

Digital Marketing: A Road Ahead To Pharmaceutical Selling

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Abstract: *Pharmaceutical companies are running hard to keep pace with changes brought about by digital technology. Mobile communications, the cloud, advanced analytics, and the Internet of things are among the innovations that are starting to transform the healthcare industry. A digital wave is sweeping across the \$17 billion Indian pharmaceutical industry and companies are dumping old ways of marketing for newer technology, Doctors as well as patients are steadily moving to online media for satisfying information needs. Applications with web platform, Medical portal, E – Detailing, eCMEs (electronic continuing medical education) / Webinars Hybrid, Search engine optimization brings pharma at a heart of digital revolution, with the opportunity to play in expanded marketing role. Traditional detailing task are more simplified with technology using newer algorithms and expositions for better insights into issues like patient compliance. Companies are trying to hone their digital skills because a large portion of their customers will operate in that space. Almost all the top names in the pharmaceutical world have, setting up digital platform for ease to patient, doctors and practitioners to capture the opportunity, Companies establish trust with the doctors as well as patients since much is required in terms of recreating industry perception*

Keywords: *Healthcare, detailing, internet, pharmaceuticals, digital, customer, market strategy*

I. Introduction

Digital marketing is the marketing of products or services with the help of technology. Digital Marketing, also termed as e-marketing, web-marketing, online marketing or internet marketing. It also includes the management of digital customer data and electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) systems. Pharmaceutical digital marketing can be implemented across verticals i.e. doctors, hospitals, patients & sales team and health care professionals. The pharma industry's marketing spends through digital platforms is estimated to shoot up nearly 50% in the next two years to touch Rs 220 crore. Mobile apps and social media are set to play a bigger role in this growth. This will help India catch up with tech-savvy emerging markets peers like China, where nearly half the companies are expected to allocate more than a fifth of their marketing budget to digital marketing by 2018. Pharma companies in India have already begun switching to new technology. This digitisation is also helping companies to gear up for the introduction of the proposed uniform code of pharmaceutical marketing practices, while technology is sharpening patient interface in healthcare field.

Companies initiative

Most of companies are entering into digital marketing with their new as well as cash cow products, Sun Pharma launched a mobile app called RespiTrack earlier this year for patient awareness on asthma and to ensure their adherence to treatment regimen. Others like Abbott Healthcare see India as a ground for introducing tech innovations that can be replicated worldwide. It introduced several tools like Knowledge Genie, a heart and liver app and another one for vertigo exercises. Some of these build on augmented and virtual reality to engage with both doctors and patients. From an earlier product-specific detailing, the focus has now moved to scientific detailing. This digitization is also helping companies to gear up for the introduction of the proposed uniform code of pharmaceutical marketing practices.

Companies like GlaxoSmithKline's trying to hone their digital skills because a large portion of their customers will operate in that space. At least 20%-30% of GSK's own customers are already in the digital world. GSK has not only leveraged webinars, video chats, information portals and platforms like 'Viva' for doctors, it has also equipped its field force with devices like iPads.

Companies evolution with time

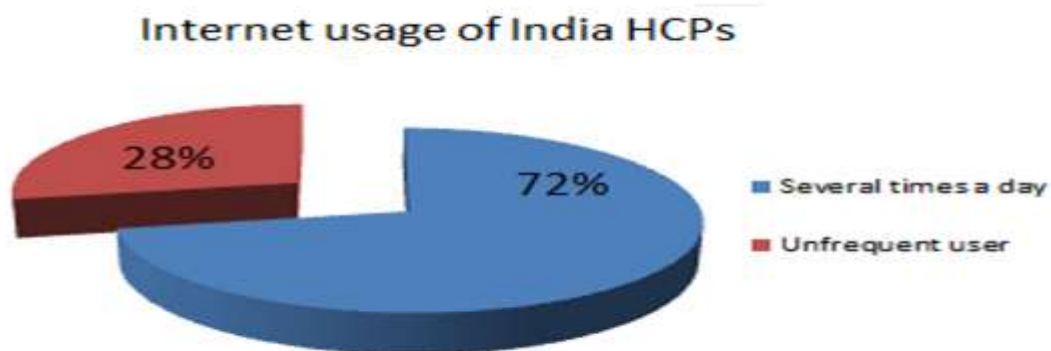
Now is the time to create a digital space with customers and consumers. Create an impactful experience for the medical community. Understand how content plays an undeniably potent role in the digital set-up and leverage it to engage with other stakeholders.

Considering 2% doctors engage with medical reps for less 10 minutes on an average and that patients are hardly aware of pharma brand values and different therapeutic offerings, forging new communication pathways may be the right marketing strategy, opening floodgates to interaction.

It is also very important to embrace the fact that the shift to digital is inevitable and in coming times, it will define how brand is perceived in the market. It is already known and well accepted world-wide that in the scheme of marketing mediums, digital is ruling the roost and trust. In the past decade or so, method of information consumption has changed drastically. Three billion people are online, interacting with each other, forming and influencing opinions every day. And, these are not just the people next door but world leaders, brands-old and new and a whole new world of potential customers and information seekers.

II. Product Detailing

As target audience in pharma marketing are Doctors, Hospitals, Patients, Sales team and Health Care Professionals (HCPs) product detailing is based on providing services, scientific data, business analytics etc. to the specialists in order to promotion of products/services. In patient's: to ensure awareness & adherence to the therapy. In sale's team it is to make their customer calls more interactive & upgrade their skills and motivation. From an earlier product-specific detailing to doctors, the focus has now moved to scientific detailing. e-Detailing and online events (like webinars or webcasts) let doctors update themselves when and where they choose, rather than having to meet with pharma representatives during rush hours in their clinics. e-marketing is carefully controlled and monitored in them.

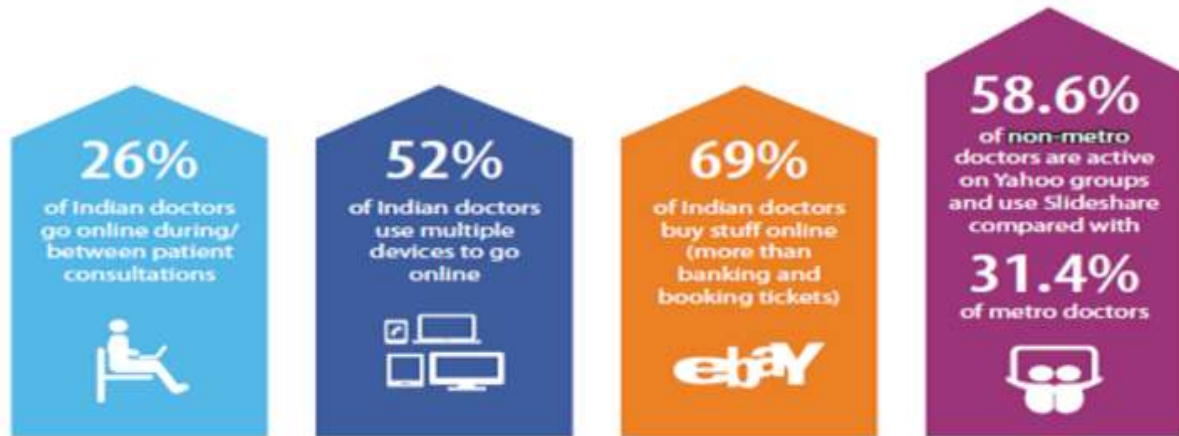


Source: The digital doctor study by VIA media health

There is an on-going revolution in the healthcare sector and it offers a unique proposition of growth to pharma marketers. It has led to a shift where no more is it only about the product but also an observed sharpening of focus on improved diagnostics and personalized care and establishment of trust with every stakeholder- doctors as well as patients. This means role expansion like never seen before and a chance to prove leadership in improving health outcomes. Heavily leaning on the power of online communities and knowledge-sharing portals, digitization of the medical ecosystem is the road ahead.

Accessibility of digital media by targets

In a recent survey by McKinsey, 85% patients admitted to accessing online resources for health-related and medical information. In fact, it constitutes the third largest search online. What this brings to light is that active participation of patients in controlling their own treatments is the new trend. Now healthcare is driven much more by consumers with patients increasingly coming to their doctors with more information, parameters they measured at home, and an informed opinion about how they should be treated. In another study it was found that with time crunch being a universal and constant theme, doctors too are turning to online platforms for information requirements. As per a Kantar Media report, 81% of physicians use smartphones for professional purposes, checking them more than 10 times per day. According to a Mediapost study, 60% of healthcare providers have used online conferences more often than two years ago and more than 30% have watched a presentation from a key opinion leader in the past month and average amount spent by a doctor on a webinar is 57 minutes.



Source: A large-scale study mapping online behavior patterns of Indian healthcare professional VIA media health

Strategic planning by pharma

Connection with patients With more and more patients actively evaluating different health care products and services, from therapies to drug information to pricing, it becomes crucial for companies to prove the value of the product in terms of the last penny spent and that is not all. Building trust is paramount which is at quite a low and that would require giving more than is expected. Engage patients, tell them about what's best for them. Use internal blogs to reach out. Keep it SEO optimised for patients search keywords. Companies have to remember their aim is not selling, aim is educating.

App and web platform Other than this, patients are also highly aware of wearables such as Fitbit and use a panoply of health apps for a range of activities from measuring deep sleep to see if blood pressure is optimal to keeping track of weight. In a study by Nielsen, it was observed that 70% consumers already knew about "wearables," and about one in six (15%) used them on a daily basis. This is especially significant for pharma companies as users login useful data everyday which can be used for drug research and understanding patient behaviour. A good first step would be to acknowledge the competition from tech companies and then prepare to get your own feet wet. An online engagement strategy comprising blogs, social media updates, mobile apps, discussion forums and KOL (key opinion leaders) videos will contribute to a **STRONG, LONG-TERM BOND** between pharma and clinicians. This will also give pharma valuable insights into what doctors need and incorporate this feedback into their product development and marketing efforts, ultimately leading to growth and business success.

Engaging doctors Patients demand a certain level of service quality from their healthcare provider and that is the where doctors expect their pharmaceutical partners to step in to do this connection with them on drug information that doesn't sound hard sell but rather talks about value addition in terms of therapy. Build CMEs (Continuing medical education) and webinars that work for them, upgrade their knowledge base, provide them with the much-needed credits. It is a good idea for companies to focus on creating content that talks something other than drugs, for instance, practice management and solutions that help drive adherence to treatments and outcomes. Strategic part have more focus on Know customer by central digital nervous system of profiling.

Interacting customer engage with closed loop marketing channels

Idea is to provide doctors with assistance other than the latest product. There is an interesting broader conversation to have with pharmacos about moving from a products-and-pills company to a solutions company. There are a number of third party platforms like Docplexus that enable creation of unbiased presence for pharma companies, facilitating dialogue with doctors.

III. e-Marketing Opportunities

Medical Portal for HCPs: Doctor knowledge & networking portals are quickly becoming an easy-touse and cost effective solution to extend your service arm and register their brands.

If implemented properly, this concept benefits both companies and HCPs in a number of ways. Benefit to Companies: It reduces the overhead costs as can serve doctors centrally. Establishes parallel communication channel between the Company & Physician. Minimal effect of Vacant territory as if a Rep leaves the territory, the market learning's are present in the digital nervous system, and this business intelligence can facilitate working of new Medical representative.

Benefit to HCP: They can update and enjoy companies services at their leisure rather than having to meet with a pharma reps during rush hours. Updated information on his desktop everyday; abreast with all medical updates. Saving time on searching for information from the Internet.

Adherence Portal for Patients: More and more patients demand to know and expect up-to-date information on their condition and treatment, as well as alternative treatment options. The access to information via the Internet means that information on a US website can be read by a Indian patient and may include information on their branded medicine. The foundation of sustainable success in the application of e-Marketing for pharmaceutical lies the combination of strategic alliances and technological innovation.

E - Detailing Indian market is still in an early stage of adoption. The e-detailing market in India does have very few companies acting as active players. Although the sales force initially looked at e-detailing with skepticism, wondering if online promotion would render the traditional sales call obsolete, most reps are actually seeing the opposite effect: e-detail actually increases the overall time spent with the rep. Ahead-of-the-curve companies are capitalizing on e-detailing as a lowcost opportunity to increase physician engagement and improve the overall sales call quality.

eCMEs (electronic continuing medical education) / Webinars Hybrid meetings are events that contain both live and virtual components combined. They are also great opportunities and are one of the hottest trends in meeting planning. Live Webcasts using streaming video of the conference would allow event sponsors and hosting organizations to widen their meeting exposure to include those who follow the conference online. This is one of the cost effective method which is established well in Indian Pharmaceutical Industry.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): SEO is unique to the Internet environment: 47% of web users said that the most common way they find products or information is through search engines. The top 10 results to a search query get 78% more traffic than subsequent listings, many firms use SEO to be sure their site is high on the list. SEO strategies change almost daily.

Social Media Marketing Search engines use activity on social media as a medium for marketing. Facebook shares, retweets over twitter and +1s on Google aid your position on the search engine results pages. Social media marketing enables direct connection of the company with its consumers. It improves the brand's values and strengthen reputation of the organisation. The negative experiences in a public forum can be turned around by providing the updates from company website and encourage discussion.

Pay Per Click Ads If the company website isn't having enough traffic, ad smay be purchased on Google. Ads can also be purchased on other websites via the numerous ad networks directly. Pay-per-click is depend on keyword that are used by searcher on Google. Ad analytics software lets the company determine the success rate of PPC campaigns. The company will only pay if anyone has clicked on the link of the add.

Email Newsletters Exact target released their 2012 Channel Preference Survey, which implied that email still remained the number one direct channel preferred by consumers for daily use for both personal and marketing communications. Also, the widespread use of smartphones and tablets allows its consumers to access the emails quickly. Also, the Exact target report showed that 77% of consumers prefer receiving permission-based marketing communications through email, compared to social channels (6%) and text messaging (5%). Email provides consumers the feeling of control and personalization in which they can opt into a relationship and then follow through by providing them with the information only which they wish to receive.

IV. Changing role of key person medical representatives

MRs as Decision Enablers – Pharma needs to change the nature of interactions between MRs and physicians by training MRs to be less as sellers and more as relationship agents. Rather than perfecting a sales pitch, they should focus on being enablers of clinical decisions. Their aim should be to convey detailed product information including its uses, side effects and contraindications in a fair manner. Stress should be placed on two-way communication for driving physician engagement.

Owing to the limit on face-to-face interactions, other touch points need to be established with doctors. MR meetings could be supplemented with prior e-detailing and social media announcements so that doctors are aware and updated with the new products even before meeting the MR, paving the way for a more effective and informed communication between these two.

V. The way forward

The pharmaceutical companies will in future highly adapt to digitalisation and develop extensive connectivity, data analysis and collaboration. Digital shall soon become the backbone of pharmaceutical industry, provided they develop proper marketing strategies and implement them. The patients and healthcare teams would provide the communication platform for brands. The traditional one way relationship in our healthcare system will soon change to two way relationship exclusively with help of digitalization on

this sector. Mobile marketing, social media and other forms of digital marketing will lead to creation of valuable channels enabling patients to exchange information.

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