

How the pharma industry is using social media to sell

NEW YORK, US: A multi-billion dollar industry that's banned in all but the US and New Zealand, Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) pharmaceutical marketing is beginning to embrace social media, explains the latest report by international business experts GBI Research.



According to the report*, the pharmaceutical marketing industry is adapting strategies to take advantage of sites such as Twitter and Facebook, including the tailoring of campaigns to specific medications and interacting directly with consumers.

Online advertising has many advantages over traditional means, by no means the least of which is the relatively low expense. In 2006, over US\$5bn was spent on DTC advertising, mainly on the most costly medium - television. As pharmaceutical firms tighten their belts, cheaper online advertising has allowed pharmaceutical advertisers to maintain a campaign presence.

Although marketing via social media can be risky, its rewards are becoming increasingly well known. Though online discussions may raise adverse product testimonials, companies are given the opportunity to answer questions, ease concerns and respond quickly to shifts in public sentiment.

Tremendously beneficial

The open nature of the online community can also be tremendously beneficial for product promotion. A friend's recommendation is trusted by 90% of people and 70% trust consumer opinions posted online (Google, 2011a). Accordingly, positive word of mouth can be more effective than typical methods of DTC advertising.

The success of online DTC marketing can also be measured much more easily. Advertisement clicks, Facebook 'likes' and Twitter mentions can all be monitored and without difficulty aid in the creation of bespoke campaigns.

Marketing companies understand that different demographics access and utilise media in different ways, and the capability to learn how different groups respond to advertising is becoming a key tool in the formation of future marketing projects.

DTC pharmaceutical advertising is only legal in the US and New Zealand, although firms often employ unbranded awareness campaigns in other countries, but without specific drug information.

[*Read more about the report here.](#)

This report provides insights into the up-and-coming trends of DTC advertising in the US and of awareness campaigns in Europe. It also provides an in-depth analysis of the types of marketing channels available to pharmaceutical marketers.

This report was built using data and information sourced from proprietary databases, primary and secondary research, and in-house analysis conducted by GBI Research's team of industry experts.

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