limpawattana, Ph.D.)
Assistant President and Director of Cooperative Education**

Title: Implementing Marketing Strategy to Increase Potential Customers at SOWA Healthcare
Credit: 5
Written By: Rojen Narsingh Shakya
Academic Advisor: Mr. Bikash Dahal
Degree: Bachelor of Business Administration (Marketing)
Faculty: Business Administration
Semester/Academic Year: 2/2022

Abstract

This report summarizes my 16-week internship at the marketing department of Sowa Healthcare which is an advanced polyclinic in Ekantakuna, Nepal from February 1 2023 to May 31, 2023. During the internship, I worked closely with the marketing team and was involved in various activities related to market research, analysis, and digital marketing. This report provides an overview of my experiences and key learnings during the internship.

All duties and responsibilities assigned during cooperative education are explained in detail in this study. Working rigorously for the organization has taught me to be more responsible and have time management skills. This practical cooperative education program also helped me to understand the activities and procedures of different functions relating to approaching various people.

The cooperative education report entitled “Implementing marketing strategy to increase potential customers at Sowa Healthcare: Building Customer Relationship” aims to describe the working experience of different tasks carried out as a co-op student. The job is based on setting up a strategy to find new prospects and sales.

The report focuses on how to attract our customers to reach our healthcare clinic. The marketing of Sowa Healthcare consists of various tasks which revolve around it. This cooperative education report contains the working experience of different tasks carried out as a marketing intern.

Working as an intern, my main duty performed was to analyze the approaches that help create better marketing for this industry, analysis of the competitors, social media marketing, content marketing, and promotion of Sowa Healthcare, and work at flow to understand and interact with people.

All duties and responsibilities assigned during cooperative education are explained in detail in this study. Problems faced were solved with the alternatives from my supervisor. Working rigorously for the industry has taught me to be more responsible and have management skills. This practical cooperative education program also helped me to understand the activities and procedures of different functions relating to approaching various people, creating content, and analyzing the market type.

Keyword: Marketing Strategy, Customer Relationship, Analyzing



Acknowledgment

I completed my internship at Sowa Healthcare from February 1st to May 30th. This internship journey I had with Sowa Healthcare, toward professional life, was a great chance for learning and professional development. My internship at Sowa Healthcare made me know more about marketing in the healthcare sector. Therefore, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all those who provided me with this opportunity. I would also like to thank Kathmandu College of Management (KCM) for providing cooperative education and learn a lot of things from it.

I would like to acknowledge those who either directly or indirectly contributed to this project. With profound regard and special gratitude, I gratefully acknowledge my supervisor at Siam University [Mr. Bikash Dahal] for his generous help and guidance with constant feedback and day-to-day suggestions in the process of my internship report.

Next, I would also like to show my gratitude towards my supervisors, Mrs. Reecha Shrestha, Marketing Director, and Mr. Piyush Lama, Business Development Manager, and all team members of Sowa Healthcare for their excellent support and proper guidance throughout my internship report. They have been extremely supportive of me. I cannot thank enough all personnel of Sowa Healthcare. They have explained everything I asked for in detail. Throughout time they were never impatient. They did not allow me to feel uncomfortable for even a single moment. I am really grateful for all their supportive and friendly behavior.

I am also grateful to the Human Resource Department of Sowa Healthcare for granting me the opportunity to make my internship program in this organization.

I perceive this opportunity as an open door in my career development. I will endeavor to use gained skills and knowledge in the most ideal manner, and I will continue to deal with their improvement to accomplish desired career objectives.

Thank you.

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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

As part of my bachelor's studies in Marketing, I did a 16-week internship (Feb 1 - May 30) at Sowa Healthcare. I was doing my Marketing Internship in the management department of the polyclinic. I am main duty was to assist in implementing the goals of the Marketing Division, which included various tasks depending on the daily activities.

1.1 Company profile

Sowa Healthcare is a healthcare advanced clinic, also referred to as a “B-category hospital”. This clinic is based in Ekantakuna, Lalitpur right next to the Swiss Embassy. It provides uncompromised services related to healthcare at competitive prices. The clinic has a medical team of 45+ medical professionals and well-equipped technologies to cater to the needs of the people. The clinic provides services relating to doctor consultation, lab tests, diagnostic and imaging services, dental services, vaccination and immunization, and other minor procedures. It also provides services relating to dermatology and cosmetics. Besides that, it also offers patients with different healthcare packages like General Health Package, Women's Health Package, Comprehensive Male Package, Diabetes Care Package, Comprehensive Female Package, Post Covid Wellness Package, Cardiac Care Package, and Elderly Package. It also has an in-house pharmacy and all the tests and diagnostic services are in-house too. This clinic also offers special services like home services where nurses go to the patient's houses to perform required tests and also has a smoking cessation clinic to help addicted people to quit smoking.

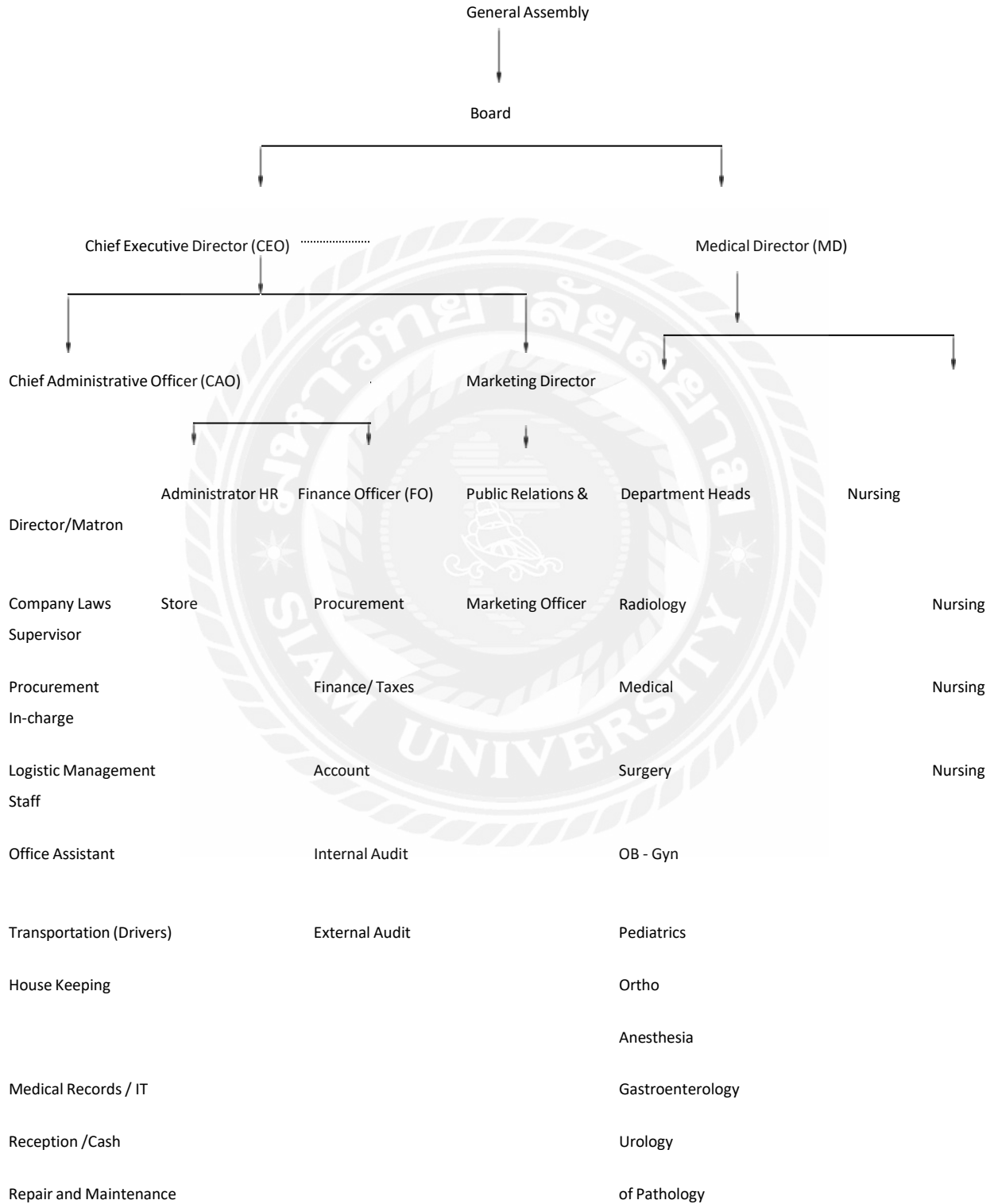
1.2 The mission of the clinic is:

To improve the health and well-being of families through personalized care, excellence in health services, and state-of-the-art technologies.

The vision of the clinic is:

The center of excellence for holistic healthcare service.

1.3 Diagram of the organizational structure



1.4 My job position

I was assigned as Marketing Intern in the management department of Sowa Healthcare. The major tasks of a marketing intern are social media posts, competitors' data analysis, customer replies in social media, appointment bookings according to inquiries, follow-up with tie-up companies, fixing meetings for tie-ups, and planning company visits.

1.5 Job Position in the Company's organizational structure

The key departments in the clinic are medical, administration, and management. The medical department consists of 45 plus doctor personnel, nurses, varieties of lab machines, diagnostics and imaging machines, and a pharmacy. This particular department is responsible for conducting varieties of lab tests and making reports based on that. The administration and management department consists of the HR team, Marketing team, and Finance team. This particular department is responsible for all the management and human resources of the clinic. My job position is marketing intern which falls under the marketing team of the management department.

1.6 Intention and motivation to choose the company

The clinic's mission is to improve the lives of families with personalized care, excellence in health services, and state-of-the-art technologies. Firstly, I would like to appreciate the wonderful opportunity given to me at a reputed organization. I understand I am a fresher and I have always wanted to be a part of an organization's workforce. Below are the reasons for my intention and motivation to choose Sowa Healthcare as part of my Co-op studies:

- a. Sowa Healthcare is a place wherein the learning curve is great and hard work is appreciated. I have always looked towards organizations like Sowa Healthcare to kickstart my career. I believe with the right atmosphere at the workplace, one can achieve much more than working at an unappreciated workplace.

- b. Working at Sowa Healthcare would give me the opportunity to gain experience in researching, analyzing, and discussing marketing strategies.
- c. Working at Sowa Healthcare would broaden my network by exposing me to a diverse range of experts and would help me understand the professional culture.

1.7 Strategies of the Company

Sowa Healthcare has a good name in the healthcare industry and its presence and popularity have been growing every year. They have been able to do so not just because of their good doctors but also because they have chosen certain strategies to help them stand out in the healthcare industry. Some of the strategies include:

The generic strategy for competitive advantage is to provide quality care patients can trust. Sowa Healthcare's competitive strategy supports prioritizing the health and well-being of the patients while ensuring confidentiality. Sowa Healthcare treats the patients and the team with kindness and creates an ideal welcoming environment for holistic healing. Sowa Healthcare provides personalized yet quality healthcare service. Sowa Healthcare brings access to novel medical technologies and innovates for the best results, driven by science, research, and data. Sowa Healthcare brings in expertise and collaborates to ensure excellence in healthcare for the patients.

Some of the other strategies are:

- Convenient and time saving
- Home Collection
- Online access to reports
- Patient first
- Teamwork
- Learning by doing

1.8 SWOT Analysis

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personalized care• Positive reputation• 45+ team of doctors• All preventive healthcare services under the same roof• Trusted by people• Patient-centric service• Prime location	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High staff turnover• High cost of replacing existing doctors• Budget Constraint
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The trend of customers migrating to higher-end services• Local collaboration• Major tectonic shifts are occurring in the areas of medical science and technology• Attract quality physicians and staffs	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Similar clinics are nearby• Changes in the lifestyle of people• Upcoming good healthcare institutions in the periphery• Staff Dissatisfaction

1.9 Objectives of this Co-op Study

My ambition is to work as a marketer. Hence my main goal for this Co-op study is to polish my marketing skills by laying a solid foundation for them.

The objectives of the study include: (1) To implement marketing theoretical knowledge learned and (2) To have a better understanding of marketing in the healthcare industry.

The sub-objectives of the Co-op studies are to make myself know the corporate culture and equip me with organizational skills such as time management, coordination, communication, and some others.

Chapter 2: Co-op Study Activities

2.1 Job Descriptions

As a marketer at Sowa Healthcare, I was assigned two types of work. The first type of work was digital. Under this, I was supposed to prepare social media plans where I kept stories in all social media and also collaborated with graphic designers to make social media posts, competitor data analysis, customer replies in social media, and appointment bookings according to inquiries. The second type was Business Development tasks where I was supposed to follow up with tie-up companies, fix meetings for tie-ups, and plan company visits.

Most of my daily activities could be divided into the following categories and they are as follows:

- **Create, curate, and publish at least three high-quality stories every single day on Instagram:** I was given the task to create stories using Canva, which is a design app, and I posted them every single day on the social media platforms of Sowa Healthcare. I posted stories relating to health. Mostly I posted different health facts, created polls to engage the audience, encouraged the audience to ask a question, and also provided the audience with some interesting quiz questions. I also had to post follow-up stories about various doctors in Sowa Healthcare.
- **Find out the sources of patients:** One of the main responsibilities of the Marketing Department at Sowa Healthcare was to find out the sources of patients i.e. from which source did the patients know about Sowa Healthcare. I used the patient registration form to know about the sources of the patients. Most of the patients' sources were referrals i.e. the doctors referring them for doing various tests at Sowa Healthcare and also referrals from other staff. Other sources were external referrals, corporate tie-ups, brochures, websites, google, social media, SMS, etc.
- **Approach companies for tie-ups:** Besides digital marketing, Sowa Healthcare also brought in many patients through tie-ups with various companies. I had to approach at least two companies every day and try to set a meeting with them. To approach a company, the first thing I do is research about that company on their websites and social media and after that I could call those companies and pitch about Sowa Healthcare and different health-related benefits they would get if they tie up with our clinic. If they seem

interested then I would send them a proposal at their company email address. I also gave them follow-up calls and tried to set a meeting with the company.

- **Company visits for tie-up discussion:** I try to set up meeting with different companies through cold calls and proposals. If they seem interested I set a meeting for further discussion and know about their preferred date and time for the meeting. After that I go for the company visit and discuss our tie-up in detail, stating every benefit they could get if they tie up with Sowa Healthcare.
- **Oversee the clinic's social media:** Another part of digital marketing was social media management where I was responsible to create various health-related informative content and then collaborated with the graphic designer to create the final post. Then the post would go for approval. After getting approved, I used Facebook Meta Business Suite to schedule and publish the designed post. I also used Facebook Meta Business Suite to conduct necessary social media analytics.
- **Competitor analysis:** My responsibility was also to conduct a competitor analysis of various nearby hospitals and clinics. I prepared a report on competitor analysis through various social media. I recorded every post our competitors posted on social media and submitted the report every month.
- **Assisting at events or seminars:** Sowa Healthcare also took part in various events in various places like schools and companies. We put our stalls at those events and distributed brochures and also performed necessary health-related services in those events like free blood pressure and sugar level checking. Also, we organized a lot of health-related seminars at our already tied-up companies. Most companies wanted to have seminars relating to ergonomics - which is a sitting posture-related health awareness for their company staff.

2.2 Job Responsibilities

My daily tasks were to create stories using Canva, which is a design app, and post them every day on social media both Facebook and Instagram. I also found out the sources from where the patients knew about Sowa Healthcare with the help of a patient registration form. I was also responsible for calling or approaching at least 2 companies for tie-ups and other duties were to set meetings with approached companies, follow up calls and send proposals to different

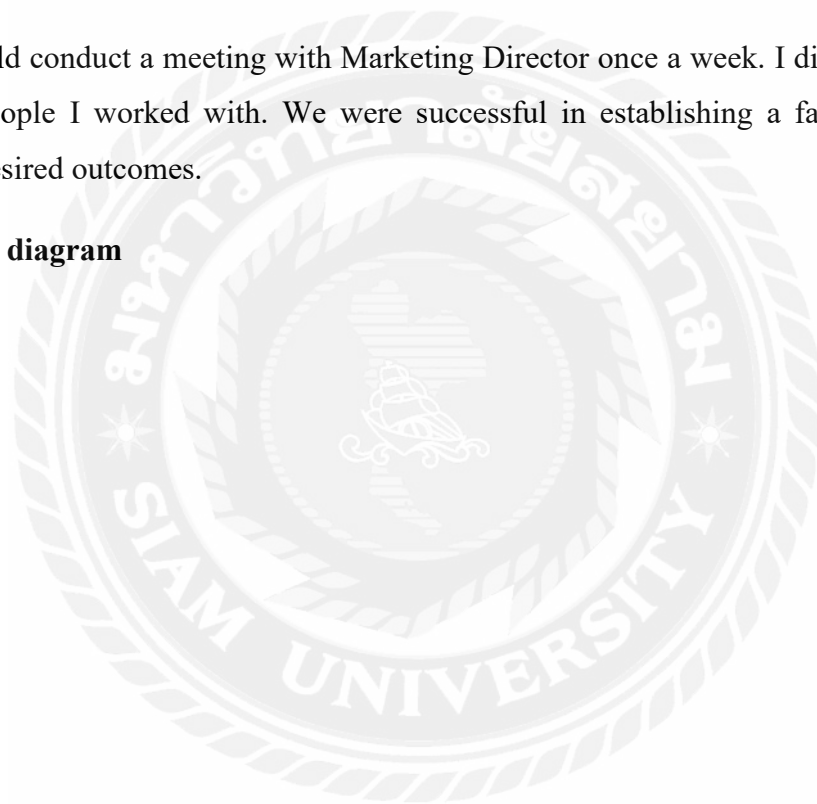
approached companies. Besides that, the duties I was assigned beyond the standard job description were to handle the front office in the absence of a receptionist and deal with walk-in customers.

2.3 Activities in coordinating with co-workers

Everyday activities were carried out in coordination with the Marketing Director, Business Development Manager and fellow co-workers. The work was usually assigned to me directly by Marketing Director and Business Development Manager, and I communicated with my co-worker - a graphic designer.

We would conduct a meeting with Marketing Director once a week. I did not feel uneasy dealing with people I worked with. We were successful in establishing a fantastic team and achieving the desired outcomes.

2.4 Job process diagram



a. Corporate tie-ups



Fig: Flowchart of the work process of the corporate tie up

- **Research about the company:** We conduct a brief research about the company before approaching it for the tie up. We go through their websites and social media accounts and know more about them before pitching our services.

- **Cold call the company:** We find their numbers on the website or social media and then call them. In case the company does not receive the call, we directly try and approach them.
- **Pitch our services in the call:** After they receive our call, we pitch our services. We do not just pitch about our services but also pitch them the benefit we as a polyclinic could provide them if they tie up with us.
- **Set up a company visit time:** After the pitch, we ask for the concerned person number and email to forward them a proposal for the tie up and ask them their appropriate time for us to visit them for in depth discussion about the tie up.
- **Visit the company for in depth discussion:** The interested companies for the tie up will try to schedule a meeting with us where we visit their company site and talk about our services and tie up module in more detail.
- **Signing of the agreement:** After the in depth discussion, the companies tend to discuss about the tie up with their team and would update us. If they wont update us, we would give follow up calls and if they are interested in corporate tie up then we provide them with the general agreement and after that they will be legible for taking our services and enjoy the benefits we provide them.

b. Social Media posts

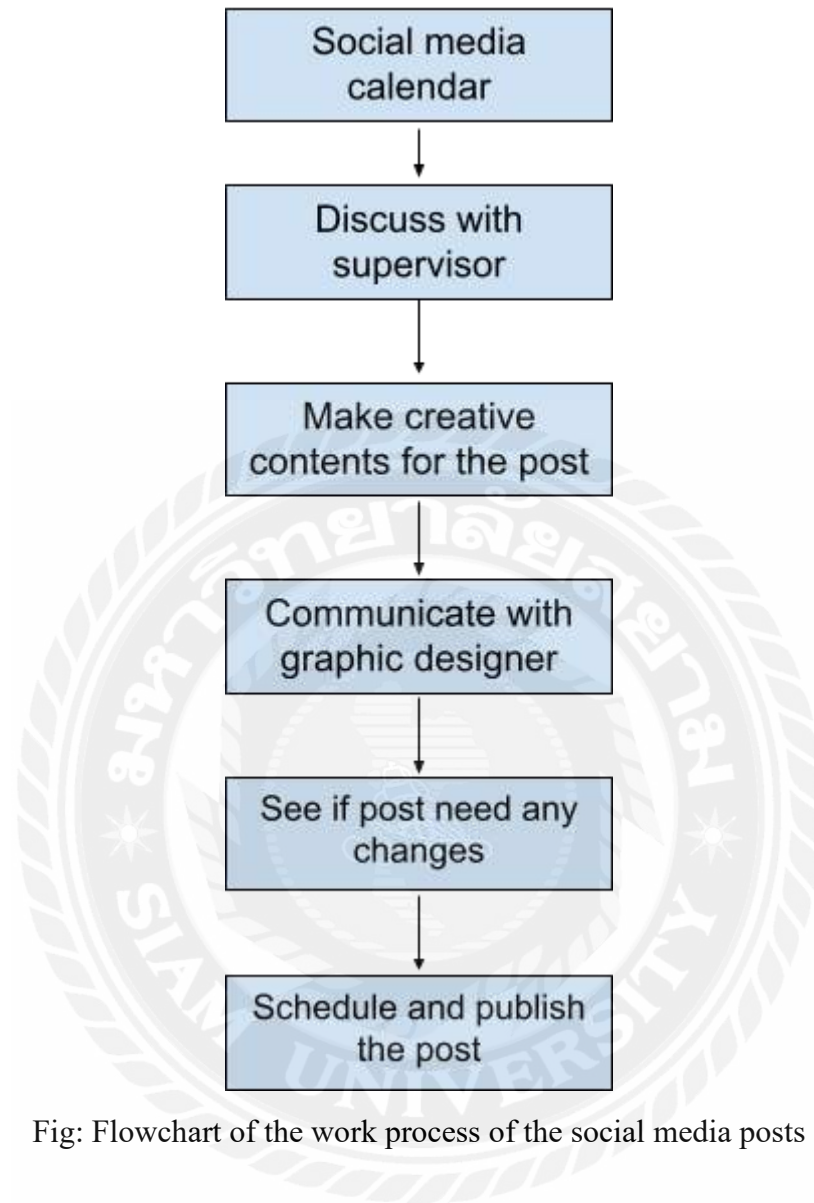


Fig: Flowchart of the work process of the social media posts

- **Social Media Calendar:** I would determine the needs of the clinic like what post is needed to be made for the upcoming month and make a social media plan according to it.
- **Discussion with supervisor:** After I make a social media calendar, I forward it to my supervisor and she will notify me for any changes to be made.
- **Creative contents for the post:** Then I start to make contents for the posts and I get to decide whether the informative or engaging posts are to be made.

- **Communicate with the graphic designer:** The contents made by me are then to be communicated with the graphic designer and they would make the post using Photoshop and Illustrator. Communication with the graphic designer here is the key to making good looking posts.
- **See if post need any changes:** The post made by the graphic designer is forwarded to my supervisor and she would tell if the post is suitable or it needs some changes. According to that, I communicate the needed changes with graphic designer.
- **Schedule and publish the post:** Lastly, I would schedule and publish the post in Facebook and Instagram with the help of Facebook Meta Business Suite and review the insights of the post.

2.5 My contributions

I, as a marketing intern, was able to make several contributions to Sowa Healthcare especially to the Marketing Department. The contributions I made are as follows:

- a. **Helped to tie up with various companies:** I assisted the marketing department in tie up with various companies which serves as potential customers for the clinic. The staff members who have tied up with us may come to take our services.
- b. **Conducted market research:** I also conducted market research on the company's target audience, competition, and industry trends. I have also assisted in creating marketing materials such as social media posts.
- c. **Offline marketing:** I have also made contributions towards offline marketing and assisted in doing various research on competitors especially the clinics and hospitals near Sowa Healthcare. I have also helped in the face to face marketing and online my main contribution is to handling social media. My works are up to date and prompt.
- d. **Ideas:** Besides that, I also helped the marketing team come up with different ideas applicable to the clinic.

Chapter 3: Learning Process

3.1 Problems Faced by me

I am a learner, I learn something new with every mistake. Although some may not perceive an internship as serious, I did, and on this journey, I faced a few problems professionally as well as personally. Some of the problems I faced during my internship at Sowa Healthcare are as follows:

- a. **Fear of missing out:** The internship is one good way of networking and leaving a great impression on your ideal company. You not just only learn during an internship, but you also meet new people, make friends and adapt to the new culture. I always had a fear of missing out on opportunities to network and learn in a new environment with people I had never met before.
- b. **Lack of focus at times:** It had been a long time since I had been involved in a professional environment. A strict schedule, work pressure, and high expectations from supervisors made me lack focus on my work.

3.2 Challenges in the Clinic

In the healthcare industry, there are many challenges of continuously evolving trends. One of the challenges is to keep up with the latest trends in the industry regarding costs, customers, and competition.

- **Problem with customers:** The main problem with customers, especially potential customers who have not yet taken our service is that they tend to think that our services are expensive. They see our clinic from outside and think it is some kind of luxury clinic like Medicity Hospital and directly think the fees are also as expensive as Medicity. But that is not the case and the clinic is struggling to change this perception of potential customers.
- **The problem of interest in companies regarding preventive healthcare during tie-up approach:** Besides the price perception of the people, the other problem is that most companies do not take a keen interest in health-related tie-ups which has always been a major challenge for the marketing department at Sowa Healthcare. Sowa Healthcare is

trying to promote Preventive Health Care among the employees of the companies but the perception of people is that they only have to visit healthcare when they are sick. While approaching different companies only the people who visit health care regularly take interest in our pitch, those who do not need any health-related facilities yet do not think of taking preventive health care.

- **The problem with the competition:** The main problem with the competition is that the competing healthcare clinics and hospitals tend to lower the price too much to attract more and more customers. There are many healthcare apps too involved in this that are giving away different health-related packages at a very low rate. They tend to lower the price of the tests and services so much that there are not enough margins. This can sometimes cause a price war in the healthcare market.
- **Problem of determining patient sources:** Another issue is to determine how did patients hear about our clinic. The sources of patients are very important for the clinic to know especially the marketing department but the problem is we are not able to determine the sources of most of our patients.
- **Budget constraint:** Sowa Healthcare has been under a budget constraint since the clinic has not been able to get to the break-even point yet.

3.3 Problem-solving

To solve the problem of potential customers thinking we are an expensive clinic is to change the price perception of the customers. To change the price perception of potential customers, Sowa Healthcare showcases the prices of the services in the proposal so that people can compare our prices with other clinics and hospitals and know we are not charging them higher. Also, when some special health-related days or days like Women's Day come Sowa Healthcare provides a big offer to the customers in order to show that they care about their customers and believe everyone must have equal health-related benefits may they be from a middle-class or high-class family.

There is another problem of competition of Sowa Healthcare trying to start a price war by lowering the prices of their services and tests too much. We cannot control what our competitors are planning to do but what Sowa Healthcare can do is not be involved in price wars if it happens. Instead, Sowa Healthcare can showcase the values the patients can get from Sowa

Healthcare that other clinics or hospitals cannot or won't provide. For example home services, pick-and-drop services, or short waiting times.

3.4 Recommendation to the company

Recommendation to the marketing department

- It is quite deceptive that people consider marketing an easy task. The deeper we go, the more complex it becomes and each stage is hard in its own way. So, I recommend that more talent be hired in this department to share responsibilities and enhance the department's performance.
- It would be ideal for the marketing department to have its own office space, as we currently share one with other departments. There were times we had disturbed them and vice-versa. Thus, having a separate workplace may help maintain focus and enhance efficiency among the marketing team.

Recommendation to Sowa Healthcare(organization as a whole)

- Since the healthcare industry in Nepal is quite competitive, I believe Sowa Healthcare can do a better job of marketing itself to the public.
- Services like screening, dental checkups, and vaccinations are key to keeping people of all ages healthy. But for a variety of reasons, many people don't get the preventive care they need. So I recommend Sowa Healthcare take necessary actions so that people will start thinking about preventive care and not only when they are sick.

3.5 Learnings

This internship has been a full on learning experience for me and an experiential journey. Working as a marketing intern allowed me to better understand the market. This internship sharpened my analytical and people skills while being closely supervised and guided by the team. The learnings from my internship are as follows:

- a. **Communication:** Communication is essential for improving both internal and external management. It made me realize how important effective communication is in keeping management and the team on the same page. Proper communication gave me and my

team confidence in the work we were doing, and it also gave our supervisor our confidence that I as an intern, was doing the job correctly.

- b. **Client dealing:** While I was interning at Sowa Healthcare, I gained the ability to conduct sales pitches and put my communication skills to the next level.
- c. **Proficiency in social media platforms:** I have become more confident using social media for the use of business.

What I have learned during my co-op study in Sowa Healthcare is that healthcare companies have a very unique set of challenges that are unlike any other industry. Success in healthcare marketing demands that you have a clear understanding of how to navigate these challenges. Healthcare marketing campaigns should incorporate the latest industry changes. Although the company is very fast-paced and it was challenging to complete all my duties, I gained valuable experience, learned how to manage my time, and how to organize work to maximize efficiency. This internship experience was important in building my business administration skills.

3.6 Interpersonal skills I developed from Co-op Studies

- a. Communication
- b. Team player
- c. Initiative

3.7 How I applied the knowledge from coursework to the real working situation?

The knowledge from my coursework gave a charming touch to the real working situation. I started an entry-level marketing internship at Sowa Healthcare with all the knowledge I have gained in the marketing field. I have always had the knowledge of doing competitive analysis and research about competitors and this was where I put my knowledge into a real working situation. Besides that, I have also put my digital marketing knowledge to work by doing various digital marketing activities mainly handling social media and performing social media analytics.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

4.1 Summary

This marketing internship was valuable for gaining experience and building professional relationships. In four months with Sowa Healthcare, I feel I was able to learn as much as I could. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to get practical experience. I was able to develop my active listening and planning skills. I practically found direct interactions with many different people improving my communication skills.

While I had many useful experiences at Sowa Healthcare, I feel that I still need to develop my confidence level. In conclusion, my experience in Sowa Healthcare was crucial in my development as a marketer. I will take the lessons and skills I learned and apply them to my next position.

4.2 Limitation of Co-op Studies

Cooperative education was such a dynamic practice but it had many limitations that caused the process to be more complicated than first perceived. Some of the limitations are listed below:

- a. My standard job description did not include me working as a front desk person but in the absence of a receptionist I had to take the responsibility of a front desk person which caused some disturbances doing my role.
- b. This internship provided limited practical experience and as a result, I did not have the opportunity to take on larger projects or develop a comprehensive understanding of marketing strategies.

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