

Digital Media Impact in Promotion of Over the Counter Medicines

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Abstract – Digital Media has a vital impact on the Over the counter medicine purchase. Pharmaceutical companies have been forced to change their approach to selling over- the-counter (OTC) medicines because of the increased pressure on sales margins. The development of Web 2.0, Web 3.0, and social media technologies allow low-cost online marketing, including e-commerce. An organisational adaptation has to cope with the changes in the OTC drug market is required because of the widespread use of the internet and social media. The increased importance of digital media for marketing has convinced the OTC medical industry to include the use of social media in its customer relationship management strategy. Qualitative research on the impact of the internet and social media on the marketing of organisational change management for OTC medicines is based on new-age digital marketing, which is replacing Kotler's 4 P's of marketing (product, price, place and promotion). This paper has found a high correlation between anchoring theory, data analysis, and theoretical returns that accrue by linking research findings, practical initiatives, and internet and social media operating guidelines in the pharmaceutical industry.

Key Words: Digital Marketing effect, impact of digital media, increase in OTC sales, rise Medicinal sales, over-the-counter medicines; internet; social media; e-marketing; qualitative research.

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INTRODUCTION

Changes in macro trends are affecting the uncertainty in the business environment. Organisations are being forced to adopt a comprehensive infrastructure that is based on a more flexible organisational structure for implementing on-demand marketing and technological innovation (Autry et al., 2013). At the same time, it is necessary to realise that the ability to develop or gain the basics of modern information and communication technologies plays an important role in the economic and social development (Bertot et al., 2012). Organisations are attempting to achieve the strategic goals affected by the increase in productivity and efficiency, added value and, thus, to develop economy and society (Bisson et al., 2010; Kaplan and Mikes, 2012; Roblek et al., 2013).

According to Brown and Sikes (2012), research conducted by McKinsey shows that, among ten global trends, the three leading technological trends are the following: profiting, from online organisations, networking among organisations and virtual collaboration (clouds, big data, and smart assets).

Pharmaceutical companies have been forced to change their approach to selling over- the-counter (OTC) medicine because of increased pressure on sales margins. The development of Web 2.0, Web

3.0, and social media technologies allow low-cost online marketing, including e-commerce (Pejić Bach et al., 2013). An organisational adaptation has to cope with the changes in the OTC medicine market is required because of the widespread use of the internet and social media. The increased importance of digital media for marketing has convinced the OTC medicine industry to include the use of social media in its customer relationship management strategy.

The paper is structured as follows: After the introductory part of the paper, the second part explores the theoretical frameworks with an emphasis on OTC medicine marketing, followed by the results of the research and explanations. In the conclusion, a structured proposal for a successful implementation of internet and social media in OTC medicine marketing is presented.

The pharmaceutical industry is knowledge-based and therefore heavily involved in research and development (R&D), as well as sales and marketing (S&M) to ensure that its competitive advantage is sustained (Zack, 2003). In recent years, digital technologies have forced organisations into making organisational changes in accordance with consumer behaviour. Organisational changes are increasingly being influenced by interactive systems that can adapt to user needs (Dominci and

Internet-related technological innovations are increasingly involved in creating and using new applications in marketing management across the industry. The global pharmaceutical industry can be divided into three groups (Kesič, 2007):

branded generic pharmaceutical companies (generics), which work on the development and sales of generic (copycat) medicines

The goal of pharmaceutical companies is to meet their customers' needs for a higher quality of life. This is achieved through development cycles, which are an essential part of inventing and marketing. In the case that pharmaceutical companies do not achieve the expected results in these two segments, they will not be competitive in the market (Allarakhiam and Walsh, 2011).

The qualitative interview that was conducted is based on the social constructionist paradigm. To research topics where extensive scientific data are still lacking, such as social media and its impact on operational changes, the most appropriate approach is the use of a qualitative exploratory interview (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002). Its focus is on social processes, rather than social structure (Yin, 2003). The primary data were analysed by using the thematic network analysis. Thematic network is a way of organising a thematic analysis of qualitative data. This approach explains the impact that the internet and social media have on organisational changes in OTC marketing management (research phenomenon) (Stirling-Attitude, 2001). Thematic network analysis is driven by both data and theory, which enables the use of an inductive, deductive or combined inductive-deductive approach in the data analysis process (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2008).

The interviews were conducted in Slovenia between October and November 2013. In the first phase of these interviews, data were obtained from semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured questions

The purpose of the study is to explore and describe the views and perspectives that physicians, pharmacists, and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry have about the influence of the internet and social media on the OTC market.

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In this step, as the researcher does not return to the original text, but its contents discussed through the fundamental themes of organising the topic and the selection of the baseline. The network now becomes not only a tool for the researcher, but also for the reader who is able to follow the researchers' interpretation of the summaries provided by the network. To facilitate the presentation and interpretation of the data network must be read in sequence (for example, clockwise).

The global theme of 'information sharing' can be interpreted through thematic networks: the internet, social media and mobile applications. These three groups are becoming a communication channel for the exchange of information on non-prescription medicines

and directly affect the faster exchange of information. As is evident from the thematic network,

specific knowledge and information are still shared between personal contacts. It is necessary that information about non-prescription medicines found on the internet and in social media is strictly controlled.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. Growth of the interactivity applications for communication and collaboration
2. Appropriate form and content created blogs allow well-documented presentation of views on medicines and their effects

The issue of surreptitious advertising

The possibility of adjusted information about the product in order to promote sales

Regulation of sales and advertising on OTC Medicines sales

HYPOTHESIS

The perception of internet and social media use in patient-(physician) in pharmacist communication is impactful

The usage of internet and social media for OTC harmonised with the corporate social responsibility (ethics, customer confidence and safety) is harmonized

The pharmaceutical industry firms utilise the potential of the internet and social media for OTC marketing management to the fullest extent.

CONCLUSION:

This paper has found connections between anchoring theory, data analysis, and theoretical returns that accrue by linking research findings, practical initiatives, and internet and social media operating guidelines in the pharmaceutical OTC medicines marketing.

Qualitative research on the impact of the internet and social media on the marketing of organisational change management for OTC medicines is based on new-age digital marketing, which is replacing Kotler's 4 P's of marketing (product, price, place and promotion).

Pharmacists thought that social media may improve the quantity and quality of customers (patients) options for getting and exchanging information about the OTC medicines. New internet technologies require pharmaceutical companies to adopt new business strategies. Managers have to make organisational changes in marketing strategy on the

basis of attitudes and characteristics of users who are using the new technologies. They have to move from the operating organisations to digital marketing.

The traditional location where transactions take place is moving online. It is important that pharmaceutical companies are visible on the web. But customers of epharmacies still do their shopping in bricks-and-mortar-pharmacies more often than online.

The pharmacists has the opportunity to provide the customer retention policy that is based on developing customer insight. Researching the customers' behaviour and characteristics help the pharmacists to understand their values. It appears a need to assess the impact of the social web and software solutions such as recommendation systems that help companies to establish on demand marketing.

This qualitative research opens further research questions about the impact of the internet and social media marketing to companies. Digital marketing is an approach to development that focuses on the needs of the wider community because modern challenges are of an ever-changing nature and require immediate action. We recommend that further research activities focus on other areas, not just the pharmaceutical industry, and that they take into consideration marketing through mobile applications that are accessible to individuals almost all day.

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