

# Promotional Strategies of Pharmaceutical Organizations through Online and Social Media

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## Abstract

The paper assesses various strategies that are utilized by Pharmaceutical companies in promoting their brand and products through the social media platform. Social media proliferation has considerably changed marketing strategies as compared to the one-way traditional methodologies. With consumers relying more on videos, blogs, forums, and social networking websites to obtain the latest molecule and medicine brand information, the companies have started to think more towards a transparent and effective way for efficient consumer engagement. The familiarity of people with social media, the dissemination of information rapidly using social media along with the pocket-friendly factor make social media platforms ideal for Pharmaceutical organizations, and doctors who are keen on providing innovative health care solutions on both the public and an individual level.

## Introduction & Literature Review

The prevalence of Pharmaceutical organizations across the globe is increasing day by day where labor reports predicted that around 500,000 Pharmacists are working in hospital Pharmaceutical, traditional Pharmaceutical stores, wholesalers as well as online Pharmaceutical and mail order. With the growth of complex prescription drugs and people who are on multiple prescribed drugs, customer interactions with Pharmaceutical are ever-increasing. This provides an opportunity for the Pharmaceutical industry for attracting more and more customers by providing easy means to them which is easily accessible. There are various ways in which Pharmaceutical companies can attract the customers which includes advertising the right thing to the right audience at right time,

attractive offers on Over the counter (OTC) products, display and merchandising, at par customer service and above all online and digital presence [1-2]. Advertising through radio, newspapers or magazines in places like health-related establishments, doctors' offices, nursing homes, and other neighbouring businesses can help to reach out to new customers. One more marketing idea is to offer promotions in health care, for example where people can freely get screenings for cholesterol and blood pressure in order to attract more customers to your premises. Effective displays and merchandising helps marketing to new customers especially when the Pharmaceutical is located within another grocery or drug store [3-4]. A customer when walk by will be attracted to browse the products if the products are displayed using some theme. Retaining the existing customers or to attract the new ones needs efficient customer service as the market is flooded with Pharmaceutical stores and customers will only visit your premises if one can provide the best customer service. Such can be achieved by offering a warm welcome and discussing health information with them where facts about the latest health products and offers can be provided. A calendar for a promotional activity about Pharmaceutical events, conducting a presentation on allergy season during spring or on diabetes (during special festivals like Holi/Diwali) so that customers can enjoy the delicacies without any health risks [6-9]. Effective use of media can be used for promoting such information to the customers. With the revolution in digital technology where everyone has access to mobile phones and laptops enabled with the internet, customers have started doing health research and shopping over online platforms. Such a scenario demands the online presence of Pharmaceutical organizations in the form of social media like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and websites or all of them. The business should also be listed in search engines and maps so that customers can easily find your business.

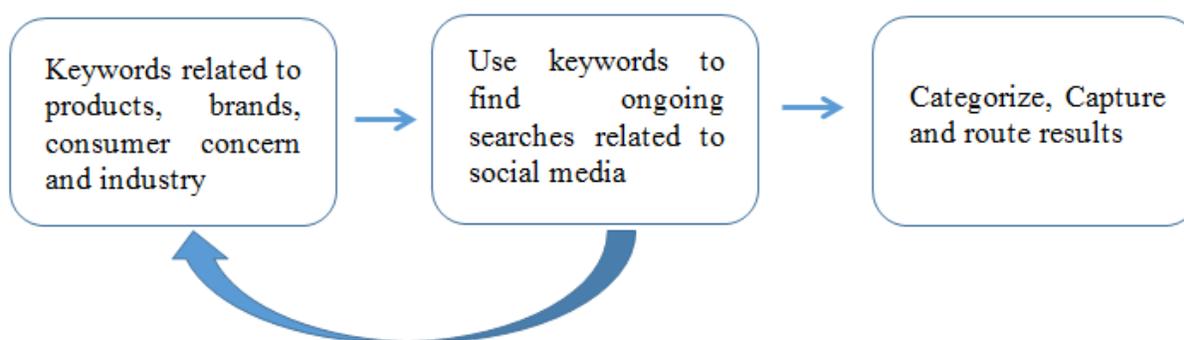
### **Digital Marketing Strategies**

The digital revolution has significantly transformed the healthcare and Pharmaceutical industry by providing effective patient communication, a higher level of transparency, and information related to drug development. In addition, the cost-effectiveness and various ways to connect consumers with doctors and Pharmacists, digital marketing are finding widespread acceptance [4]. The key tactics and trends for digital marketing that help marketers in the Pharmaceutical industry to engage, promote, and grow include Value-driven content creation, Augmented and virtual reality, autonomous assistants and messaging apps, influencers, introducing blockchain technology [4,10]. Pharmaceutical companies can no longer hide the information related to treatments or products as

all the information is readily available to consumers on the web content, mobile applications, and online communities. By creating value-driven, targeted, and branded content that offers awareness of relevant information to current or prospective patients can significantly grow your audience. By providing solutions to queries of patient issues in an engaging and inspiring way along with demonstrating transparency, the organizations can grow the customers while positioning the brand as a thoughtful leader and fostering trust [6]. For example, Johnson & Johnson which is a leading healthcare brand is renowned for taking initiatives in creating inspiring content marketing. Virtual Reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technology are becoming an integral part of our day to day life; this immersive technology can be used by Pharmaceutical companies to break down barriers between its clients and business, patients or consumers and partners. Adoption of AR and VR in the Pharmaceutical industry is still in its infancy, some of the big Pharmaceutical companies have already started using immersive tactics and apps [11, 12]. These technologies offer care and information through product demonstrations and virtual clinics which put people at the heart of the business. With the use of a VR headset, a person suffering from migraines can program their detailed symptoms (including sensitivity to light, auras and blind spots) in order to experience the traumas. The efficiency of the organizations can be further improved by using self-governing chatbots (e.g. ANYA is an AI-based chatbot for patients from Pharmaceutical company Lupin that provides medically verified information and acts as a preferred partner for doctors in resolving patient queries anytime) that work on the concept of machine learning and are capable of handling patients' and clients' queries along with performing key tasks to escalate the productivity while augmenting the customer experience. According to the survey, around 75% of the youngsters are highly prejudiced by the recommendations received from their peers while around 90% of people falling under the age group of 18 to 24-year-olds trust more on the medical information which is acquired through various social media platforms [4,9]. Only one-third of adults use search engines online for understanding a medical disorder. So, Pharmaceutical brands have a great opportunity to work with thought leaders and industry influencers over social media platforms. The latest research has emphasized the use of blockchain technology as a part of digital marketing for assessing various trends of the users towards various products by analysing the data gathered from different sources however this technology is in a very preliminary stage but if it is explored to the fullest then it can certainly lead to the growth and evolution of Pharmaceutical companies [10,11].

### Considerations for Pharmaceutical Industries

The widespread popularity of social media can be utilized in an effective manner for marketing by Pharmaceutical companies with the help of market research technique in the form of monitoring the social media or social listening where the firms need to establish consumer bonding, survey the narratives and conversations of the customers using practitioners and academics [13-14]. Social listening includes persistent and systematic monitoring of various platforms of social media which can be conducted by online searches which use the list of phrases/keywords that are constantly updated and are significant to the Pharmaceutical company, industry, product(s), brand(s), and, consumer experiences [15-16]. Social listening act as the first step for pleasing customers on their specific turf, own terms and own voice [17-20].



**Figure 1:** Structured Online Listening Process through Users Online Interaction [17]

Figure 1 depicts the process involved in marketing through social media where keywords are developed and managed which are relevant to the Pharmaceutical consumer's concerns, brands, products, and services. Then by using these keywords, one needs to identify the searches going on and then further refinement can be done in the search keywords. Finally, the search results are categorized after capturing the significant ones and routed properly.

The very first step which includes the development of keywords is vital for the successful implementation of the social listening scheme. Considerations towards the development of keywords where the entire phrases (e.g. “headache relief”) should entail are of prime importance. The words chosen should be part of conversations related to consumers regarding Pharmaceutical products. For example, referring to the generic or chemical name of drugs (e.g. Cetirizine, hydrochloride). Generally, in social media, consumer conversations principally focus on brand names, regardless of the fact that the generic version of the drugs available for several years might

be different (e.g. Prozac®, Valium®, Ambien®). Pharmaceutical marketers and executives can describe their products based on the “therapeutic areas” which they fall into (e.g. cardiovascular or inflammation, central nervous system). Through bonding, patients prefer to adopt language which is specific to the condition or disease that concerns them (e.g. high blood pressure, depression, or arthritis) or they focus on discussions about various symptoms in simple language rather than using medical terminology linked with particular conditions and diseases and conditions. This admiration of “consumer speak” over “corporate speak” is a very important tactic as far as social listening is concerned [18-19]. The keywords refinement through trial and error leads to effective search results and it leads to more isolation of conversations happening in social media. A cross-functional and collective effort should be applied in the firm for the maintenance and cultivation of keyword over time [15].

The second step uses the aforementioned keywords to seed searches over social media. In terms of procedural standpoint, the searches occur through different search engines like Google, Yahoo, etc. Alerts in these search engines can be useful for automating the search process [21-23]. Alerts will allow the lists of keywords which can be entered and when the respective search results are established for those keywords, an email got generated with details of the results. This strategy effectively results in a “push” vs “pull” search [17]. Twitter and Facebook can be searched for ensuring real-time results whereas Google and Yahoo deliver search results of the Internet in terms of forums, blogs, and bulletin boards. Current research has discovered that consumer conversations can be obtained not only from social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter but also from bulletin boards and forums, image (e.g. Instagram) databases and videos (e.g. YouTube). The refining process of keywords on a regular basis should be carried out due to updation in the products or newer diseases which are diagnosed over time.

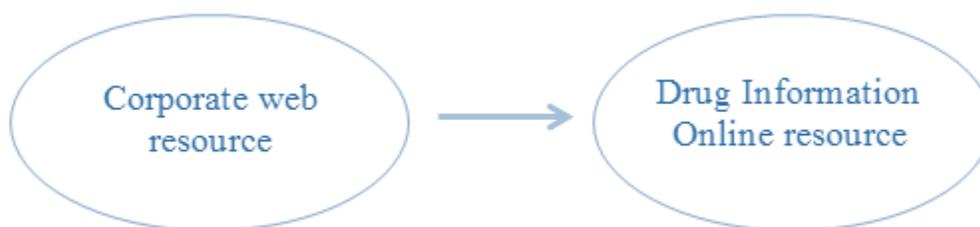
The final step involves capturing, classifying and routing the search results. The obtained search results can be condensed down to the most relevant selections or snippets of consumer conversations which are catalogued in a datasheet or spreadsheet and reserved for analysis over time [16-17]. This prospective abundance of data will lead to categorization of processes based on the type of conversation (e.g. influential comments, competitor mentions and expressed needs), topic (e.g. Pharmaceutical companies, conditions, products, brands, products, diseases, and symptoms), and valence (e.g. complaints, complements). Based on the nature of the organization

or business unit routing of the workflow could occur which helps in directing the particular conversation threads to appropriate parties within the Pharmaceutical business [17].

### **Emerging Social Media Strategy Framework:**

Consumer engagement can be achieved by the companies with the help of social listening through the location identification for bonding, type, and nature of conversations, key participants and nature, and type of conversations. The crucial pay-off due to this engagement originates in the form of the latest product development, improved product knowledge, long-term relationship growth, financial performance, testing and introduction [24-25] and, new indications in the case of Pharmaceuticals. However, due to legal and regulatory constraints, Pharmaceutical companies needs to tread cautiously for such interaction with consumer which acts a barrier that other marketing counterparts do not face in non-regulated industries [24-25] Due to such constraints, web presence of Pharmaceutical firms have been transferred to a one-way traditional marketing model that fundamentally replicates features of broadcast and print advertisements in the digital domain. This prevents the use of the potential of social media. Ideally, social media is considered as a tool that serves as outlets for communication socially [26]

In the past, marketers use to communicate using promotions, advertisements, and controlled messages can possibly be classified as “dissemination”, as it typically lacks a two-way association between receiver and sender i.e. a telephone call or a face-to-face conversation) and relying largely on unidirectional dissemination of messages (i.e. radio, television, email, print) [27-31]. This applies mainly to websites sharing drug information that usually delivers promotional and marketing information via traditional media due to regulatory oversights. The “Dissemination Model” is depicted in Figure 2 [17].



**Figure 2:** Information Dissemination Model

Although marketers were involved in one-way communication, the new era is evidently turning in the direction of a newer model of interactive engagement and consumer empowerment [17,28,30]. As per the above-mentioned revolution in the marketing which is occurring due to result of

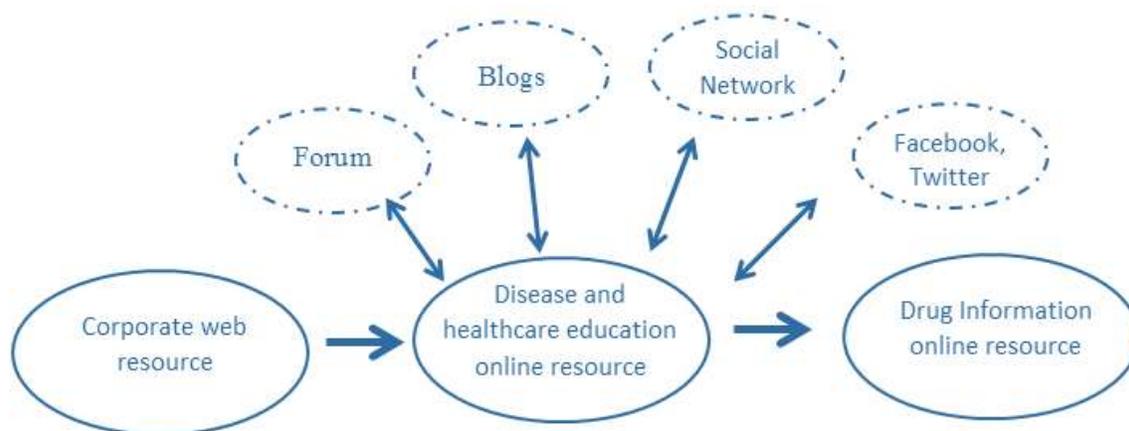
increasing and advent use of social media, and agree with the research findings through bonding, the inclination of consumers for obtaining information about brands and products from each other exhibit a version to what is apparent to be absolute advertising presented by corporations. An “Education Model”, as shown in Figure 3 [17], has started to arise as a new method for Pharmaceutical marketing, wherein websites of advocacy groups, disease awareness and forums for medical advice have started to serve as an arbitrator between established web portals used by Pharmaceutical corporate and their websites for corresponding drug information.



**Figure 3:** Educational Model – Potential Gateway to Consumer Bonding

This approach of “content marketing” is increasingly popular [31-35], as it provides customers with the benefits of seemingly helpful and unbiased information about symptoms, causes, treatments, and diseases. On account of Pharmaceutical promoting, these entries or mediator destinations additionally can possibly offer customers implicit or inferred outsider underwriting of specific ailments (that a specific organization offers sedate items for), or treatment moves toward that might be synergistic or complementary to the Pharmaceutical organization's medication showcased or affirmed medicines. It ought to be noticed that Pharmaceutical organizations utilizing this model unmistakably stay under obligation to administrative limitations (ordinarily by method for spring up disclaimer) when passing shoppers from rather conventional illness training data (for example online websites) to progressively explicit medication data [32-34]. Be that as it may, illness instruction locales and the relating "Training Model" progressed here furnish Pharmaceutical organizations with an uncommon chance to set up compatibility with their definitive shoppers and, while in the long run prompting a transmission of item data, propels a similarity to altruism and commitment to open information, item deals in any case. Critically, these locales and the relating "Training Model" start to give open, helpful substance to purchasers rather

than unadulterated play publicizing and thusly fill in as a potential door for reconciliation into the customer holding process. In this way, normally expanding the "Instruction Model" offers to ascend to an eminent internet based life technique system, which appeared in Figure 4 as the "Connection Model" [17].



**Figure 4:** Consumer Interaction Model: Evolved Social Media Strategy Framework

This model predicts the chance to connect surviving web-related promoting endeavors as infection training to the profoundly dynamic and progressively famous internet based life stages where shopper holding happens. Though the plain advancement of medications in discussions, release sheets and online journals are overflowing with concerns [35-39], not the least of which is likely negative shopper response, sickness instruction sites could be extended to incorporate reconciliation with explicit internet based life stages (and consequently influencers) found by Pharmaceutical organizations during the previously mentioned social listening process. To delineate this proposed stepwise joining into the buyer holding process, as showed in Figure 4, a "star grouping" of significant and explicit web-based life outlets could be connected to and from the organization supported sickness training sites. For instance, if the ailment training site concerns the nature and reasons for headache cerebral pains, included components inside the webpage could connect outward to surviving web based life, for example, well-known discussions and online journals that element shopper holding around headaches. As has been illustrated, as stages for holding, these gatherings are viewed as obviously offering some benefit to shoppers, and by connecting legitimately to them; Pharmaceutical organizations could be viewed as, at least,

recognizing that the networks exist. Alternately, specialists of Pharmaceutical organizations, while confined in their immediate connections with buyers in internet-based life, could distinguish through social listening when and where purchasers unite behind the hardships of infections, their medication medicines, and other ailments the board systems and, to the degree that it is allowed by winning guidelines, react legitimately to remarks posted and talks by alluding heroes to the supported ailment training sites. Further, Pharmaceutical organizations may make the most of the chance to reframe the substance of said illness training sites to more readily address the worries reflected in customer editorial and talk happening in different online life. This "semi discourse" holds the possibility to empower Pharmaceutical organizations to start the way toward recognizing and partaking during the time spent purchaser holding, which, much of the time, has been happening for quite a while and without their inclusion.

### **Conclusion:**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> digital century, online media has been instrumental in reaching out to the socio-professional community. The traditional printing and one-to-one marketing strategies have been significantly altered to reach out to the end consumers; especially over around a decade, social media has gathered significant interest in Pharmaceutical industries. The boom of mobile applications along with faster and relatively cost-effective internet has caused a big impact on marketing by Pharmaceutical industries. The website has become the primary platform to advertise the drug and relevant information. The modification in regulations and policies such as reaching out to direct-to-customer has provided ease in online Pharmaceutical business. Pharmaceutical industries are also exploring options for providing online medical education based on Web 2.0 concepts. In summary, there is a strong opportunity to integrate online and social media with traditional marketing strategies to reach out to a larger human population to meet the expected business objectives.

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