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Introduction to pharma marketing

The global pharmaceutical market is expected to exceed $1.1 trillion in years to come with a 5% growth rate. When it comes to marketing, many companies are spending twice as much money on marketing than they do on research and development.

Marketing enables pharma companies to identify, anticipate and provide solutions for customer requirements.

Pharma marketers have two main audiences - patients and medical professionals.

According to Health Action International’s guide, pharmaceutical companies use a “multi-channel” approach to ensure the same message about products is received from different information sources.

The promotional strategies they’re using include:

- Relationship-based Selling,
- Product Information and Awareness,
- Use of Media,
- Market expansion technique
- Use of Key Opinion Leader

In this ebook, we’ll focus on the use of media, specifically on digital marketing.

**Going digital**

Pharmaceutical companies can no longer solely rely on brand name recognition or print advertising to drive sales because of the increasing competition from generics.
manufacturers. That’s one of the reasons why they’re turning to digital.

Also, the HAI guide points out that with the rise of smart devices, both healthcare professionals and consumers are increasingly reliant on the internet for medical information. That means investing in this new trend and replacing traditional promotional activities with product websites, SEO and social media campaigns.

Currently, the most successful strategies are the ones combining search, video, and social.

Statistics show that people prefer video content. 51% of marketers say that video content has the biggest ROI, while 59% of consumers say that if they have to choose between text and video on the same topic, they’ll choose video.

**Emphasis on the content**

When it comes to creating content, Blue Novius states that pharma marketers need to be aware of regulations. The HAI guide states that in the European Union there are three regulatory arms:

- The EU legislative framework;
- Individual national laws incorporating EU provisions;
- Voluntary codes of conduct (self-regulation).

Because of that, content produced by pharma marketers has to be in compliance with the regulations. On top of that, products that pharma marketers are promoting directly impact people’s health and it’s essential that the content is verified, based on facts, clearly explained and precise.

Read more on pharmaceutical marketing regulations in the third chapter (Navigating the challenges of pharmaceutical marketing).
In the 2019 MMM website asked pharma marketers what technology, media or innovation has had the most significant impact on healthcare marketing.

Their main takeaways were:

- AI-enabled voice search,
- Integration of telemedicine, digital behavioral change, and direct-to-consumer prescription delivery
- Robust digital/social marketing via marketing automation systems like Marketo, HubSpot, Pardot, etc.
- Strong data strategy

In the coming chapters, we’ll cover content and going digital in more detail.
Many pharma marketers would argue that in the past their CEOs were not paying enough attention nor realizing the importance of marketing in the pharmaceutical industry.

Others say that marketers are at fault because they’ve looked at their products as commodities rather than highly differentiated brands.

The fact is that marketing has a huge impact on the success of pharmaceutical products if done right.

Eye for Pharma gave a great example of that:

“A certain brand had great clinical data on efficacy, a minimal side effect profile and strong safety but was just failing to thrive. Two years post-launch and it still had a single-digit market share and was not growing. When looking at the data, it didn’t look like a particularly effective drug, so the thinking was that it would have to be positioned for mild cases of the condition. However, when analyzing the data further, it was found to be a highly effective drug and the marketing team had neglected to even discuss efficacy as a message as they felt the fact it was launched and approved meant it was highly effective. They had decided to focus on what I would consider secondary messages - such as ‘lack of weight gain’ - and completely neglected efficacy, which was the number one driver message. By changing their messaging to analytics-identified driver messages, they were able to double their market share in 6 months with the same budget, something they had not been able to achieve in the preceding years.”

This shows that producing new products and placing them on the market is simply not
The importance of pharma marketing

enough. The saturation of products in the pharma industry is high and differentiating your products is a must.

Here’s a product that ticks all the boxes, but no one is buying it.

Why?

They’re not properly informed, and because of that they’re reaching for some other, familiar, and possibly tried the product. That other product may have worse stats than the one we’re talking about, but we can’t blame the consumers for not knowing that.

Nowadays, people have myriad ways of getting the information they need. That’s why it’s important for you to provide them with relevant and factual ones.

It’s important for you to be in control of the information circulating about your products. Otherwise, someone else might. Read more about creating productive marketing strategies in the following chapters.

In order to inform your customers, you also need to know what they want and need. Thorough research should be a priority for all pharma marketers. The research will provide you with valuable data that will help you build your messaging.
The ever-growing nature of the pharmaceutical industry is undeniable. Research by The Business Research Company reports the global pharmaceuticals market was worth $934.8 billion in 2017, while the forecasts suggest it will reach an incredible $1,170 billion by 2021.

And while the numbers do speak for themselves, those within the pharmaceutical field are certainly aware of how fluctuating and fragmented this industry can sometimes be.

Even the single largest pharmaceutical market globally, that of the United States, is expected to experience stagnation. According to the QuintilesIMS report, the United States market will witness a growth of just 9% in 2021, compared to 12% in 2015.

It is pharmaceutical marketing that plays a huge role in the growth process. All the newest technology trends are driving a shift towards patient-centric healthcare, and it's up to pharma marketers to recognize the number of opportunities and innovate their marketing while still abiding policy reforms and managing data.

In this section of our ebook, we’ll cover four of the most notable challenges pharmaceutical marketing faces nowadays:

1. Regulations
2. Data collection
3. Adapting to a patient-centric environment
4. Digital transformation

Let’s start!
REGULATIONS

Pharmaceutical products have traditionally been much more challenging for marketers than food and beverage or clothing items, for instance. It is also an industry that has been fairly conservative when it comes to the level of creativity allowed in various marketing campaigns and promotional efforts.

The reason for that? Regulations. If you’re working in the pharma, this won’t be surprising. Be it patient privacy protection, data management or legal legislation, the pharmaceutical industry is and always will be faced with the challenge of various regulations.

Policy reforms and new regulations happen often, and there’s basically nothing that pharmaceutical companies and organizations can do other than comply.

Policy-based challenges are not something B2B nor B2C marketers are immune to. Not only do they have an impact on sales, but they also affect how businesses market their products. Often times, marketing efforts, initiatives, and messages will require altering.

And although the pharmaceutical industry sometimes can’t keep up with these changes, regulatory organizations do track everything. This means companies and individuals may be faced with sanctions for their marketing efforts, whether the errors within them are intentional or not.

These regulations vary from country to country. In the United States, for example, companies must follow the standard FTC guidelines for influencer marketing ads, as well as abide by FDA rules and the fair balance principle, which obliges companies and individuals to list the side effects and most important risks in the main part of the drug ad, along with its benefits.
In an example from 2015, the FDA actually issued a letter due to the lack of complete risk information in the main part of Kim Kardashian’s Instagram endorsement for Diclegis, a morning sickness alleviating drug. After also receiving a lot of public backlash for not being fully transparent, the social media star changed the caption of her post and added the missing information.

It’s challenging to make something like the aforementioned Instagram caption appealing when one needs to write down major drug use risks along, which are in itself a reason to think twice about the use of certain drugs, and not even the fact that Kim K told you about them can help.

Situations like these prompted the pharmaceutical industry to shy away from high-scale influencer marketing on a regular basis, unlike many other industries that thrive on influencer marketing.

**DATA COLLECTION**

Another major challenge is the one regarding data handling, interpretation, and consent. Certain digital technologies are omitted due to strict patient privacy protections that limit the options of targeting individuals.

Regulations like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) make the lives of marketers in any industry a bit more complicated. Now, translate that into the pharmaceutical marketing that depends on consumer information and feedback and the situation gets even more tricky.

On that note, a report by Econsultancy suggests the majority of healthcare organizations are not even prepared to deal with emerging data sources or to collect high volumes of data.
The importance of pharma marketing

Developing patient insight from emerging data sources (i.e. wearables, etc.) and integrating into marketing programs

- 23% agree
- 43% disagree
- 30% neutral
- 5% not applicable

Collecting/managing very high volumes of data quickly

- 17% agree
- 36% disagree
- 40% neutral
- 8% not applicable

Developing patient insight from existing data sources (CRM, medical databases, etc.) and integrating into marketing programs

- 12% agree
- 32% disagree
- 50% neutral
- 6% not applicable

Collecting/managing very high volumes of data securely

- 10% agree
- 22% disagree
- 50% neutral
- 18% not applicable

Developing policies in line with privacy regulation for gathering, permissioning and using it correctly

- 9% agree
- 28% disagree
- 47% neutral
- 17% not applicable

Source: Econsultancy

According to this research, 66% of respondents are not prepared for developing patient insights from emerging data sources and integrating them into marketing programs, while the speed of data collection presents an issue for 53%.

Developing policies in line with privacy regulation for gathering, permissioning and using it correctly is something one-third of respondents are (very) unprepared for. Given the severity and responsibility of handling such delicate information collected from the consumers, this is an alarming situation, especially since more and more people are becoming much more aware of the third-party usage of their information online.

The pharmaceutical industry is yet to recognize the enormous potential new technologies such as wearables have. Wearables are smart electronic devices (most popularly smartwatches) that can be incorporated into clothing or worn as accessories and used to track physical activity, sleep patterns and heart-rate. They provide valuable data about patients’ behavior and habits, while some go as far as recognizing potentially dangerous heart conditions.
It is estimated that almost half of adult wearable users regularly wear a smartwatch and that number will only increase. In fact, a report by eMarketer suggests that a quarter of the US population will use a wearable at least once a month by 2022. That is a whopping number of 67 million people providing their lifestyle and health data.

Other than wearables, new technologies also include the likes of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software. CRMs provide data suitable for integration in marketing campaigns, yet 44% of the aforementioned respondents are still not prepared to use the CRM data for patient insight.

ADAPTING TO PATIENT-CENTRIC ENVIRONMENT

Speaking of technological advancements and trends, there is one that should interest pharmaceutical marketers in particular - the shift to a patient-centric environment.

Pharmaceutical companies should always tend to find new ways to better resonate with their audience, educate their patients and build confidence in their products more effectively. To do so, they need to know where and how their patients prefer to receive that information.

For a long time, patients relied solely on healthcare practitioners for information, but the fact is that patients are nowadays not so dependent on doctors and pharmacists and often seek health-related guidance online.

A study by Pew Research suggests 90% of people aged 18-24 trust medical information on social media. Furthermore, a whopping third of the adult US population goes online to ‘figure out’ a medical condition.

As a result, patients are more likely to take an active role in any treatment plan their
doctor may prescribe. That is the exact reason why direct consumers might become pharmaceutical companies’ most strategic partners and shift the focus from partnerships with the medical community.

Patients are also active in an increasing number of digital channels and becoming more and more in control of their digital experiences, making targeting and personalization a more complex but potentially rewarding task for marketers.

According to research, 59% of U.S. online shoppers expect their healthcare customer service to be as good as Amazon. This is why the main basis on which pharmaceutical marketers compete nowadays is providing the ultimate customer experience (CX).

Not only are customers more informed than ever, but they also seek new value-benefits; new drugs and therapies that are better than anything on the market. The pharmaceutical industry will have to foster a relationship with the public and develop a patients-first approach, as they play an ever-increasing role in the success of pharmaceutical products.

**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

Every aspect of marketing is impacted by technology, and pharmaceutical marketing is no exception. Although new technologies are challenging in the sense that they come and go so fast, there are some that have the potential to revolutionize the pharma marketing sector.

**Big data** and **artificial intelligence** have completely changed the digital landscape, while the use of new and emerging technologies constantly provides competitive advantage and aid in **branding** and **differentiation**.
One of the key aspects the digital revolution has brought to the business world is **advanced data analytics**, which enables pharmaceutical companies to gain valuable insights and implement them into various stages of R&D, as well as marketing and sales.

However, the complexity of analyzing such vast amounts of data can be demanding - hence the reason why some pharmaceutical companies turn to **machine learning** to handle the task. Machine learning, a part of artificial intelligence, is focused on analyzing data using computer systems, recognizing patterns, and learning from that data. In conjunction with large amounts of information, this results in what is often referred to as **big data**.

Another major buzzword is **IoT** - the Internet of Things. It enables data to be processed not only in the **cloud** but also in small gadgets such as the aforementioned **wearables** themselves in real-time. Being able to adapt to that information as they appear would be a huge step forward for the entire industry, and all the **predictions** suggest that **IoT will be key** in the imminent future.

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**IoT Application Across Pharma Value Chain, source: Wipro**

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<tr>
<th>DRUG DISCOVERY &amp; DEVELOPMENT</th>
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<td>- Use of Auto-ID with AIDC (automated information data collection) for smart serialisation</td>
<td>- Drug interaction checker - Interactive ecosystem with HCPs using database encompassing NFC and allergy detection to preemptively discover adverse drug reactions</td>
<td>- Wearable devices</td>
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<td>- Wearable devices for subjects with sensors for real-time health reporting</td>
<td>- Real-time logistics visibility using RFID &amp; sensors to capture and report parameters including temperature</td>
<td>- Smart warehousing and routing</td>
<td>- Chip in a Pill</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Use of sensors and devices to monitor clinical sites, subjects screening and real-time reporting</td>
<td>- Predictive maintenance of machines &amp; equipment</td>
<td>- Predictive maintenance of machines &amp; equipment</td>
<td>- Smart pill with dose variabllization</td>
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Drug usage tracking and medication compliance
If more pharma companies used these technologies, they would be able to gather and analyze patient data more effectively. Thus, pharma could design **personalized treatments** and furthermore cater to the needs of their patients while also increasing the drug effectiveness and the likelihood of its use.

As for pharmaceutical marketing, knowing the exact needs of a certain target group could be of tremendous value in all stages of marketing a product.

Pharma marketers now face a challenging decision of whether to invest time and money into researching new technologies and then wisely choosing those that would return the investment and give an edge over the competition in the traditionally slow-paced pharmaceutical industry.

With so many options available, it may be difficult to determine where to even begin. In the last chapter of this ebook, we’ll cover **the most successful pharma marketing strategies** you can implement right now to improve your marketing efforts.
Given the constant development and innovation in the pharmaceutical industry, a marketing job in such a field makes for an exciting career choice.

Not every marketer out there will brave the challenges of the ever-changing pharmaceutical landscape, but those that do thrive in an abundance of areas for growth and professional development.

In this section of our ebook, we’ll dive deeper into the required qualifications, knowledge, and skills to see what differentiates pharmaceutical marketers from others in the marketing field.

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

Tasks of a pharmaceutical marketer can vary, depending on the position and role, as well as the organization of employment itself. Most often, the main activities a pharma marketer will conduct are:

- Product and service promotion,
- Creating and implementing marketing plans with an aim to achieve the company’s goals and to respond to customers’ needs according to legal and ethical principles,
- Working with cross-functioning teams and external partners such as vendors,
- Identifying and analyzing competition and new target markets,
- Providing support to sales programs and customer relations,
Participating in the organization of events, trade-show activities, presentations, and other marketing-related events,
Maintaining professional cooperation with pharmacists, doctors, and key opinion leaders,
Educating, communicating, and informing prospects and clients.

KNOWLEDGE
Pharmaceutical marketing is a very interdisciplinary job. One should:
- Be very well acquainted with many aspects of health science,
- Possess an understanding of the pharmaceutical industry and knowledge about the development, production, and quality control of pharmaceutical products,
- Be an innovative multi-channel marketer and create demand in order to achieve sales,
- Have basic business knowledge regarding the development of business strategies, budgeting, strategic planning, and resource allocation.

SKILLS
Skills-wise, a pharmaceutical marketer should have:
- Strong interpersonal and organizational skills,
- Strong communication skills (presentation, verbal, and written abilities),
Ability to work with and manage cross-functional teams,
Ability to manage multiple projects and priorities,
A detail-oriented and analytical mindset with critical thinking skills,
Willing to constantly learn and grow professionally.

Qualifications and experience

A bachelor’s degree or an MBA is traditionally required, while the field of study can vary. Most often, pharmaceutical companies look for a university degree in Pharmacy, Medical Science or Veterinary Medicine.

Experience is another aspect that is predominantly a must. The majority of companies expect a person to have experience in marketing methods and techniques, as well as a hands-on experience within the industry.
PHARMA MARKETING STRATEGY

Pharma marketing is steadily making its transition from one-channel, traditional marketing practices to multi-channel approach. The change was required due to the rise of digital and changing consumer expectations. Nowadays, consumers are accessing information in a multitude of ways, using different online platforms. Gone are the days of TV and print ads being the only source of information and advertising opportunity.

In fact, the shift to digital has notably been predicted to rise by 14.1% this year, while TV will grow by a mere 0.8%.

Forever burdened by the many regulations and restrictions (however rightfully in place), pharma marketers are always facing obstacles when wanting to market their products.

However, digital has broadened the horizons of pharma marketing and made way for new marketing opportunities.

To gain competitive advantage, pharma marketers are embracing the digital transformation and making use of all the newest channels - including social media, apps, and video.

In this chapter, we offer a look into nine new channel tactics you can employ in your pharma marketing strategy.
The importance of pharma marketing

Click on the subsection to skip right to it.

#1 Messaging apps & chatbots

#2 Influencer marketing

#3 Video marketing

#4 Social media presence

#5 Content marketing

#6 Unbranded content

#7 Voice search

#8 Virtual reality

#9 Media monitoring & social listening

Pharma marketing useful tools
1 MESSAGING APPS & CHATBOTS

These two are on the rise and a convenient way of bringing AI into pharma marketing. Especially with today’s NLP-based chatbots that have an ability to learn from interactions, growing more accurate over time. What exactly is in it for pharma marketers, though?

Let’s start with a couple of statistics. One survey has shown that more than 85% of patients were confident in their ability to take responsibility for their health. Meaning they are learning to be less dependable on actual doctors. Another survey has shown that 37% of Americans would use a chatbot in an emergency.

Many big pharma names are getting in on the apps & bots game - from Pfizer to Teva. It’s a way for pharma companies to spark up conversations with their (potential) customers, engage with them and gather valuable information first-hand.

It also plays a significant role in automated marketing activities, as chatbots can be there 24/7 for patients’ questions and inquiries. Whether it’s about dosages, instructions, usage, advice - they can provide medical information for patients and automate repetitive processes.

Here are a few examples:

#1 Johnson & Johnson: Andy

Andy is an AI-powered virtual assistant for contact lenses that connects to the Facebook Messenger app. It takes a consumer through a customer journey of Johnson & Johnson ACUVUE contact lenses. It is made for those considering wearing contacts for the first time, as well as those who already wear them. It also serves as a place where they can get advice and form healthy contact-wearing habits.
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#2 Amag Pharmaceuticals: sexual health chatbot

Amag has developed a chatbot that allows women to inquire about sexual health and, more precisely, pain experienced during intercourse. This way they’ve created a safe space for women to anonymously get more information as well as learn more about Intrarosa (Amag’s medicine for treating the aforementioned pain).

Amag chatbot, source: PM360
#3 Teva: Maxbot

This chatbot won two Pharmaceutical Marketing Society awards in 2018. It connects to the Facebook Messenger app and serves as a digital brand ambassador for Teva’s inhaler through which patients can discuss its usage and benefits.

Teva Maxbot, source: Teva UK

2 INFLUENCER MARKETING

According to one research, 90% of young people trust the information they see on social media. Additionally, a third of the US adults opt to go online to research a medical condition.

The foundation for beneficial influencer marketing practice in pharma is there. However, pharma marketers were still a little wary to make that transition. The reluctance was mainly a result of the FDA regulations which mandate that pharma ads list possible risks and side effects of the product, as well as at least one approved use. Additionally, pharma influencers need to emphasize the connection between them and the brand (which is usually done by using the hashtag #ad and variations thereof). If those conditions are not met, both the pharma company and the influencer can find themselves in trouble (remember Kim Kardashian’s post for Diclegis).
Therefore, pharma marketers have to be more careful about who they’re working with and make sure it is someone who’s authentic and transparent in their approach. That’s why, when they opt for using influencers, pharma marketers tend to lean towards niche influencers. People with a smaller following and reach, but with a bigger impact and engagement rate. Those are mostly doctors or nutritionists, fitness experts - people that are actually relevant to an advertised subject and respected in their areas.

Influencer marketing is especially successful if a person sponsoring a pharma initiative or treatment is personally involved in the issue or has experienced it. People are more trusting towards influencers who they feel have a valid reason to sponsor a certain product and can easily empathize with. It’s all about storytelling and creating an emotional connection with the audience.

Here are a couple of examples of successful influencer-pharma marketer relationships:

**#1 Amcal Pharmacy & Jack Perkins**
Amcal Pharmacy collaborated with a race car driver Jack Perkins who suffers from diabetes. He documented his personal journey with the disease and how Amcal pharmacy helped him manage it and get the medication he needs - all without promoting a specific product. Rather, the sponsored post was meant to raise diabetes awareness.

Amcal & Jack Perkins collaboration, source: Jack Perkins’ Instagram post
#2 Novartis & Queen Latifah

Novartis, who produce a drug to treat heart failure, teamed up with Queen Latifah during World Heart Day to discuss and raise awareness of the illness. Inspired by her mother’s own heart failure experience, Queen Latifah has been passionate about bringing this subject to life in a Facebook Live panel discussion. For Novartis, following a poorly received campaign for their medicine Entresto, this was a more empathetic and heartfelt approach to awareness campaigning. This way, they’ve wanted to reach a wider audience in real-time and encourage live engagement.

Check out the promo video starring Queen Latifah and her mother [here](#).

Both collaborations exhibit emotional connectedness to the cause and storytelling aspects. Both Jack Perkins and Queen Latifah have been personally affected by sponsored illnesses and that made them convincing, credible ambassadors with whom people can empathize. That is what you need to strive for in pharma influencer marketing. Don’t be hasty in choosing the influencer with the biggest following. Rather, make sure the influencer is relevant to your product, initiative, and brand.

3 VIDEO MARKETING

As we’ve already mentioned in the introduction, 51% of marketers say that video has the highest ROI of all content formats. Not only that, but viewers retain 95% of the message when watching a video.

These are compelling data that highlights the importance of video as a marketing format. Whether it’s through social media, website, email or other channels - videos are an advantageous tool in raising engagement, capturing attention and delivering easily digestible information. Not only does this ring true for patients, but also physicians. In fact, physicians themselves spend around three hours a week watching videos, and they prefer videos to reading medical publications or listening to rehashed data from a
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sales rep. Additionally, 49% of physicians who watch online videos state that it influences their clinical decision.

Patients, too, want to take in as much information as possible in a short time. They want that information to be easy to retain and understand, as well as entertaining.

**Explainer videos** are a popular way of accomplishing this. They are short and concise, meant to simplify a complex subject. With explainer videos, you can introduce a problem (an illness) and offer a solution for a viewer (e.g. your product/service).

Here are a few examples of successful use of video in pharma marketing:

**#1 Hims on baldness and ED**
Hims managed to approach two difficult situations in innovative, unapologetic ways. Their audience is men, which is a market segment often reluctant to engage when it comes to sensitive health issues. Combine that with conditions like erectile dysfunction and receding hairlines - and sensitivity becomes more pronounced. However, Hims used video as a medium to capture these conditions in an approachable, even humorous way, while still staying informative about their product and service.

Hims video screenshot, check out the whole video [here](#)
#2 Xiidra: It’s a thing

Xiidra is a great example of using entertaining, relatable videos on social media. Through short, animated video series, they identify common nuisances people with dry eyes face and offer their product as a solution.

Xiidra Twitter video screenshot, check out the whole video [here](#).

4 SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

State of pharma industry social media presence: 2019

The Worldcom Public Relations Group released a [2019 report](#) in which they’ve analyzed **how 25 global pharma companies manage their online presence**. They’ve found that pharma companies are not using social media to its full potential. Their **key recommendations** included:

- Identifying social media platforms most in use by their audiences
- Having a social media presence on both global and local level
- Using competitors’ social media strategy as a point of reference
- Creating a careers channel for employer branding
- Using media monitoring/social listening to discover opportunities for engagement (topics relevant to their industry and products/services)
Additionally, media monitoring can be used as a way of identifying and keeping an eye on competitors.

Furthermore, the research has identified Twitter as the most popular platform among pharma companies, followed closely by Facebook. However, Instagram and Youtube, otherwise among the largest social media platforms, are found to be heavily underrepresented among pharma companies. Even amidst the importance of employing a holistic, omnichannel approach to social media strategy.

Among the 25 analyzed companies, Bayer was found the best-performing company, followed by Pfizer, Boehringer Ingelheim, Novartis and Sanofi as the top five companies.

This report has proven that there’s still a need for improvement when it comes to the social media presence of pharma companies. These companies should recognize social media as a way of building their brand identity by educating and engaging content across social media platforms.

The importance of social media
No one can dispute the relevance of social media nowadays. It’s a way for brands to directly interact with their customers and drive engagement. It’s no different for the pharmaceutical industry. What might be different, though, is striking a balance between addressing patients and physicians. Both are present on social media and neither audience should be neglected.

That said, social media is a way for you to build relationships with your audience. A way to humanize your brand and connect with the audience through the content you publish. Make sure it’s content they find relevant, though. Once again, it’s important to find balance - a balance between being informative and entertaining. Pharma is restricted by different regulations, but there’s a way you can abide by those regulations and still present information in an engaging way.
For your starting point in social media strategy, check out our blog 7 social media hacks: a cheat sheet for pharma marketers.

5 CONTENT MARKETING

Content marketing is a way for pharma companies to build lasting, loyalty-based relationships with their audience. Content provides additional value to patients and physicians, that extra-mile brands go beyond the very product and/or service.

By providing this value-driven content, identifying and answering consumers’ common pain points in an educated, informative and transparent manner, you work towards gaining their trust and loyalty.

The best way to do so is through content like blogs, guides, ebooks, webinars or even infographics and videos. Use these content types to relay important product information, usage and dosage directions, as well as side effects. Use it even beyond the information related specifically to your product, service or treatment. Address common problems your consumers face, offer advice and tips for identifying or treating their ailments, emphasize the importance of reaching out to physicians - anything that can provide additional value.

Similarly, address the physicians with content they might find useful. In this case, the content should be focused more on the products and services you offer, so they have as much information as possible to make educated decisions.

The content side of pharma marketing is important because people have become more independent in their approach to health-related topics. They themselves often look up information on the internet (via search engines), but also on social media.

You want to ensure you become a trustworthy and credible source of information, one to which they reach out.
If patients and physicians recognize your brand as one going above and beyond in making sure their audience is educated and informed, you pave the way for building a loyal customer base.

**Johnson & Jonhson: an example of a good content marketing strategy in pharma**

Back in 2014, a healthcare brand Johnson & Johnson ran a campaign “Care Inspires Care” in which content played a big role. Their goal was to prove the world is still a caring place, through acts, big or small, performed by people around the world. Through value-driven content like blogs, social media posts, and visuals, they aimed to emphasize the importance of caring for one another. By encouraging people to share their caring acts on social media, and supporting that UGC with their own content, they’ve managed to prompt 26 million acts of care.

Even beyond that, Johnson & Jonhson has a blog on its website titled *Our stories*, which includes everything from the latest news in the healthcare industry to personal stories depicting real-life experiences from researchers, physicians, and people affected directly or indirectly by an illness.

**6 UNBRANDED CONTENT**

Unbranded content is growing in popularity in the pharma industry. It refers to unbranded apps and websites that offer information and educate people on certain conditions, initiatives and similar topics, without mentioning any specific brand or its products. The brand’s logo and minimal information usually only appears in the website page footer or in the *About* section if a website has it.

This way, companies can show their audience they care about more than selling their products. They can show they emphasize with their consumers and care about them enough to provide valuable content without asking for anything in return.

Here are a couple of examples of unbranded content:
The importance of pharma marketing

#1 Alkermes’ United for Schizophrenia website

This website’s target audience are HCPs (healthcare proxies), i.e. people who have the authority to make healthcare decisions on the behalf of another person. In this case, those are people whose close ones suffer from schizophrenia. Alkermes wanted to create a platform where those people can share their own stories, as well as read others’ stories. The initiative was meant to create a community and tell real stories from real people that made a difference in the lives of people living with schizophrenia. The way to know it’s an Alkermes’ initiative is by their logo in the page footer and by the information offered in their About section of the page.

![Alkermes' United for Schizophrenia home page](image)

#2 GlaxoSmithKline’s asthma.com website

Similarly, GSK created a website for people suffering from asthma where they can get information on the condition, as well as resources on how to manage it. The website has sections devoted to parents, FAQs, even a downloadable Doctor Discussion guide. The only way to know it’s GSK sponsored is by its logo at the page footer where it says that the website is funded and developed by GSK.
7 VOICE SEARCH

Voice search is gaining in popularity. In fact, more than 57 million Americans use voice assistants such as Apple’s Siri or Amazon’s Alexa, and 47% of smart speaker owners use them for online search.

In the context of the pharma industry, this would mean that these people can use voice search to get information on the nearest pharmacy (or medical specialists or hospital...) or information on symptoms of certain conditions.

What are the implications of this for pharma marketers? It mostly alludes to a need for adjusting their website SEO to reflect the rise in the voice search. This would mean editing the content so its keywords represent the more conversationalist tone of speakers. It’s the same as matching keywords to search engine queries. Now you’d just have to take into account the way and manner in which people voice search. That would improve pharma marketers’ chances of ranking first on voice search.

8 VIRTUAL REALITY

The draw of VR in marketing lays in its immersion ability. It allows a person to be completely absorbed in virtual, make-believe reality which is why marketers often use it to elicit empathy through storytelling.

In pharma, VR technology can do such things as take a person on a ride through a body’s bloodstream or experience what it like to live with the symptoms of a certain condition.

Many big names in the pharma industry, like Pfizer, Novartis or Amgen, are using VR nowadays for purposes ranging from research to marketing purposes.

For instance, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) used VR tech to create its campaign The Migraine Experience for Excedrin - their migraine treatment. Using a VR headset,
people suffering from migraines were able to program their symptoms (such as sensitivity to light and blind spots) and then hand the headset to their loved ones. That way their loved ones could experience what it’s really like to suffer from migraines. Additionally, they could experience how medicine could relieve their pain.

GSK, on the other hand, saw an increase in engagement and positive perceptions (there was a 300% increase in mentions of Excedrin, and the video of people trying it out was ranked #6 on AdAge’s viral video chart). Not only that but GSK also saw an increase in profits (Excedrin sales rose by 22% in just the two weeks after the campaign was released).

9 MEDIA MONITORING & SOCIAL LISTENING

Media monitoring was already briefly mentioned when we talked about social media presence in the context of competitors and discovering new opportunities. However, aside from that, media monitoring benefits pharma companies in battling misinformation, aiding pharmacovigilance, detecting crises, and discovering new channels.

**Battling misinformation.** From people’s general distrust in the pharmaceutical industry to a wealth of untrue information about ingredients, side effects or other medicine-related topics - handling misinformation is of big importance in pharma. By tracking your product and product-related keywords (some common side effects, for instance), you can keep track of what people and the media have to say on the subject. However, in this instance, it's important to know what to focus on. Recognizing emerging patterns, like topics that keep repeating, helps identify worthwhile issues. Another way to do so is by analyzing the sentiment and focusing on negative mentions. For a more detailed look into misinformation and fake news in pharma, check out our blog Fake news and pharmaceuticals - how to prevent a disaster.

**Aiding pharmacovigilance.** Media monitoring can help in discovering risks associated with treatments or drugs. Consequently, it helps minimize that risk by addressing the
issue. As pharmacovigilance relates to monitoring and prevention of adverse drug effects, the best practice is to track common drugs, side effects or medical conditions. This way, pharma brands can get insight into online conversations (e.g. on social media) and address questions and, again, possible misinformation. Pharma companies may even discover some new side effects they weren’t aware of previously. For instance, popular, often funny, social media content are videos depicting people under the anesthesia. It can be a way for pharma companies to keep track of anesthesia side effects and make sure there are no undesired, harmful results. Another example is addressing questions people have about a specific drug. For example, if a woman wants to know if she can take aspirin when pregnant, implication being if there are any negative side effects. Aside from getting insight into how patients think and discovering new information, you can adopt a proactive approach by responding to those kinds of questions. Consequently building a relationship with your audience.

**Detecting crises.** This continues well onto the previous two matters. By continuously tracking and analyzing online conversations revolving around your company and brands, you can more easily detect a rising crisis. Especially beneficial is the alerts feature media monitoring tools have. Spike alerts, for instance, inform you when there’s a spike in your mentions, i.e. when a query you’re tracking is mentioned more often than usual.

**Discovering channels.** Once you start tracking your queries, you’ll start getting mentions from different sources. Media monitoring tools can filter mentions by sources and you can see which sources are the most popular by the number of mentions. It’s a great way to find out what channels are predominantly your target audience’s choice.

**For inspiration and best pharma marketing practices, check out our blog 10 campaigns that reinvent pharma marketing.**
PHARMA MARKETING USEFUL TOOLS

Marketing tools have proven to be a worthy asset in helping brands stay on the top of their game. From securing a better workflow to automated processes, tools are unavoidable if you want to have an effective marketing strategy.

However, you need to be restrained when choosing marketing tools. New tools are forever emerging, and it’s important to not immediately go after the newest trends. In fact, when choosing tools you have to make sure those tools are within your budget and supporting your marketing goals. There’s no need for excess tools.

Marketing tools are supposed to support your marketing strategy tactics, and so choose them accordingly.

Below, we’ve compiled a list of six useful tools for pharma marketers:

Salesforce

Salesforce is a CRM software for creating seamless customer experiences through integrated marketing tools. It has everything from email and social studio to audience and data studio. Created especially for pharma marketers, it helps create all kinds of content - emails, e-detailers, websites, etc. - in a multichannel way.

eWizard

eWizard is a multi-channel content management tool, especially useful for its localization feature. This feature allows for medical content reuse and repurposing by taking into account cultural differences. It’s a worthwhile investment as it helps brands connect to new markets.
CoreValue also provides a CRM solution specially created for pharma. On its page, CoreValue defines these as benefits of their CRM for pharma marketers: measuring customer views on existing drugs and modifying your sales and marketing mix accordingly, predicting market demand for your medicines, organizing target prospect groups and their spheres of influence, as well as physicians, key opinion leaders (KOLs) and medical institutions...

SEMRush is an SEO (search engine optimization) tool for managing SEO processes of your marketing campaigns. It encompasses solutions from content & PR to social media and paid traffic. Keep in mind, though, that the best use of SEMRush is not to measure your own website’s traffic statistics. Rather, use Google Analytics for your own website. On the other hand, this tool is great for competitor analysis as it allows you to keep track of your competitors’ website effectiveness so you can compare it to your own and make improvements (if necessary).

Mediatoolkit is a media monitoring tool for tracking online mentions of your brand, competitors, key people or other relevant topics in real-time. By monitoring the internet (websites, social media…), Mediatoolkit makes it possible to identify engaging posts, analyze brand sentiment, benchmark your brand against the competitors, and get virality alerts (it’s great for detecting and dealing with media crises).
HubSpot is a great marketing automation tool. And marketing automation is preferable as it automates routine, repetitive tasks and frees up time. HubSpot is an all-in-one digital solution that makes it easy to maintain customer engagement and build long-term relationships through relevant and useful content. It helps you grow your traffic, convert more visitors, and run inbound marketing campaigns.
Start bettering your marketing efforts today with Mediatoolkit!

To reiterate, here’s a few possible ways you can use media monitoring to improve your pharma marketing strategy:

- Manage brand reputation (by tracking brand name and key people)
- Identify and track competitors (and their online strategy)
- Battle misinformation
- Develop brand reputation

Pharmacovigilance

Detect and manage crises

Discover online channels