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DIGITAL MARKETING OF A PHARMACEUTICAL BRAND

The use of digital technologies in pharmaceutical marketing is a necessity in modern conditions. According to the Indegene report for 2024, which provides information on the needs of healthcare professionals, 40% of specialists prefer a combination of traditional and digital channels, 33% of HCPs constantly interact with digital channels, and only 27% of HCPs resist using digital tools. Pharmaceutical companies in Ukraine use an omnichannel approach to brand promotion. In recent years, digital tools for drug promotion have played an important role. As the "Digital 2024" report shows, 79.2% of Ukrainians are Internet users. The aim of the research is to evaluate the use of digital tools for brand promotion in the pharmaceutical market and to justify promotional strategies to increase the effectiveness of brand management in pharmaceutical companies. A hypothesis has been formed about the direct relationship between promotional activity and brands sales. Using general scientific methods such as generalization, analysis and synthesis, comparison, and tabular representation, it was found that the active use of digital channels for drug promotion contributes to the growth of their sales. It has been proven that there is a direct relationship between promotional activities and sales. The more channels are involved in brand promotion, the more significant positive dynamics are observed in their sales. If pharmaceutical companies analyse which channels are preferred by different segments of healthcare professionals and consumers, they will optimize their strategies for maximum impact on target audience.

Keywords: pharmaceutical market, brand, OTC drugs, digital tools, promotional activity, brand management.

ЦИФРОВИЙ МАРКЕТИНГ ФАРМАЦЕВТИЧНОГО БРЕНДУ

Використання цифрових технологій у фармацевтичному маркетингу є необхідністю в сучасних умовах. За звітом Indegene за 2024 р., що надає інформацію про потреби фахівців з охорони здоров'я, 40% фахівців надають перевагу поєднанню традиційних та цифрових каналів, 33% постійно взаємодіють з цифровими каналами і лише 27% опираються на використання цифрових інструментів. Фармацевтичні компанії в Україні використовують омніканальний підхід для просування брендів. В останні роки цифрові інструменти для просування ліків відіграють важливу роль. Як показує звіт "Digital 2024", 79.2% українців є користувачами інтернету. Метою дослідження є оцінка використання цифрових інструментів для просування брендів на фармацевтичному ринку та обґрунтування промоційних стратегій для підвищення ефективності бренд-менеджменту фармацевтичних компаній. Сформовано гіпотезу про прямий зв'язок між промоційною активністю та продажами брендів. Використовуючи загальнопнаукові методи, такі як узагальнення, аналіз і синтез, порівняння та табличне представлення, виявлено, що активне використання цифрових каналів для просування ліків сприяє зростанню їхніх продажів. Доведено, що існує прямий зв'язок між промоційною діяльністю та продажами. Що більше каналів задіяно в просуванні брендів, тим значініша позитивна динаміка спостерігається в їхніх продажах. Якщо фармацевтичні компанії проаналізують, які канали є перевагою для різних сегментів медичних працівників та споживачів, вони оптимізують свої стратегії для максимального впливу на цільові аудиторії.

Ключові слова: фармацевтичний ринок, бренд, безрецептурні препарати, цифрові інструменти, промоційна активність, управління брендом.

JEL Classification: I10, I11, M30, M31, M37.

Introduction

The rapid development of modern technologies and improved accessibility to the Internet have led to the emergence of new marketing tools and to the transformation of marketing from classical to digital. The development



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of digital marketing began in the early 90s of the 20th century with Internet marketing, when information about products appeared on text sites (Iankovets, 2024).

Digital channels for promoting the company's brand are systematized in the article "Digital Marketing of Brands in Social Media" by Iankovets (2024). The author identifies the following channels: search engines (Google, YouTube, Amazone, Olx, Prom), social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn), paid media (television, radio, digital advertising, opinion leaders), free media ("word of mouth", mass media, social networks, Google Discover), own media (own website, email, social network accounts), messengers (Telegram, Viber, WhatsApp, Signal).

Modern Ukrainian and foreign scientists pay considerable attention to the study of digital marketing channels in the pharmaceutical industry. They indicate the importance of using digital marketing channels for brand promotion and communication. As V. Protsenko and A. Protsenko reported, digital marketing in the pharmaceutical industry provides numerous opportunities for promotion and expansion of the customer base. In addition, the authors highlight some practical tools of digital marketing, such as e-mail, electronic data detailing, and virtual reality, the use of which allows for reducing marketing costs. Also, such effective digital tools for promoting medicines as content marketing, search engine optimization, e-mail marketing, and marketing in social networks were identified (V. Protsenko & A. Protsenko, 2022). T. Zholudenko's research results highlight the importance of a strategic approach to adopting digital technologies in pharmaceutical marketing to achieve long-term competitiveness and improve communication effectiveness. Particular attention is paid to studying the role of artificial intelligence and big data in optimizing the processes of pharmaceutical products' development and promotion (Zholudenko, 2025). As a result of the study Pashniak and Us, the role and advantages of innovative marketing and the use of digital tools in the pharmaceutical industry were determined. A comparative analysis of the pharmaceutical market of the United States of America and Ukraine was conducted in terms of innovative marketing trends and consumer preferences. The analysis demonstrates the importance of developing innovative marketing and using digital tools to improve the efficiency of the pharmaceutical business (Pashniak & Us, 2025).

The aim of this research was to evaluate the application of digital tools in brand promotion in the pharmaceutical market and to justify promotional strategies to increase efficiency in the brand management of pharmaceutical companies. As an example, two groups of OTC drugs were used for analysis – the diosmin group and the antispasmodic group.

To realize the goal, a hypothesis was formed that there is a direct correlation between promotional activities and brands' sales. And the use of the most effective marketing solutions has become the main task of brand management nowadays.

The following general scientific methods, such as generalization, analysis and synthesis, comparison, and tabular representation, were used to test the proposed hypothesis. The information base of the research was legislative and regulatory acts of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, and data from analytical studies of the pharmaceutical market by Proxima Research.

The article is divided into two sections: the first provides an overview of the current use of digital tools in brand promotion, while the second presents an analysis of digital promotional tools employed in the Ukrainian pharmaceutical market, using two groups of drugs as examples.

1. Digital Transformation of the Pharmaceutical Market

The pharmaceutical market is a dynamic system that is constantly evolving. The emergence of new drugs and manufacturers, new research, and the expansion of experience in the existing medicines, and, of course, the marketing activities of pharmaceutical companies contribute to the pharmaceutical market's growth. Digital transformation plays an important role in these positive changes.

Pharmaceutical companies in Ukraine prefer to use omnichannel to promote brands, but in recent years, digital tools have played an important role. Digital channels are integral to the hybrid promotion model adopted by many pharma companies. However, the proliferation of digital channels – from websites and email to social media, mobile apps, and virtual events – requires defining the optimal strategy for drug promotion. Pharmaceutical companies should analyse which channels are preferred by different segments of healthcare professionals (HCPs), based on factors such as specialty, therapeutic area, region, age, gender, etc. Only after that, they will be able to choose digital tools depending on the needs and preferences of the target audience – doctors, pharmacists, and consumers.

In 2025, Indegene published data on approximately 2.1 million HCPs across 69 therapy areas and 30 specialties on their attitudes towards the use of digital technologies in their practice and in the promotion of pharmaceutical brands. Insights are derived from over 45 omnichannel activation programs. According to this report, 40% of HCPs combine traditional and digital channels, 33% of HCPs demonstrate consistent engagement with digital media. Only 27% of HCPs are resistant to using digital media (Indegene, 2025). And age does not determine digital savviness; older HCPs show significant engagement with digital tools. The report confirms that pharmaceutical companies use a variety of channels – from email and electronic health records to webinars and programmatic ads – to connect with their target audience. However, it's critical to identify and optimize the optimal channel mix for maximum impact.

The report provides information on the needs of healthcare professionals and what information they want to receive through digital channels. A deeper dive into content preferences reveals distinct patterns among HCPs. The TOP 5 among content are product awareness, HCP resources, disease

awareness, patient access, and clinical studies on the safety and efficacy of drugs, real scientific evidence, and guidelines for the management of patients with a certain disease (Indegene, 2025). The results of these studies should encourage pharmaceutical companies to monitor healthcare professionals' needs and analyse their commitment to certain digital channels and the information provided to them. So, understanding HCP content preferences helps pharma refine strategies to create impactful, engaging messages.

Digital channels for drug promotion are also directed at consumers (patients). Consumers consider drugs as a necessary purchase that will help to relieve the symptoms of the disease. At the same time, the consumer does not know which drugs he needs and how to choose them from the large number of analogues available on the market. As shown by DataReportal's Digital 2024 report for Ukraine, 79.2% of the Ukrainian population used the Internet at the start of 2024. And 64.9 % of the total population are social media users (Kemp, 2024, February 23). In 2024, the ranking of the most popular social networks in Ukraine was topped by Telegram – used by 78.1% of respondents, YouTube – used by 59.5% of respondents, and Facebook – 44.6% (Polikovska, 2024, July 16).

According to a survey conducted by Kantar-Ukraine, 54% of Ukrainians surveyed have consciously reduced their viewing of advertising. The main reasons are: oversaturation with advertising – 41%, disinterest – 38%, distrust of advertising messages – 19% (DM Media sapiens, 2024, July 24). According to the results of the study "Media Consumption of Ukrainians: The Third Year of a Full-Scale War", despite the oversaturation with advertising, Ukrainians continue to trust social networks (47.3%), the Internet without social networks (43%), and television (34.1%) the most (Zmina, 2024, July 17).

One of the problems leading to increased distrust in advertising is unscrupulous and unethical promotion. Every third drug advertisement potentially contains signs of incomplete, inaccurate information that could mislead the consumer. Most often, this is information about the speed of action, affordable price, safety, natural origin, quality, market leadership, etc. (Sanzharovska & Ganzhelo, 2023, May 11).

Therefore, when choosing promotional strategies, pharmaceutical companies should choose one or another digital channel, taking into account the level of trust in it by consumers, and conduct ethical promotion.

2. Digital tools for brand promotion in the pharmaceutical market of Ukraine

We analyse what digital tools were used to promote brands on the pharmaceutical market of Ukraine in 2023–2024, on the example of the diosmin group drugs (for the treatment of chronic venous diseases and haemorrhoids) and the antispasmodic group (for relief or prevention of spasms of the gastrointestinal tract), using data from analytical studies of the pharmaceutical market by Proxima Research.

According to the sales results of 2023–2024, the leaders of the group of the diosmin drugs and their combination are the brands Detralex (Servier) and Normoven (Kyiv Vitamin Factory). Analysing *Tables 1, 2*, we conclude that these brands demonstrate the largest growth in sales in packages and the largest growth in the use of all digital channels for brand promotion in 2023 compared to 2022. And, on the contrary, negative growth in sales in 2023 is shown by brands whose promotional activity decreases compared to the previous period and approaches 0. In 2024, only Normoven demonstrates increases in the use of all digital channels and the largest growth in packages compared to 2023. A decrease in the use of digital tools in the promotion of Detralex in 2024 is accompanied by a decrease in sales in packages. So, the results of the analysis indicate a direct correlation between the sales dynamics of this group of drugs and the dynamics of promotional activity using digital channels.

Table 1

Dynamics of sales (thousands of packages) and use of digital tools (number of mentions) for the promotion of diosmin drugs brands and its combinations in 2023–2024

Brand	Sales, thousands of packages				Online conferences				E-mailing			
	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023
Detralex, Servier	1761	+271	1656	-106	4751	+2587	2728	-2023	686	+108	552	-134
Normoven, Kyiv Vitamin Factory	716	+206	852	+136	807	+487	956	+148	150	+62	182	+32
Phlebodia, Innotech	206	+18.5	213	+7	166	+34	198	+32	55	+2	22	-33
Flebaven, KRKA	77.5	+14	54	-13.5	29	-2	1	-28	25	+25	1	-24
Dioflan, Arterium	23	-4	18	-5	18	-16	0	-18	0	0	0	0
Avenue, Farmak	22	-3	27	+5	0	0	16	+16	0	0	0	0
Vasoket, UCB Pharma	11	0	11	0	0	-1	1	+1	0	0	0	0

Source: constructed by the author from the data of Proxima Research (n. d.).

Table 2

Dynamics of digital tools use (number of mentions) for the promotion of diosmin drugs brands and its combinations in 2023–2024

Brand	Advertising on the Internet				TV Advertising				Radio Advertising			
	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023
Detralex, Servier	2779	+729	3417	+638	4113	+483	4326	+213	366	-189	461	+95
Normoven, Kyiv Vitamin Factory	489	+330	721	+233	937	+731	1112	+175	90	+90	377	+287
Phlebodia, Innotech	251	+68	351	+100	149	+12	399	+250	611	+591	197	-414

End of Table 2

Brand	Advertising on the Internet				TV Advertising				Radio Advertising			
	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023
Flebaven, KRKA	80	-16	0	-80	0	0	57	+57	0	0	0	0
Dioflan, Arterium	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Avenue, Farmak	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vasoket, UCB Pharma	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: constructed by the author from the data of Proxima Research (n. d.).

Let us analyse in more detail the dynamics of the use of such a digital channel as Internet advertising for the promotion of diosmin group drugs and their combinations. The analysis includes the dynamics of the number of impressions of video, graphics, and text information. Detralex demonstrates the biggest decline in these indicators in 2024 compared to 2023. It also shows the largest decrease in packages. These results confirm the above conclusions regarding the direct correlation between sales and promotional activity. Let's analyse which type of advertising on the Internet is more effective for this group of drugs. As can be seen in *Table 3*, the largest share of impressions is graphics advertising, and the smallest share is text information.

Table 3

Dynamics of the number of advertising impressions on the Internet using the example of diosmin group drugs and their combinations in 2023–2024 (thousand impressions)

Brand	Internet Advertising, Total Quantity			Video		Graphics		Text	
	2024	GR 2024/2023	GR, %	2024	GR 2024/2023	2024	GR 2024/2023	2024	GR 2024/2023
Detralex, Servier	9886	+2290	30	569	-5302	9290	+7594	41	-21
Normoven, Kyiv Vitamin Factory	1585	+350	28	468	-117	1076	+488	26.5	-3
Phlebodia, Innotech	308.5	+304.5	7613	148	+144	151	+151	9.5	+9.5

Source: constructed by the author from the data of Proxima Research (n. d.).

According to the sales results of 2023–2024, the leaders of the antispasmodic group are the brands No-spa (Opella Healthcare International) and Espumisan (Berlin-Chemie/Menarini Group). Analysing *Tables 4, 5*, we conclude that these brands demonstrate the largest growth in sales in packages and the largest growth in the use of all digital channels for brand promotion in 2024 compared to 2023. And, on the contrary, negative growth in sales in 2024 is shown by Drotaverin (Darnytsia) whose promotional activity approaches 0. So, the results of the analysis confirm the existence of a direct correlation between the dynamics of sales of this group of drugs and the dynamics of promotional activity using digital channels.

Table 4

Dynamics of sales (thousands of packages) and use of digital tools (number of mentions) for the promotion of main antispasmodic drugs in 2023–2024

Brand	Sales, thousands of packages				Online conferences				E-mailing			
	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023
No-spa, Opella Healthcare International	4712	+244	4891	+178	2061	+1370	2089	+28	454	+236	468	+14
Drotaverinum, Darnytsia	1405	-47	955	-450	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Espumisan, Berlin-Chemie	871	+20	996	+125	551	+520	431	-120	108	+108	210	+102
Duspatalin, Abbott	431	+68	445	+13	1756	+837	3002	+1246	136	+110	176	+40
Meverinum, Corporation Arterium	215	+29	226	+11	481	+233	121	-360	68	+68	48	-20
Meteospasmyl, Mayoly	127	+29	147	+20	158	+75	166	+8	83	+47	238	+155

Source: constructed by the author from the data of Proxima Research (n. d.).

Table 5

Dynamics of digital tools use (number of mentions) for the promotion of antispasmodic drugs in 2023–2024

Brand	Advertising on the Internet				TV Advertising				Radio Advertising			
	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023	2023	GGR 2023/2022	2024	GGR 2024/2023
No-spa, Opella Healthcare International	3664	+2041	3931	+267	4709	+2227	5277	+568	617	+240	549	-68
Drotaverinum, Darnytsia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Espumisan, Berlin-Chemie	1953	+906	1202	-751	2709	+1285	3300	+591	415	+284	758	+343
Duspatalin, Abbott	1255	+836	644	-611	1606	+1365	845	-761	44	+44	125	+81
Meverinum, Corporation Arterium	198	+149	63	-135	61	+36	19	-42	0	0	0	0
Meteospasmyl, Mayoly	118	+110	113	-5	0	0	224	+224	0	0	0	0

Source: constructed by the author from the data of Proxima Research (n. d.).

Let us analyse in more detail the dynamics of the Internet advertising use for the promotion of antispasmodic drugs. The analysis includes the dynamics of the number of impressions of video, graphics, and text information. Only Espumisan demonstrates growth in 2024 compared to 2023. It also shows one of the largest increases in the number of packages. These results confirm the above conclusions regarding the direct correlation between sales and promotional activity. If we analyse which type of advertising on the Internet is more effective for this group of drugs, we will see that the largest share of impressions is graphics and text advertising (Table 6).

Table 6

Dynamics of the number of advertising impressions on the Internet using the example of antispasmodic drugs in 2023–2024 (thousand impressions)

Brand	Internet Advertising, Total Quantity			Video		Graphics		Text	
	2024	GR 2024/2023	GR, %	2024	GR 2024/2023	2024	GR 2024/2023	2024	GR 2024/2023
No-spa, Opella Healthcare International	15 012	–17 696	–54	11 056	–15 769	2868	–3015	1088	+1088
Duspatalin, Abbott	5323	–12 726	–71	3585	–14 464	1661	+1661	77.5	+77.5
Espumisan, Berlin-Chemie	939	+39	+4	516	–1536	397	–421	26	+26

Source: constructed by the author from the data of Proxima Research (n. d.).

One of the important strategies for promoting OTC drugs online is a brand website. To analyse the effectiveness of promotion through the brand website, the group of drugs diosmin and its combinations, the brands Detralex, Phlebodia, and Flebaven were selected, as they have their own websites in Ukraine. By analogy, for the analysis of the antispasmodic drugs, the brands No-spa, Duspatalin, and Espumisan were selected (Table 7).

Table 7

Analysis of overall site visit rates in 2024 (average value for 1 month)

Brand	Website	Average number of visits per month	Average visit duration, sec	Pages per visit	Bounce rate, %
Diosmin and its combination drugs					
Detralex	https://detralex.ua	967	77	2.37	36.83
Flebaven	https://flebaven.com	1245	39	1.71	59.66
Phlebodia	https://www.phlebodia.com.ua	525	n/a	1.01	43.83
Antispasmodic drugs					
No-spa	https://www.no-spa.ua	2006	52	1.89	38.19
Espumisan	https://www.espumizan.ua	1582	57	2.04	38.02
Duspatalin	https://www.duspatalin.ua	569	n/a	1.01	42.52

Source: constructed by the author from the data of SimilarWeb (n. d.).

Let's analyse the overall indicators of visits to the website of each of these brands, according to the analytical service SimilarWeb for 2024 (see Table 7). Flebaven has the highest value of the index of visits to the website in the group of diosmin drugs. However, according to the indicators of the average visit duration on the website and the number of pages viewed per visit, the Detralex website has the best indicators. This indicates a higher quality of content on this website, and it is filled with useful information. The bounce rate characterizes the absence of a transition to another page of the website. The higher its value, the less interesting the website is for users. The value of this indicator is the highest for the Flebaven website, and the lowest for the Detralex website. The analysis confirms that the Detralex website has better content and contains the necessary information for users.

If we analyse the antispasmodic drugs, the No-spa and the Espumizan websites demonstrate almost the same indicators. No-spa has the highest

values of the website visits index. And the Espumisan website has better indicators in terms of the average visit duration on the website, the number of pages viewed per visit, and the bounce rate. The analysis confirms that both websites have good content and contain the necessary information for users.

Conclusions

The use of digital marketing channels to promote brands is an important aspect of brand management in the pharmaceutical industry. Despite the fact that pharmaceutical companies in Ukraine prefer omnichannel, in recent years, digital tools for drug promotion have played an important role.

To promote drugs, pharmaceutical companies should choose trusted digital channels and apply personalized digital content depending on the needs and preferences of each target audience. Due to oversaturation of advertising, drug promotion should be accurate, balanced, fair, objective, and sufficiently complete, and should not mislead through distortion, exaggeration, overemphasis, or omission of information.

When choosing promotional strategies, it is important to analyse the level of trust and commitment of healthcare professionals to certain digital channels, as well as their needs for the information provided to them. While factors like brand objectives, budget, etc, influence channel selection, understanding individual HCP preferences is key to optimizing these choices. According to the results of the study, the main digital channels of drug promotion for healthcare professionals are online conferences and Emailing.

Despite the oversaturation with advertising, according to the results of the study, Advertising on the Internet, TV, and Radio Advertising remain the main digital channels of drug promotion for consumers.

Active use of all possible digital channels to promote drugs contributes to the sales growth. Moreover, there is a direct correlation between promotional activities and sales – the more channels involved and the more events held, the greater the potential for sales growth. This proves the hypothesis put forward. Thus, the implementation of digital drug promotion tools contributes to increasing the effectiveness of brand management in the pharmaceutical industry.

Since the results of the study are based on the analysis of 2 groups of drugs, to objectify the data, it is necessary to continue studying this correlation in other groups of drugs.

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