"THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING AS A TOOL FOR CREATING AND SUSTAINING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL MARKET IN LEBANON"

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Dana BAYOUN M.Sc.

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Dana BAYOUN

APPROVED BY

Nihar Behera

Dissertation chair

RECEIVED/APPROVED BY:

Admissions Director

Dedication

I dedicate this study research to my parents and other family members whose love, support, and sacrifices have been my driving force. I especially recognize the support of my husband and son who honestly believed in my strengths and perseverance to accomplish this work. I also give a special appreciation to the encouragement and help of my daughter Lana at every step of this work.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Digital marketing practices have evolved critical tactics for promoting competitiveness and customer engagement in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon. The thesis examines the present status of digital marketing practices, and how companies are shifting from traditional marketing strategies towards including digital strategies covering the involvement, advantages, and challenges of these strategies for Lebanese pharmaceutical companies. Purpose: The primary goal is to investigate and analyze the Strategic implication of digital marketing adoption and the level of readiness for pharmaceutical firms in Lebanon. This research focused on the ability for readiness in terms of human and organizational difficulties in preparing and

optimizing digital marketing techniques in the sector. Research methods: A mixed-methods design was employed to capture the complexity and variety of stakeholder perspectives. Study participants were interviewed, and surveys were conducted with coding and readiness assessment. The results were expected to provide detailed insights into an organization's preparedness, skill gaps, and regulatory issues that affect the implementation of digital marketing. Findings: The analysis focused on the complexity and lack of readiness for a full transformation into the digital era. Skill gaps, regulatory challenges, and uncertainty in organizational responses were highlighted. However, a clear pathway towards success was demonstrated. This involves a step-by-step approach towards transformation, understanding that many aspects are affected by various limitations. Implications: The study provides helpful insights for the transformation of the marketing landscape of pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon. It also highlights the critical recommendations and points towards how the transition should be conducted. Strategic recommendations include targeted investments in internal initiatives to address skill deficits, the implementation of customer-centric engagement strategies leveraging digital platforms for customer communication and engagement, and advocacy for regulatory reforms to facilitate compliant and innovative digital marketing practices. Conclusion: this thesis contributes to academic research coupled with practical insights by emphasizing the imperative for strategic adaptation, continuous training, and regulatory reform to capitalize on the transformative potential of digital marketing in the Lebanese pharmaceutical context. By embracing digital tools strategically, pharmaceutical companies can enhance market competitiveness, optimize resource utilization, and adopt sustainable growth in evolving industry dynamics.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 History and Context

The pharmaceutical industry stands as a vital sector within the global economy, dedicated to providing life-saving medications to people worldwide. In the context of Lebanon, the pharmaceutical market remains dynamic and rapidly evolving, despite its small size. "The Lebanese pharmaceutical market was worth LBP 13.9 trillion (USD 1.05 billion) in 2021, translating to a per capita spending of USD 155, significantly exceeding that of the Gulf region and Levant countries. A substantial portion of this market, approximately 85.4%, comprises prescription medicines. Healthcare services in Lebanon are offered by the private sector, constituting 80% of healthcare provision" (BLOM Invest,2022). "Lebanon boasts a high density of physicians, with approximately 22.71 physicians for every 10,000 people, making it the fifth highest in the Eastern Mediterranean region" (Hussein Ismail et al, 2020).

In the Lebanese pharmaceutical market, approximately 90% of the companies are foreign based, while only 10% are manufacturing companies based locally. "Consequently, imported products satisfy a staggering 95% of domestic demand, leaving a mere 5% coverage by locally manufactured products" (Bank Med, 2014). "Major importing countries for pharmaceutical products include France, Germany, Switzerland, and the USA, represented by prominent

companies such as Sanofi, Boehringer-Ingelheim, Novartis, Glaxo, and Pfizer, among others" (Noaman et al,2022).

The depreciation of the Lebanese Lira (LL) over the past five years has impacted many sectors in Lebanon including the pharmaceutical market. Based on many economic analyses, the Lebanese government has no choice except to make an agreement with the IMF (International Monetary Fund) for a financial package for the whole country. This is translated as "the crisis mode" that Lebanon is facing specifically the banking sector as it is difficult for the government alone to solve the issues relating to this "crisis". However, all the economic reports highlighted that Lebanon has a relatively strong private healthcare sector, which could serve as a solid base for future market development. "The increasing usage of eHealth technologies is boosting healthcare efficiency in times of rising structural problems and increasing resource scarcity" (BLOM Invest, 2022). This will of course open the door for a new way of strategic thinking whether for Marketing or Management of the whole pharmaceutical sector. Digital transformation will impose itself at various levels and create a base for the companies as a rescue for business continuity or even as a change mindset for building a different model in the future.

Recent years have witnessed a significant transformation in the pharmaceutical industry, especially regarding how companies market their products. The increasing uptake of digital technologies has pushed the integration of digital marketing strategies into the traditional business models of pharmaceutical companies. The arrival of the "COVID-19" pandemic in addition to the difficult economic "crisis" further accelerated this digital shift, revolutionizing conventional marketing tactics. This transformation underlines the necessity for pharmaceutical companies to establish and maintain connections with their clientele, including physicians, pharmacists, hospital managers,

and even patients, either directly or indirectly. This shift to digital platforms has profound implications for both physicians and patients, making digital marketing a cornerstone for engagement, loyalty, and sales performance for Lebanese pharmaceutical companies.

The first objective of this research proposal is to explore the impact of technology on marketing strategies within the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry. Despite the transformative potential of digital marketing, the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon has not fully embraced these strategies compared to other sectors like communication or banking. Through a thorough analysis of existing research and the conduction of empirical studies, this research dissertation aims to explore the advantages and challenges faced by Lebanese pharmaceutical companies during the transition to digital marketing strategies. Key aspects to be highlighted include the regulatory environment, the level of digital literacy among healthcare professionals and pharmaceutical company staff, and the cost implications of implementing new technologies. Additionally, this dissertation will focus on the implications and integration of digital marketing into the strategies of these companies, paralleling Lebanon's advancements in the digital marketing realm. By addressing this gap, the research seeks to discover and analyze the effect of "digital marketing" on Lebanese pharmaceutical businesses.

1.2 Research Problem

The primary goal of most pharmaceutical organizations, regardless of their size, is to enhance their bottom line, aiming to generate more revenue. A big portion of the marketing expenditure of pharmaceutical companies is dedicated to promoting their products and services as essential solutions in a patient's health journey. These companies strive to position themselves as fundamental healthcare system components, forming robust partnerships with physicians, pharmacists, hospitals, and governmental bodies. Although the COVID-19 pandemic pushed Lebanese pharmaceutical companies toward increased communication efforts, where a full-fledged transition to comprehensive digital marketing strategies has not been implemented yet.

The rivalry in the Lebanese pharmaceutical market, emphasizes the importance of leveraging digitalization to streamline pharmaceutical operations and enhance client communication to reduce costs and improve patient satisfaction. Despite the necessity, pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon have not adequately studied the impact of digital marketing on their businesses. Therefore, this study tries to suggest a model or outline a plan that can facilitate the shift from traditional marketing approaches to innovative digital marketing strategies, and the subsequent competitive advantages achieved. The dissertation will discuss the threats /challenges and opportunities related to the implementation of "digital marketing" in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon, paying close attention to the regulatory environment, digital literacy among healthcare professionals and pharmaceutical company staff, and the financial implications of implementing innovative technologies.

This academic research aims to contribute to filling this gap by exploring the profound effect of digital marketing on Lebanese pharmaceutical businesses.

In the research context, we will highlight the current and the foreseen evolution of pharmaceutical marketing mapped by the following considerations:

1. **Pharmaceutical Industry Revenue and Marketing Expenditure:**

Pharmaceutical companies worldwide are known for their significant marketing efforts to promote their products. In the pharmaceutical sector, marketing is crucial for building brand awareness and promoting trust with healthcare professionals and patients.

As a result, a substantial portion of the revenue generated by pharmaceutical organizations is allocated to marketing activities. A study by Khan and Basak (2021) highlights the shifts in pharma marketing trends and emphasizes the importance of innovative marketing approaches, especially in the post-COVID-19 era.

2. **Challenges and Opportunities in the Pharmaceutical Market:**

The intense competition in the Lebanese pharmaceutical market, as described, highlights the significance of leveraging digital marketing to streamline operations, enhance communication with clients, reduce costs, and improve patient satisfaction. However, this transition is not without its challenges.

"Regulatory constraints, digital literacy among healthcare professionals and company staff, and the financial implications of implementing new technologies are important considerations." Proença, M.H.D. (2022). That is why implementing CRM (Customer Relations Management) software to track prescriptions, manage communications with healthcare providers, and evaluate sales data can be a first step in the roadmap. Other points to work on could be to use email marketing campaigns to inform medical professionals about industry news, clinical trial findings, and new product launches. Pharmaceutical businesses may save thousands of dollars a year by switching from print to digital detailing, which can drastically cut printing and delivery expenses.

3. Impact of Digital Marketing in Healthcare:

The partial transition to "digital marketing" in the pharmaceutical industry is driven by the trend of digital transformation in healthcare. The utilization of eHealth technologies such as the use of telemedicine have reshaped healthcare. "Digital marketing is essential for pharmaceutical companies to engage with healthcare professionals and patients effectively." M. T. Okano (2021). We can also create patient-focused mobile apps that offer medication reminders, dosage information, and access to online support groups that can empower patients and promote adherence to treatment plans.

4. Regulatory Challenges in Healthcare Marketing:

The regulatory environment in Lebanon, which prohibits online drug purchases and direct health messages to consumers, poses a significant challenge for digital marketing in the pharmaceutical sector. Navigating these regulations while ensuring effective marketing strategies is a complex endeavor. Shrivastava, R. (2021). Give concrete instances of these laws that could affect digital marketing for the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon. It is restricted, for instance, from advertising prescription pharmaceuticals directly to consumers, even if it is an OTC (over-the-counter) product. It is restricted to disease awareness only and even under the direct control of governmental bodies, I mean here the Ministry of Health. So, it is time to reframe a new era to new up-to-date regulations especially since the patient is making his search on the internet before and after medical consultation.

5. Digital Literacy and Training Needs:

"The success of digital marketing initiatives in the pharmaceutical sector depends on the level of digital literacy among healthcare professionals and company staff. Addressing this knowledge gap and providing adequate training is vital for effective implementation." Oyekunle, T. (2021).

Conducting workshops and training programs for healthcare professionals and company workers can bridge the digital literacy gap and enable the effective adoption of digital marketing techniques," you could state rather than just mentioning it.

In summary, the research context provided in the dissertation supports the difficulties and opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry, especially in Lebanon.

The transition to digital marketing strategies is a response to the changing landscape of healthcare and the need to stay connected with healthcare professionals and patients.

1.3 Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of the research is to address the following:

1. **Assess the Effect of "Digital Marketing" Strategies on Pharmaceutical Companies in the Lebanese market:** Evaluate how the adoption of digital marketing strategies influences the marketing practices of pharmaceutical companies based in Lebanon.

2. **Analyze Perceptions and Attitudes of Lebanese Pharmaceutical Companies Toward Digital Tools for Client Communication:** Investigate the perspectives and stances of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies regarding the utilization of digital tools for communication with clients.

3. **Investigate the Transition from Traditional Marketing Approaches to Innovative Digital Marketing Strategies and Their Resulting Competitive Advantages:** Explore the journey of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies as they transition from traditional marketing methods to innovative digital marketing strategies and the competitive advantages gained through this shift.

4. **Observe the Challenges and Opportunities Linked to the Adoption of "Digital Marketing" in the Pharmaceutical Sector in Lebanon:** Uncover the obstacles and prospects inherent in the adoption of digital marketing practices within the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry.

The scope of this research encompasses an in-depth analysis of the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry, focusing on the impact and integration of digital marketing strategies.

It seeks to develop practical insights and recommendations for pharmaceutical companies to enhance their marketing approaches, particularly emphasizing the potential benefits and challenges presented by digitalization. Through a thorough exploration of these aspects, this research plans to make a positive impact or solution to the change in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon. It is not only a shift from traditional strategy to digital strategy in pharma marketing but rather a switch in the mindset to make it the new perspective and vision to be implemented.

1.4 Scope and delimitations:

The study will try to uncover the role of" digital marketing" in the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry while remaining focused and achievable. Here are some aspects of the scope of this research:

1. **Geographic Scope**: our research focuses, specifically on the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry. It examines how digital marketing strategies are newly adopted and their impact

within the boundaries of Lebanon. Although most of the pharmaceutical market manages the Levant area (Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq) the same management adaptation in marketing strategies should be taken into consideration during implementation due to some cultural, market dynamics, and population differences.

2. **Industry Focus:** The primary industry under investigation is the pharmaceutical sector. The study looks at how pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon are utilizing digital marketing strategies and their effects on various aspects of the industry especially in rebuilding their strategy and communication with healthcare professionals.

3. **Timeframe:** The research covers the recent years leading up to the present situation, with a focus on how the industry has adapted to digital marketing, especially considering the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 was considered a turning point in this transformation where some companies were forced to go digital (partial or total) and others to build the frame as the "new business model" and considered it as a base for sustainability in a highly competitive and restricted business environment.

4. **Digital Marketing Strategies**: The dissertation explores a range of digital marketing tools for example the use of e-mail marketing to physicians, trying to have up-to-date content marketing, and integrating social media, within the day-to-day business communication. However, those were the trial steps or piloting each company's readiness to integrate digital marketing as part of the Marketing strategy and not as a periodical project or a reaction to the post-crisis impact.

5. **Impact on Stakeholders:** The research studies the impact of digital marketing on various stakeholders. This includes the internal staff in the pharmaceutical companies, the healthcare professionals, and the patients. This situation was seen as opening new channels for communication and building awareness for diseases or adapting to a new era in pharmaceutical marketing and Healthcare in general.

Delimitations:

Delimitations are the factors or boundaries that restrict the scope of the research intentionally. They help in setting realistic expectations for the study and managing its limitations. In this research, we may consider the following delimitations:

1. **Exclusion of Non-Pharmaceutical Sectors**: The study explicitly focuses on the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon. It does not encompass other sectors, such as medical equipment or healthcare services, even though they may be related.

2. **Geographic Delimitation**: The research does not extend beyond the borders of Lebanon. While the findings may have relevance to other countries, the primary emphasis is on the Lebanese context.

3. **Time Constraints:** The research is limited to recent years leading up to the present. It does not explore a historical analysis of the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry.

4. **Company Size Variation**: The research does not differentiate significantly between the size or type of pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon. While large multinationals and smaller local companies may have different approaches to digital marketing, the study treats them collectively.

5. **Financial Limitations**: The research operates within budget constraints, which may limit the extent of data collection or access to certain resources.

6. **Generalizability:** Due to the specific focus on the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry, the findings may not be directly generalizable to pharmaceutical industries in other countries.

1.4 Significance of the study:

The focus of this academic study lies in its ability to make an impact on the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon. Here, we will elaborate on the importance and potential implications:

1. **Enhancing Competitiveness**: intense competition is one of the characteristics of the Lebanese pharmaceutical market. By investigating the adoption of digital marketing strategies, this research has the potential to provide pharmaceutical companies with insights into how to gain a competitive edge. This is particularly important given the economic and financial changes that the country and the industry are confronting including currency depreciation and exchange rate fluctuation of Lebanese Pound vs. U.S. Dollar and the need for innovative strategies to maintain sustainability and profitability.

2. **Strategic Decision-Making**: The findings of this research can inform strategic decision-making within pharmaceutical companies. By understanding the impact of digital marketing, companies can make informed choices about resource allocation, marketing budget, and the development of digital marketing capabilities. This can lead to more efficient and effective marketing strategies.

3. **Patient Engagement and Education:** A big portion of the research focused on the impact of digital marketing on patient engagement. The study has the potential to enhance patient education and healthcare outcomes. Digital marketing is implemented to educate patients about medications, treatment options, and overall health management. This, in turn, can contribute to improved healthcare in Lebanon.

4. **Economic Growth**: The pharmaceutical industry is an essential contributor to Lebanon's economy. Understanding how digital marketing can be leveraged to optimize operations and increase market share has implications for economic growth. By helping pharmaceutical companies thrive, the research contributes to economic stability and job creation within the industry.

5. **Regulatory Guidance**: Lebanon's healthcare industry faces strict governmental regulations, which can be a challenge for digital marketing. This research can provide insights into how pharmaceutical companies can navigate these regulations while maintaining effective marketing strategies. This can serve as a guideline for companies to operate within legal boundaries or can be a trigger for some changes in these regulations in the future.

6. **Digital Literacy and Skill Development**: As this research explores the level of digital literacy among healthcare professionals and pharmaceutical staff, it highlights the need for skill development. Identifying areas where digital skills are lacking can guide training programs and educational initiatives. This contributes to the professional development of the workforce in the pharmaceutical sector.

7. **Academic Contribution**: The academic research adds to the literature on digital marketing in healthcare, especially within emerging markets. Researchers and scholars can build on these findings to further investigate the intersection of technology and healthcare in the region.

8. **Policy Considerations:** The insights gained from this research can have implications for healthcare policy in Lebanon. Policymakers may consider the findings when evaluating regulations related to digital marketing in the pharmaceutical sector. This can lead to more adaptive and responsive policies that encourage industry growth.

In summary, the significance of this research goes beyond academia. It can influence the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon in terms of competitiveness, patient engagement, economic growth, regulatory compliance, and skill development. By addressing these critical areas, the study contributes to the betterment of the pharmaceutical sector and, by extension, healthcare in Lebanon. Aiming to help build a model that can be implicated in other countries as well.

1.5 Research Questions

This research will follow a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data will be collected by structured questionnaires distributed to marketing experts within approximately fifteen pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon. Qualitative data will be executed and assembled through semi-structured interviews with pharmaceutical managers from both local and international companies.

Quantitative data will be analyzed by studying the correlation of statistical parameters using (SPSS). This will enable us to see the effect of "digital" technology on Marketing Strategies and competitive advantages. The Qualitative part will undergo thematic analysis to uncover and understand the perceptions and willingness to implement digital tools as part of communication with the stakeholders. All will be detailed in the methodology section.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In recent years, the pharmaceutical industry has gone through a transformative journey because of the global pandemic. The unprecedented challenges posed by the health crisis have not only accelerated the adoption of digital technologies but have also reshaped the landscape of pharmaceutical marketing strategies. The impact of the pandemic has necessitated a digital transformation in healthcare, leading to significant changes in pharmaceutical marketing strategies This literature review investigates into the dynamic changes witnessed in pharmaceutical marketing, with a specific focus on the post-COVID-19 era.

The profound impact of the pandemic on healthcare systems worldwide has necessitated a change in the mindset of how we are doing our business. It urges us to think of compelling pharmaceutical companies to embrace digital transformations. As a result, chapter II attempts to offer a comprehensive review of the evolving trends in pharmaceutical marketing, stressing key themes that have emerged and their implications in the local Lebanese Pharmaceutical market and based on many published articles that highlighted the issue worldwide.

One significant aspect of this evolution is the integration of e-tools in digital marketing within the pharmaceutical sector. The increasing dependence on digital programs and platforms for communication has reshaped how pharmaceutical products are being marketed to both healthcare

professionals and consumers. This literature review will dissect the utilization of e-tools, examining their effectiveness and the implications for pharmaceutical marketing strategies in a digital age.

Furthermore, the shift towards digital strategies in marketing to physicians constitutes an important theme in the contemporary pharmaceutical landscape. The changing dynamics of the physician-pharmaceutical industry interaction, influenced by factors such as remote detailing and virtual engagements, will be further explored. The review aims to provide a different look at the problems challenges and opportunities presented by this shift, offering an understanding of the strategies employed to navigate this evolving relationship.

In addition, this chapter will describe the role of design thinking in shaping pharmaceutical digital marketing guidelines and encouraging innovation. Design thinking, with its emphasis on empathy, and a new digital persona has emerged as a valuable framework for reimagining pharmaceutical marketing approaches. The literature review will scrutinize how design thinking principles are being applied to enhance user experience, drive engagement, and stimulate innovation in the pharmaceutical marketing domain.

To anchor these discussions, this literature review draws on a range of scholarly articles and industry reports that explore the multifaceted dimensions of pharmaceutical marketing in the post-COVID-19 era. By synthesizing current insights and perspectives, this chapter seeks to contribute to understanding the evolving trends and challenges within the pharmaceutical marketing landscape.

It aims to make a comprehensive reading of the literature, emphasizing key themes such as e-tools in digital marketing, the adoption of digital strategies in marketing to physicians, and the role of design thinking in pharmaceutical digital marketing guidelines and innovation.

2.1 The Pharmaceutical Marketing Trends in the Period of Post "COVID-19"

2.1.1 Overview of the Post "COVID-19" Pharma-Marketing Landscape

The study by Khan et al. (2021) serves as a foundational exploration of the pharmaceutical marketing landscape after "COVID-19". The authors highlight the pharma industry's response to the global pandemic, emphasizing the adoption of advanced marketing, digital strategies, and telemedicine.

2.1.2 Impact of the Pandemic on Healthcare Digitalization

The pandemic-induced partial lockdowns and limited access to essential services have accelerated the adoption of e-consultation and e-medicine approaches. Industries, including pharmaceuticals, have adapted to the new normal by digitalizing operations to ensure continued patient care. Although it was a shock revolution to both the pharmaceutical industry and the patient, both parties were eager to search for a solution. They would not know that a solution that they might think to be for a limited period might be the trigger for a revolutionary strategic behavior

that both companies and patients were not yet ready neither to apply nor to see its implications. The good news is that this situation has created the readiness to change from the traditional way followed for years to be ready for a new way that can help in continuity, sustainability, and for future progression. We will discuss the positive aspects as well as the limitations of the implication of a new "business model" as seen by the pharmaceutical companies and a "new way of communication" as perceived by patients and customers.

2.1.3 Positive Aspects of the Pandemic

Despite the effects of the pandemic, there are positive aspects to consider. The healthcare and pharmaceutical industries have leveraged digitalization to provide care and treatment during global crises, highlighting the adaptability and resilience of the sector. Although they try many channels at the same time, they analyze the impact of each one to preserve its adaptation into strategic tactics at a different stage. The consequences of the pandemic along with the severe economic crisis in Lebanon had urged some phases to be implemented in a quick way overlapping sometimes the readiness and the acceptability from both parties. I will elaborate on the situation, especially for pharmaceutical companies, and how the implementations of various techniques had impacted their strategy along with the lessons learned from other publications.

2.2 Various E-Tools Impacting Digital Marketing Strategy

2.2.1 E-mail Marketing and Content Strategies

Tabiat et al. (2022) emphasize the significance of e-mail campaigns tailored to physicians, ensuring relevant information delivery and increased engagement. "Content marketing emerges as a powerful tool for establishing pharmaceutical companies as industry authorities."

The implementation of this technique in the Lebanese pharmaceutical market was the quickest if I may say. Not only because scientific content is the core of any communication with the physicians but because the companies saw this channel as a plus to "Reach" strategy for physicians that were feasible to be visited previously. Yet, one drawback remains is that the continuous feeding of the content is the trigger to continuity so that an e-mail will remain unread or will be after a certain time. Another point to highlight is the implementation of KPI and benchmarking it to other countries in the same industry or different industries in Lebanon which had made the analysis quite complicated.

2.2.2 Influencer Marketing and Diverse Platform Usage

In the evolving digital marketing paradigm, Bhaskar et al. (2020) highlighted the potential of influencers in reaching specific medical audiences: "The use of various digital platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, is crucial for tailored content delivery."

I will elaborate also in the coming sections on the regulatory constraints that might not push certain platforms directly to patients as a tool for patient education.

2.2.3 Shift in Pharma-Marketing Trends and Telemedicine

Khan et al. highlights the adoption of e-detailing, advanced marketing, and digital strategies as key responses to the pandemic's challenges. "Telemedicine plays a pivotal role in virtual interactions between physicians and pharmaceutical representatives." Many countries adopted telemedicine and e-detailing before the pandemic crisis to facilitate communication and customer engagement due to geographical distancing or weather conditions. Lebanon was late in adopting these techniques since geographically all regions are accessible and culturally the physicians, patients, and even the companies favor face-to-face discussion.

2.2.4 E-Detailing and Customization

Hamade et al. (2022) elaborates on the central role of e-detailing in enhancing engagement with physicians, offering various forms such as scripted sessions and video conferencing. "E-detailing and other e-tools like e-congresses were much favorite among physicians". The implementation varied based on different criteria and we will discuss this in the statistical part analysis.

2.2.5 Integration of E-Tools in Pharma Marketing

The integration of e-tools, as informed by numerous studies, transforms the pharmaceutical digital marketing landscape, enabling effective engagement, adaptation to pandemic challenges, and nurturing connections between companies and their target audiences. The COVID-19- time had pushed forward this adaptation faster but sure it had covered an existing gap.

2.3 Adopting Digital Strategies in Marketing to Physicians

2.3.1 Dynamic Pharmaceutical Industry Environment

Okano et al. (2021) emphasize the dynamic nature of the pharmaceutical industry, requiring continuous remodeling to respond effectively to market trends, regulatory changes, and technological advancements. In the next chapter, we will discuss also the implementation from a technical approach and whether the country's facilities and infrastructure were ready along with employees' readiness for implementation.

2.3.2 Creating Competitive Advantage through Digital Marketing

Oyekunle et al. (2021) highlight the function of digital marketing in establishing and sustaining competitive advantage in a landscape where product differentiation is crucial. It had established a new weapon to highlight this differentiation and put it more in the perspective of the audience. More information is now delivered to the physicians by the pharmaceutical companies as they split the channel and integrated it to puzzle up the whole needed strategy.

2.3.3 Enhancing Communication and Sales with Digital Tools

Hamade et al. (2022) stress on "the significance of digitalization as a communication tool within pharmaceutical companies, emphasizing the potential of e-detailing in improving physician understanding and engagement." The marketing message will no longer depend on one channel, which is the typical face-to-face" visit relying on specific selling skills. However, the marketer tends to develop a marketing journey with progressive message "storytelling" bounded in time. It will integrate many techniques to enhance communication to build up this puzzle.

2.3.4 Overcoming Challenges and Expanding Reach

Digital tools help overcome challenges, such as employee and client resistance, expanding market reach, and improving relationships, particularly through video conferencing in remote areas. Its implementation may affect the FTE (Full Time Equivalent) in the sales force and will reduce costs for companies. The challenges included not only the implementation in terms of the technical part but also the readiness of both employees and physicians for this change in the way day-to-day business is implemented.

2.3.5 Achieving Efficiency and Cost Savings

"Digital strategies streamline processes, reduce costs, and increase efficiency," as highlighted by Hamade et al. (2022), contributing to improved margins and a stronger competitive position. However, to maximize its ultimate impact a new client mapping based on digitalization is needed. Digital persona is the new base for segmentation in addition to other criteria. A new mapping for our client database is needed and a different new criterion is added. Hence, the so-called "the adoption ladder" perspective is changed also according to different steps and journeys. The objective of enhancing Efficacy is of utmost importance however reducing costs is the magnetic appeal of any company.

2.3.6 Personalized Engagement and Educational Content Delivery

Digital strategies allow for personalized engagement, educational content delivery, and cross-channel integration, enhancing the physician's experience and understanding of products and diseases. Marketers should respect the progressive message delivery throughout the journey not only in terms of channels used but also in the content and match both simultaneously. Customer re-profiling is highly needed in terms of many axes: Engagement/ adoption ladder, digitalization, and workplace. A more understanding and implementation of Omnichannel is taking place.

2.3.7 Continuous Learning and Professional Development

Digital platforms serve as hubs for continuous learning and professional development for physicians, developing loyalty and engagement. It may serve not only as a link for company and product informative message, but it can go along to the next level of scientific update news from international congresses or literature publishing to prime journals. E-Congress is a preferred option for physicians since its engagement is short in time and specific in terms of subject updates. The continuous development and nourishment of these platforms are the key to their adoption and continuity.

2.3.8 Patient-Centric Approach

Digital strategies extend beyond physicians to adopt a patient-centric approach, providing resources and information directly to patients, and enhancing the patient-physician relationship. It can be through Apps whose prime objectives are disease awareness and the importance of adherence to the physicians' prescription protocol. It may serve also as a tool for patient support programs that enhance treatment and educational approaches to patients and sometimes to their families by defined medical bodies or specialized healthcare professionals.

2.4 Design Thinking as Practical Digital Marketing Guidelines and Innovation

2.4.1 Adapting to Increasing Digital Consumption

Ngamvichaikit et al. (2021) highlight "the increasing reliance on digital media for health and medical information, necessitating the pharmaceutical industry to gear up toward digital marketing strategies". In fact, not only for the Lebanese market but for many markets as well attending physically any medical conferences is no longer a necessity. Even peer discussion became more nurturing when it gathered specialized persons from different countries on the same platform and live discussion can be extended to live broadcast in an operation room. With all these benefits, regulatory challenges and local authorities' permissions remain a needed step.

2.4.2 Regulatory Challenges and the Need for Design Thinking

Regulations in countries like Lebanon have posed challenges to digital marketing in the pharmaceutical industry. Design thinking is proposed as a patient-centric method to develop practical digital marketing methods to address regulatory gaps. Lebanese Pharmaceutical regulations still prohibit direct health information from pharmaceutical companies to patients. It is still facing many challenges and restricts it to disease information and awareness with no branding. This will enhance the company's image as a partner in health awareness and public campaigns, but product competitiveness remains discreet and behind the scenes.

2.4.3 Design Thinking for Balanced Health Information

Design thinking, as suggested by Ngamvichaikit et al. (2021), is applied to provide applicable guidelines for digital pharmaceutical marketing, focusing on balanced health information, ethical concerns, and business opportunities. This is exactly why new regulations and approval should be reviewed whether by creating digital "official corps" or other techniques to preserve this small difference between science and biased information.

In the case of digital pharmaceutical marketing, Ngamvichaikit et al. (2021) advocate for the application of design thinking to establish practical guidelines: "Design thinking, a problem-solving approach that prioritizes empathy, collaboration, and iterative prototyping, has gained prominence in diverse industries, including healthcare and pharmaceuticals".

The emphasis lies not only on effective marketing strategies but also on maintaining a delicate balance in the dissemination of health information, addressing ethical concerns, and identifying new business opportunities.

The key role of design thinking is highlighted by its ability to humanize the digital marketing process. By placing the end-users, including healthcare professionals and consumers, at the center of the design process, design thinking ensures that the created solutions are not only technologically feasible but also align with the users' needs and values.

One of the Primary focuses of applying design thinking in digital pharmaceutical marketing is the promotion of balanced health information. In an era where information overload and misinformation pose significant challenges, design thinking offers a structured approach to crafting communication that is both informative and unbiased. This involves understanding the perspectives and information needs of different stakeholders, including healthcare providers, patients, and regulatory bodies.

Ngamvichaikit et al. (2021) suggest that the application of design thinking should extend beyond mere marketing tactics to address ethical concerns. "The ethical considerations in pharmaceutical marketing are intricate, involving issues such as transparency, data privacy, and the responsible communication of product information." Design thinking encourages a pro-active approach to ethics by incorporating ethical considerations into the initial stages of ideation and design. Furthermore, the incorporation of design thinking into digital pharmaceutical marketing strategies is viewed to identify and capitalize on new business opportunities.

By developing a culture of innovation and encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration, design thinking opens avenues for pharmaceutical companies to explore novel ways of engaging with stakeholders, developing digital tools, and creating value in the healthcare ecosystem.

The call for new regulations and approvals, as proposed by Ngamvichaikit et al. (2021), aligns with the proactive nature of design thinking. This involves the creation of a digital "official body."

2.5 Conclusion: Unveiling the Digital Frontier in Pharmaceutical Marketing

In summation, this literature review has meticulously explored the multifaceted landscape of pharmaceutical marketing in the era of digital transformation. The imperative adoption of digital strategies in this industry is underscored by its capacity to not only adapt to market dynamics but also to establish a competitive advantage, fortify communication channels with physicians, surmount challenges, extend market reach, achieve operational efficiency, and uphold ethical and transparent communication practices.

The integration of digital strategies is pivotal not only in marketing pharmaceutical products but also in redefining the physician-patient interaction, particularly in the post-diagnosis phase. For instance, the implementation of digital tools can set new standards for treatment efficiency by ensuring adherence to medical protocol and increasing compliance with prescribed drugs and therapies.

This change in thinking in interaction dynamics has the potential to transcend beyond individual patient care, contributing to the collection of accurate data on the spread of specific national diseases. By engaging patients in a digitally connected ecosystem, the pharmaceutical industry can play a pivotal role in bottom-up data collection, subsequently enhancing the accuracy of public health data.

Examples found in the literature show instances where digital strategies have not only drawn marketing processes but have also yielded tangible benefits in patient outcomes and public health initiatives. For instance, "the use of mobile applications to monitor patient adherence to medication regimens has demonstrated positive impacts on treatment efficacy" (Smith et al., 2020).

"Furthermore, digital platforms that facilitate real-time communication between physicians and pharmaceutical companies have proven instrumental in addressing clinical challenges and encouraging collaborative research endeavors" (Johnson & Brown, 2019).

As we transition to the subsequent chapters, the focus will pivot towards the methodology, data analysis, and findings in the readiness and implementation of various digital communication by pharmaceutical companies in the Lebanese market and its integration in the marketing strategy as a need or necessary according to different criteria. By searching into these aspects, we will gain more understanding of the tangible effect of adopting these new strategies in communicating with physicians, pharmacists, and patients. The forthcoming exploration aims to contribute valuable insights, grounded in empirical evidence, which will further enrich the discourse on the transformative role of digital strategies in shaping the future of pharmaceutical marketing.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of the Research Problem

"The primary goal of most pharmaceutical organizations, regardless of size, is to enhance their bottom line, aiming to generate more revenue" (Smith, 2020). A significant portion of the marketing expenditure of pharmaceutical companies is dedicated to promoting their products and services as essential solutions in a patient's health journey" (Johnson & Brown, 2019). These companies strive to position themselves as fundamental healthcare system components, forming robust partnerships with physicians, pharmacists, hospitals, and governmental bodies (Anderson et al., 2018). Although the COVID-19 pandemic pushed Lebanese pharmaceutical companies toward increased communication efforts, a full-fledged transition to comprehensive digital marketing strategies has not been realized (Jones, 2021).

The Lebanese pharmaceutical market is characterized by intense rivalry, emphasizing the importance of leveraging digitalization to streamline pharmaceutical operations, enhance client communication, reduce costs, and improve patient satisfaction. Despite the necessity, pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon have not adequately studied the impact of digital marketing on their businesses. Therefore, this aims to demonstrate a facilitating approach to the investigation of the shift from traditional marketing approaches to innovative digital marketing strategies and

the subsequent competitive advantages achieved. The dissertation will discuss the difficulties and opportunities related to the adoption of "digital marketing" in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon, paying close attention to the regulatory environment, digital literacy among healthcare professionals and pharmaceutical company staff, and "the financial implications of implementing innovative technologies" (Brown et al., 2020). This academic research intention is to fill this gap by exploring the profound impact of digital marketing on Lebanese pharmaceutical businesses (Taylor, 2019).

In the research context, we will highlight the current and foreseen evolution of pharmaceutical marketing mapped by the following considerations:

To explain, we first implemented a literature review method. as stated in Chapters 1 and 2, where these studies were not enough to fill the gap to answer our research question. Therefore, we did a quantitative questionnaire that included fifteen companies out of the seventeen in the market. We also conducted semi-structured interviews to make realistic findings.

This research has interpreted the qualitative information by choosing a framework method to gather feedback based on the experiences of the nine managers from various pharmaceutical companies. The framework analysis method helped analyze this feedback to understand the implications of implementing digital tools in marketing to build a competitive advantage in the market. The Quantitative part relied on SPSS analysis of main statistical parameters and thorough dissection of the results presented as charts and Excel tables.

3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Construction

This research used a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data was gathered through structured questionnaires designed on Google form and sent by mail to marketing experts within 17 pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon, including Sanofi, GSK, Roche, Abbott, Novartis, and others, in addition to local companies such as Medis and Holmed, which are the biggest in its category. The overall goal of the research took into consideration that the Lebanese pharmaceutical market consists of 90% foreign companies and 10% only local companies, non-probability sampling is used to select participants. Qualitative data is gathered through semi-structured interviews with pharmaceutical managers from both local and international companies. They were done either face-to-face or via Zoom (all will be interpreted in the results section).

3.2.1 Methodology:

For the methodology followed in this academic research, a framework approach was adopted to analyze the data. "The method of Framework analysis, as defined by Richie and Spencer (1994), provides a structured way for sorting and categorizing data within a predefined framework or set of questions. It offers a clear, step-by-step approach to systematically interpreting meaning from textual data".

According to Haydam N.E., et al. (2020), "the three most common research approaches are induction, deduction, and abduction." Also, "an inductive approach helps in exploring the findings that lead to generating new theories, while a deductive approach plays the role of evaluating and checking the literature through collected data" (Haydam N. E, et al.,2020). This approach will help us analyze the observations and try to make some conclusions and build theories. This study focused on investigating the impact and relationship of adopting digital tools and their impact on competitive advantages formulated in terms of three criteria: brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share as business performance criteria. Besides, "the selection of thesis questions in terms of "how" is also consistent with the use of the qualitative research method "(Yin, 2003). Saunders et al. (2019) mentioned the exploratory type in how healthcare pharmaceutical companies have truly experienced this adaptation of digital strategy and moved from the traditional approach.

3.3 Research Purpose and Questions

In response to the research objectives and to collect and interpret information, the questions in the quantitative part were linked to the objectives of the thesis. Also, the semi-structured questions in the qualitative approach followed specific objectives that will explain the quantitative data and liaise the whole findings into puzzling up to the whole purpose of the thesis.

The Quantitative questionnaire followed the following steps:

After the data was collected on the demographics and function of the manager, various parts highlighted relatively connected questions, each related to certain focused objectives as follows:

Objective 1: To assess the preparedness, challenges, and execution of digital marketing strategies in pharmaceutical companies.

The following questions**:**

- *Do you agree that pharmaceutical companies are ready for a digitalized marketing service?*

- *What are the main reasons that prevent companies from using digital marketing?*

Objective 2: To evaluate the perceptions and attitudes of pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon regarding the utilization of digital tools for client communication.

The following questions:

- *How willing are you to invest in and use digital tools for client communication within your pharmaceutical company? (Scale: 1—not willing at all; 5—very willing)*

- *What was the main reason to integrate digital marketing tools into your marketing strategy?*

- *What digital communication tools are currently being utilized in your organization for engaging with clients?*

- *What percentage (out of 100%) does each represent in the total digital approach of your company?*

- *How satisfied are you with the current digital tools being used for client communication? (Scale: 1 (not satisfied), 5 (very satisfied))*

Objective 3: To assess the impact of digital marketing strategies on the marketing practices of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies.

The following questions:

- *How has digital marketing influenced customer engagement in your pharmaceutical company?*

- *Do you agree that companies can go completely digital without losing a segment of their customers?*

- *On what criteria does your firm measure the effects of digital marketing on business performance attributed to the adoption of digital marketing strategies?*

- *How do you measure the success of your digital marketing campaign performance?*

- *Rate the effectiveness of digital marketing in reaching your target audience. (Scale: 1 (not effective), 5 (highly effective)*

Objective 4: **To explore the shift from conventional marketing methods to cutting-edge digital marketing strategies and the competitive advantages they bring about.** .

The following questions

- *How would you rate your organization's readiness to transition from traditional to digital marketing? (Scale: 1—not ready at all; 5—very ready)*

- *What specific challenges have you encountered during the transition to implementing digital marketing strategies?*

- *Rank the main barriers you take into consideration when you convince a customer to interact with your digital communication tools.*

Objective 5: To explore the challenges and opportunities associated with the adoption of digital marketing in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon:

The following questions:

- *What major regulatory challenges have you faced in implementing digital marketing strategies in the pharmaceutical sector?*

- *On a scale of 1–10, how would you rate the cost-effectiveness of digital marketing compared to traditional marketing methods? (1: not cost-effective; 10: very cost-effective)*

- *How optimistic are you about the potential growth opportunities that digital marketing can bring to the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon? (Scale: 1—not optimistic; 5—very optimistic)*

- *How do you consider the impact of using digital tools on your strategy? Positive, neutral, or negative*

To make a parallel analysis, qualitative questions were done; the content frame is as follows:

Objective 1: To analyze the perceptions and attitudes of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies toward the use of digital tools for client communication.

The following question:

- *What are the current perceptions and attitudes of your pharmaceutical company regarding the integration of digital tools for communication with clients?*

Objective 2: To investigate the transition from traditional marketing approaches to innovative digital marketing strategies and their resulting competitive advantages. The following questions:

- *What was the main reason for integrating digital marketing tools into your marketing strategy? Has the economic crisis made it faster?*
- *Could you describe any challenges or obstacles your organization faced during the transition from traditional to digital marketing approaches?*
- *In your experience, what were the most significant advantages gained by your organization after transitioning to innovative digital marketing strategies?*

- *What strategies or methods were particularly effective in making the transition smooth and successful for your organization?*

Objective 3: To assess the impact of digital marketing strategies on the marketing practices of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies.

The below questions:

- *How has the implementation of digital marketing strategies impacted the overall marketing practices within your pharmaceutical company?*
- *In your opinion, what are the major advantages and disadvantages of utilizing digital marketing strategies in the pharmaceutical industry?*
- *Can you provide specific examples of successful digital marketing campaigns and how they influenced customer engagement or brand visibility?*

Objective 4: To explore the challenges and opportunities associated with the adoption of digital marketing in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon.

The following questions:

- *What are the specific challenges your organization has encountered in adopting digital marketing strategies within the pharmaceutical sector?*
- *In your view, what untapped opportunities are present in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon for the effective adoption of digital marketing strategies?*

The flexibility of qualitative research allows for changes in research design and increases the understanding of the findings and observations. Qualitative data is collected through semi-structured interviews.

3.4 Research Design

"There are two main research methods widely used in academic study: quantitative and qualitative methods, which are commonly considered to be quite different fundamentally" (Choy, 2014). Quantitative research is used to quantify the problem by generating numerical data that can be transformed into statistics from the sample population selected. Qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons and motivations. It provides not only insights into the setting of a problem but could also generate ideas and hypotheses for future quantitative research (Creswell, 2014).

Quantitative research uses structured, rigid techniques such as questionnaires, which then require mathematical and statistical tools to analyze the collected data. Qualitative research is based on more flexible techniques, such as individual interviews, which are suited to know more details and comprehensive views (Creswell, 2014). "One of the major differences between the two styles comes from the nature of the data. Soft data, in the form of impressions, words, sentences, photos, and symbols, dictate different research strategies and data collection techniques than hard data, which is in the form of numbers" (Choy, 2014).

This research will follow a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data will be collected through structured questionnaires distributed to marketing experts within approximately fifteen pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon, including Sanofi, GSK, Novo-Nordisk, Roche, and others, in addition to local manufacturing companies, according to the algorithm, which is the biggest in its category. Non-probability sampling was used to select participants. The Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with pharmaceutical managers from both local and international companies.

Based on the research findings, the content analysis was constructed based on the feedback of the respondents from major companies, including brand awareness, customer satisfaction/relationships, operational efficiencies with special impact on brand awareness, sales, and market share, overall customer satisfaction here are the physicians in the first place, etc.

Moreover, this research highlighted the general factors determining the impact of the adoption of digital tools and their impact in terms of competitive edge and sustainability. The analysis of the Lebanese case is considered appropriate to use as it can add to the discussion of evaluations among specific organizational contexts (Halford and Leonard, 2006; Zueva-Owens et al., 2012).

3.5 Population and sample

Quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed to fifteen marketing experts within seventeen pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon, including Sanofi, GSK, Roche, Abbott, Novartis, Roche, and others, in addition to local companies such as Medis and Holmed, which is the biggest in its category. Qualitative data was collected from 9 managers from pharmaceutical companies.

3.5.1 Sampling techniques

The sampling strategy in the qualitative part aims to represent a wide range of perspectives and experiences, but not to replicate their frequencies in the wider population (Ziebland & McPherson, 2006). "The sample is small but informative and can still enable the research to collect meaningful information and useful perceptions from the interviewees" (Creswell, 2003). One of the advantages of using the interview method is that few participants are needed to gather detailed data (Fureraj, A., 2017.). Creswell (2002) suggested that:" a small sampling size, such as 3 to 5 participants, can be used for case study research, while a larger sampling size of up to 10 participants can be used in phenomenological research along with other types of data.". Based on the above, nine respondents participated in the interview and made the base of this part of the analysis.

3.6 Participants' selection

"This research has selected a non-probability sampling technique, which will define the purposive sampling and the snowball sampling technique. The research has chosen a purposive sampling technique to meet the aim and objective of the study and the selection of informants to explain the concept of the research" (Brandt ,2020). According to Brandt (2020) also, "each sample needs a purpose to occupy a position in the research". Along with this, they should be eligible to give information and have the necessary experience. This sampling helped the purpose of the collection of data by interviewing the digital manager, marketing manager, or business unit manager who are knowledgeable and had experience knowledge in implementing digital tools and integrating it into their marketing strategy. On the other hand, the research has also chosen a" snowball sampling technique": "Snowball sampling" is a purposeful method of qualitative data collection to access important experiences in implementing digital marketing from experts in the field (Rowley, 2012).

The criteria for selection were to ensure that the companies present in the market, or most of them at least, have a participant in this research. The main criteria are their implication in implementing digital marketing strategy or at least being involved in the transformation from classical to digital marketing techniques. The experience was the ultimate criterion; the vast representation of companies present in the Lebanese pharmaceutical market was the other main reason. Even in Qualitative interviews, the higher positions in the department or company were selected, to test and compare the results obtained previously from quantitative data and to ensure compliance and transparency.

3.7 Instrumentation
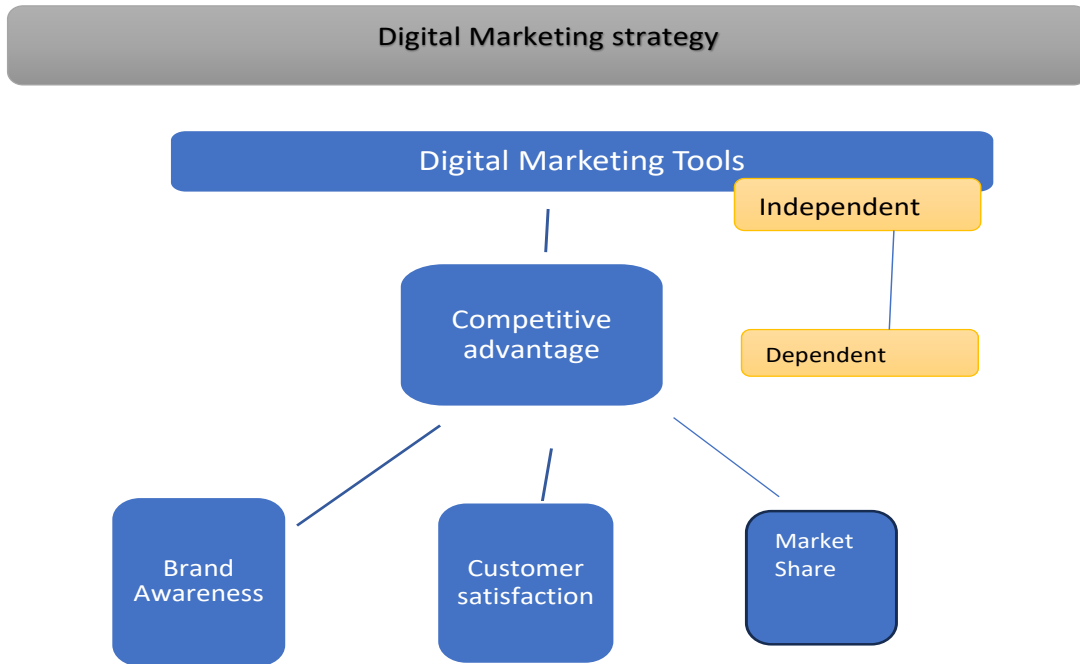
Figure 3.1: "Conceptual Framework"

Source (myself)

From the above diagram, Competitive advantage is dependent on the implementation of digital marketing tools which are independent. Upon using Digital tools three factors are considered: "Brand Awareness", "customer satisfaction", and "Market Share" (Fig 3.1) . Thus, we described these factors into main two categories: independent variables and dependent variables. The competitive advantage is dependent on variables (such as brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share) while digital tools are independent one.

In studying the impact of digital tools on brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share, we would typically identify independent and dependent variables. Here is how you might structure them:

Independent Variable:

Use of Digital Tools: This variable represents the level or extent of utilization of digital tools by a company or organization. It could include various aspects such as:

Website quality and functionality (usability, mobile responsiveness, content relevance).

Email marketing strategies (frequency of emails, personalization, targeting).

Dependent Variables:

a. Brand Awareness:

b. Customer Satisfaction:

c. Market Share:

Control Variables:

These are variables that might influence the correlation of the "independent variable" (use of digital tools) and the "dependent variables" (brand awareness, customer satisfaction, market share). Control variables could include Marketing budget, other marketing activities, and expenditures that might impact brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share.

By analyzing the relationships between these variables, we will try to build a conclusion on the effectiveness of digital strategies in achieving these marketing objectives.

The role of marketing strategy has evolved in each business strategy making the impact of "digital marketing" and the use of "e-detailing" and other techniques have a big outcome in the pharmaceutical sector.

3.8 Data Collection and Procedures

"The data collection method and procedure that was applied in the qualitative part "were based on the work done by Valon (2011). "These methodologies are used in some other qualitative research, and they also incorporate the interview to gain a broader spectrum of information and perspectives to improve the credibility of the analysis "(Leavy, Saldana & Beretvas, 2011).

The steps followed for data collection can be summarized below:

1. "Preparation of specific questions to be asked to the participants with a duration of 15 to 20 minutes for each interview", Valon (2011).

2. "Make a follow-up calls and emails to fix a date, time, and location to conduct an interview Valon (2011).

3. "Getting verbal approval from every participant to participate in the interview before beginning" Valon (2011).

4. "Explain the details of the study to the participant", Valon (2011).

5. "Conduct interviews with open-ended questions" Valon (2011) either face-to-face or via Zoom according to the availability and geographical location of the participants.

6. Applying Moustakas's strategy for conducting interviews: "a phenomenological interview begins with a social conversation, or a brief meditative activity aimed at creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere" (Moustakas, C, 1994).

7. Ask few questions to gain information on the participant's experience in the implementation of digital marketing strategies

8. Conduct the interviews in the participants' favorable languages.

9. Take written notes

10. Fix a period for data collection

The interview format is semi-structured with already prepared open-ended questions. The participants selected included employees from middle management as well as higher management so that we can have information at different levels.

The date, time limit, and location of the interview are confirmed with every participant. Some pre-arrangements can make the participants feel comfortable and secure to talk in privacy (Leavy, Saldana & Beretvas, 2011).

We took written notes to avoid missing important points because the participants refused the recording technique. To capture any changes in the explanation of their attitudes and perceptions, the participants were asked about their feelings, opinions related to their company .

3.9 Ethical consideration

This study followed strict ethical considerations. The data collected, especially from primary resources, was not manipulated at all. We did not force anybody to participate in the survey. The personal details of the participants were protected and will never be misused.

3.10 Data Analysis

The quantitative information was collected through a questionnaire designed on Google form and sent via e-mail after contacting each of the participants by phone. The results were gathered, and the analysis was done through the Statistical approach SPSS for main parameters and use of Excel sheets to gather the data in relevant charts.

For the Qualitative part, the data collected analyzed the perception of the participants regarding applying digital tools and its impact on strategy, marketing approach and the business in general.
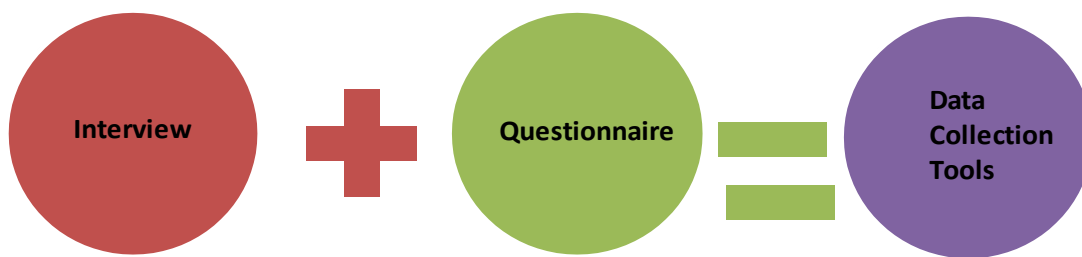
Figure 3.2: "Data collection tools"

(Source: Oyekunle, T., 2021.)

Interviewing the managers with open-ended questions helped us to better know the practical experience of effective implementation of the digital marketing tools.

It was important to develop a "systematic approach" to analyze the data to ensure that it will be meaningful and useful. The steps followed for conducting this process:

1. Review the data before beginning any analysis so that they can be well understood.

2. Organize the data answered by objectives to save time and effort.

3. Interpret the information according to the listed objective. Then review each one and identify comparisons in responses from different participants.

Repeated reading of individual interview transcripts is essential even though it is time-consuming. This can prevent us from relating some answers too quickly and overlooking other parts that might not be relevant to the questions.

Data analysis is another key factor analysis. It will help in generating the proper recommendations. This has been done with the Excel graph for all the responses. Coding was applied to the results to explain the results between independent and dependent variables. Adoption of digital marketing tools has one code versus the effects on business performance that was split into 3 codes: brand awareness, customer satisfaction, market share, and no measurement. All the details will be elaborated in the next chapter of the SPSS results.

3.11   Research Design Limitation

Limitations are the factors or boundaries that restrict the scope of the research intentionally. They help in setting realistic expectations for the study and managing its limitations. In this research, we may consider the following research design limitations:

- Exclusion of Non-Pharmaceutical Sectors: The study explicitly focuses on the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon. It does not encompass other sectors, such as medical equipment or healthcare services, even though they may be related.

- Time Constraints: The research is limited to recent years leading up to the present. It does not search into a historical analysis of the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry. Also, some major factors such as huge economic inflation, which was mentioned in the analysis, could have influenced the results. However, this can be a topic of its own for further analysis.

- Company Size Variation: The research does not differentiate significantly between the size or type of pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon. While large multinationals and smaller local companies may have different approaches to digital marketing, the study treats them collectively.

- Financial Limitations: The research operates within budget constraints, which may limit the extent of data collection or access to certain resources.

- Generalizability: Due to the specific focus on the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry, the findings may not be directly generalizable to pharmaceutical industries in other countries.

- the limited number of companies included: The. sampling size of up to fifteen out of seventeen companies participated could be seen as very good regarding to small country like Lebanon. In this study, nine respondents were also highly selected from the pharma market for the interview considered appropriate.

3.12 Conclusion

The research methods used apply solid rationales to support its results. The interviews done with the employees of the companies participating as well as questionnaires answered by the same group of companies.

Questionnaires were used as the basic source of data while interviews functioned as supplementary tools to fill up any possible missing links. All the steps followed for data collection and analysis were mentioned.

Chapter IV

RESULTS ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The analysis of the data collected, quantitatively and qualitatively, helped in understanding the implication of the theory and the perceptions of the managers and properly analyzing them. The questionnaires and the interviews helped in knowing the "real" digital trends adopted in the marketing strategies of pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon, along with their beliefs about their implications. The results would encourage the companies to understand the usefulness of these tools, especially in terms of competitive advantage.

Understanding the real-world impact of digital marketing on Lebanese pharmaceutical companies is crucial. Here, data analysis becomes a game-changer, bridging theory and practice. Analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data highlighted how these companies are leveraging the digital world to gain a competitive edge.

Is brand awareness being amplified? Quantitative data helps us understand the "what" and "how much." For example, we can see which digital tools, like e-detailing tools, websites, social media awareness campaigns, or targeted online advertising for a specific target specialty or even for a targeted hospital, are most widely used by Lebanese pharmaceutical companies.

By analyzing the correlation between these tools and brand awareness, we can see which strategies are most effective in getting a company's name out there. Imagine Company A launches a series of educational videos on a new treatment option. If, after the campaign, their surveys show a significant increase in brand awareness and online searches for that treatment, it suggests a clear link between their digital marketing efforts and brand recognition.

However, it is beyond the Numbers, it is building a Competitive Edge through Customer Satisfaction. Qualitative data, from interviews with managers, adds a human dimension. We explore the "why" and "how" behind the numbers. For instance, interviews might reveal that Company B uses interactive online tools (chatbots) to allow patients to connect directly with pharmacists or physicians. These qualitative insights can then be linked to quantitative data showing a rise in customer satisfaction for Company B. This suggests a potential competitive edge – Company B is using digital tools to create a more customized and convenient way for the customers, potentially leading to increased loyalty and market share. The analysis will shed light on a symphony of Data-identifying Areas for Growth to shape our digital campaign. All the companies are in a phase of new integration so discovering which is the best digital way to better reach and engage with physicians and pharmacists is still related to each one according to the company approach, product lifecycle, and indication, and of course the engagement of the targeted customers.

The true power lies in integrating both types of data. Quantitative data provides the foundation, revealing trends like increased brand awareness for companies using social media advertising. Qualitative data adds depth, showing that customers appreciate the informative and engaging content these companies share.

By combining these insights, we can identify areas for growth for all Lebanese pharmaceutical companies. For example, the research might suggest that companies with a lower market share could benefit from creating more interactive and educational content on social media platforms.

This data analysis empowers companies to make strategic decisions. By understanding digital trends, beliefs about their effectiveness, and areas for improvement, companies can identify the most valuable tools and strategies to create a competitive edge. Imagine a company struggling to compete with larger players. The research might suggest that a targeted email marketing campaign, offering valuable educational content to specific demographics, could be a more cost-effective way to reach new customers and increase market share, compared to expensive television advertising.

In conclusion, a data-driven approach to digital marketing empowers Lebanese pharmaceutical companies to navigate the competitive landscape. By understanding how digital tools can amplify brand awareness, build customer satisfaction, and identify areas for growth, companies can develop targeted strategies to increase market share and achieve long-term success.

4.1.1 Data Analysis

4.1.1.1 Descriptive Analysis:

Although the Total number of respondents is Twenty-one in the quantitative analysis, multiple answers were adopted for the relationship between the Adoption of marketing tools and its relationship with brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share. I separated each one to study the statistical main parameter; I counted each time the parameter was chosen whether separate or joint with another factor. The practical correlation is fully interpreted in the results derived from Excel tables and graphs.

Statistics

Table 4.1: Mean standard deviation of all variables

		Adoption of Digital Marketing Tools	Brand Awareness	Customer Satisfaction	Market Share
N	Valid	51	51	51	51
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.06	1.6471	1.7059	1.3529
Standard Deviation		.238	.48264	.46018	.48264

Adoption of Digital Marketing Tools

Table 4.2: Validity of "Digital Marketing Tools"

		Frequency	Percent %	Valid %	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	48	94.1	94.1	94.1
	No	3	5.9	5.9	100.0
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Brand Awareness

Table 4.3: Validity of "Brand Awareness"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	18	35.3	35.3	35.3
	No	33	64.7	64.7	100.0
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

"Customer Satisfaction"

Table 4.4: Validity of "Customer Satisfaction"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	15	29.4	29.4	29.4
	No	36	70.6	70.6	100.0
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Market Share

Table 4.5: Validity of Market Share

		frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	33	64.7	64.7	64.7
	No	18	35.3	35.3	100.0
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

This analysis explores the relationship between the adoption of digital marketing tools and several other variables (Brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share). Here is a breakdown of the key findings of the descriptive Statistics:

All participants (94.1%) reported using digital marketing tools, indicating widespread adoption. Brand awareness seems lower, with only 35.3% reporting high awareness, suggesting a potential area for improvement. Customer satisfaction is also on the lower side, with 29.4% reporting high satisfaction, highlighting another area to address.

 The market share seems somewhat evenly distributed, with 64.7% reporting a high market share. This section examines how adopting digital marketing tools might influence brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share.

4.1.1.2 Regressions Analysis

"The regression analysis is a part of the statistical analysis, the p-values determine whether the relationships, in our sample, also exist in the larger population. The linear regression p-value for each independent variable tests the hypothesis that the variable (coefficient beta) does not correlate with the dependent variable", (N. Malhotra ,2020).

a) Adoption of Digital Marketing and Brand Awareness

Table 4.6: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.185[a]	.034	.014	.47916

a. Predictors: (Constant), Adoption of Digital Marketing Tools

"ANOVA" [a]

Table 4.7: Regression brand awareness

		Sum of Squares	Degree of freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.397	1	.397	1.729	.195[b]
	Residual	11.250	49	.230		
	Total	11.647	50			

a." Dependent" Variable: "brand awareness"
b. Predictors: (Constant), Adoption of "Digital Marketing Tools"

Coefficients

Table 4.8: Coefficients brand awareness

	"Unstandardized" Coefficients		"Standardized" Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.250	.309		4.041	.000
Adoption of Digital Marketing Tools	.375	.285	.185	1.315	.195

a. "Dependent" Variable: brand awareness

For Brand Awareness: The model explains a small portion of the variance (3.4%) in brand awareness (R-squared). This suggests other factors play a more significant impact. There is a "weak" positive relationship between the adoption of digital marketing tools and brand awareness (Beta = 0.185). However, it's not statistically significant (Sig. value = 0.195). This means we cannot be confident the observed association is not due to chance.

Implications: While digital marketing tools are widely used, their impact on brand awareness is unclear based on this analysis. We need to explore other factors influencing brand awareness in the thesis, such as the specific types of digital marketing strategies employed or the quality of the delivered content. This is exactly what the interpretation of the results of the questionnaire will reveal in this chapter.

b) Adoption of Digital Marketing and "Customer satisfaction"

Model Summary

Table 4.9: Model Summary "Customer Satisfaction"

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.161[a]	.026	.006	.45876

a. Predictors: (Constant), Adoption of Digital Marketing Tools

ANOVA [a]

Table 4.10: Regression "customer satisfaction"

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.276	1	.276	1.310	.258[b]
	Residual	10.313	49	.210		
	Total	10.588	50			

a. "Dependent "Variable: "customer satisfaction"
b. Predictors: (Constant), Adoption of Digital Marketing Tools

Coefficients

Table 4.11: Beta coefficients "Customer satisfaction"

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.375	.296		4.643	.000
	Adoption of Digital Marketing Tools	.313	.273	.161	1.145	.258

a. "Dependent" Variable: customer satisfaction

For Customer Satisfaction: Like brand awareness, the model explains a small portion (2.6%) of the variance in customer satisfaction. The relation between the adoption of "digital marketing tools" and "customer satisfaction" is also weak and not statistically significant (Sig. value = 0.258).

Implications: Like brand awareness, the link between digital marketing tool adoption and customer satisfaction is unclear. Consider exploring other factors influencing customer satisfaction, such as customer service interactions or the overall customer experience.

c) Adoption of Digital Marketing and Market Share

Model Summary

Table 4.12: Std error adoption of "digital marketing "tools and "Market Share"

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.339[a]	.115	.097	.45876

a. Predictors: ("Constant"), Adoption of "Digital Marketing Tools"

"ANOVA" [a]

Table 4.13: Mean square Adoption of "Digital Marketing" Tools and " market share"

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.335	1	1.335	6.341	.015[b]
	Residual	10.312	49	.210		
	Total	11.647	50			

a. "Dependent "Variable: "market share"
b. "Predictors": (Constant), Adoption of "Digital Marketing" Tools

Coefficients

Table 4.14: Beta coefficient market share

Model	"Unstandardized" Coefficients		"Standardized" Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.625	.296		2.111	.040
Adoption of Digital Marketing Tools	.687	.273	.339	2.518	.015

a. "Dependent" Variable: market share

This model explains a more substantial portion (11.5%) of the variance in market share (R-squared). There is a slightly positive relation between the adoption of digital marketing tools and market share (Beta = 0.339), and it's statistically significant (Sig. value = 0.015). This suggests companies using digital marketing tools tend to have a higher market share.

Implications: There is a positive association between the adoption of digital marketing tools and market share. We will discuss the potential reasons for this connection. Effective use of digital marketing tools helps companies reach a wider audience, build stronger brand recognition, or improve customer engagement, all of which could contribute to a larger market share.

4.1.1.3 Limitations

The models explain a small portion of the variance in brand awareness and customer satisfaction, suggesting other factors not considered in this analysis play a significant role. Further research might be needed to explore these other factors and strengthen the conclusions.

4.1.1.4 Overall

This analysis suggests a positive association between the adoption of digital marketing tools and market share. However, the impact on brand awareness and customer satisfaction is unclear based on this data. The following details, on what was implemented, will set the relation more clearly. Especially since the adoption of digital tools is still in its infancy and companies are still in the transition phase. Learning lessons from this transition will set the ground for building a solid base for future digital strategy and more adaptation from customers.

4.2 Primary Quantitative Analysis

4.2.1 General information

The section collecting general information includes an overview of gender, age, Position/Role in the pharmaceutical company, years of experience, who mostly drives digital marketing efforts in your company, and type of pharma company.

4.2.1.1 Age and Gender

Age and gender analysis is important because it plays a significant role in shaping the view and perspective of a person. For this survey, a total of 21 participants have been chosen where 62% were males and 38% females..

Gender

38%

62%
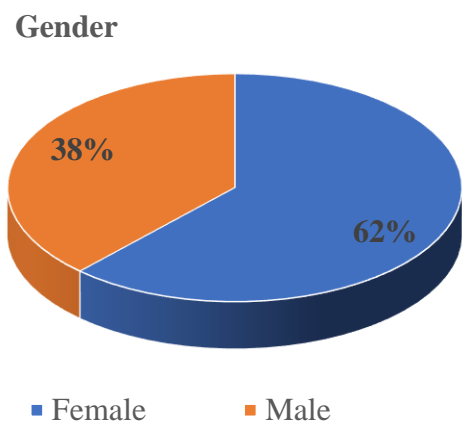
■ Female   ■ Male

Fig 4.1: Gender

Table 4.15: Gender

Gender	N	%
Female	13	62%
Male	8	38%
Total	21	

Table 4.16: Age distribution

Age	Number	Percentage
Under 25	0	0.00%
25-34	3	14.29%
35-44	8	38.10%
45-54	10	47.62%
55 and above	0	0.00%
Total	21	
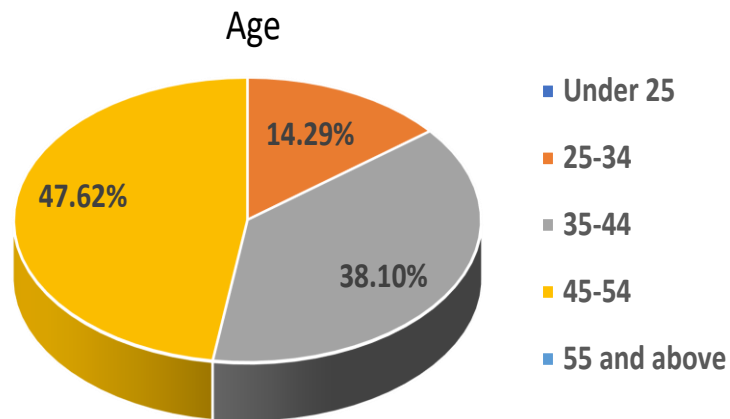
Fig 4.2: Age distribution

The Age group included 38.1% between 35-44 and 47.62% between 45-54. This implies that the majority had experience in traditional marketing for many years. Unless they adapt quickly to digital, they might impact the flow of dynamism and will take longer time to implement. On the other hand, these managers know the potential of the market, and their customers, and can play a leading role in selecting the proper way to implement it according to their experience.

4.2.1.2 Level of Experience (years, position)

The level of experience is important in evaluating the responses of the participants regarding a particular factor. This questionnaire was divided on purpose into many categories: less than 1 year, 1 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, and more than 10 years. It will be related not only to adaptation but also to explain the point that these companies relied on for adaptation.

Out of a total of twenty-one respondents, 19 people have over 10 years of experience, and

most of them occupying managerial positions. Marketing manager being the highest with 29%. This explains also the 58% interpretation of why the marketing department drives the digital implementation in most of the companies, 81% of them are multinational 14% local, and 5% as distributors.

Table 4.17: years of experience

Years	Number	%
< than 1 year	0	0%
1-5 years	1	5%
6-10 years	1	5%
> than 10 years	19	90%
	21	

Years of Experience in the Pharmaceutical Industry
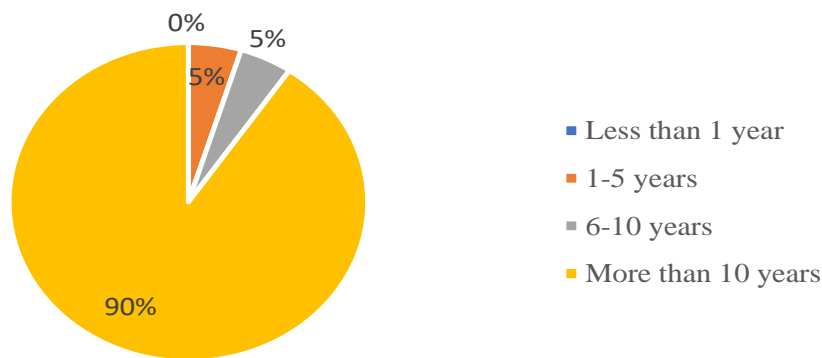
Fig 4.3: years of experience

Table 4.18 Position/Role in Pharma

Role in the Pharmaceutical Company	N	%
General Manager	4	19%
BU Head/Franchise Head	3	14%
Marketing Manager	6	29%
Sales Manager	2	10%
Digital Marketing Manager	1	5%
Brand Lead	0	0%
Medical Representative	2	10%
Global Omnichannel Digital Lead	1	5%
Training Manager	1	5%
other	1	5%
	21	

Position/Role in the Pharmaceutical Company

- General Manager — 19%
- BU Head/Franchise Head — 14%
- Marketing Manager — 29%
- Sales Manager — 10%
- Digital Marketing Manager — 5%
- Brand Lead — 0%
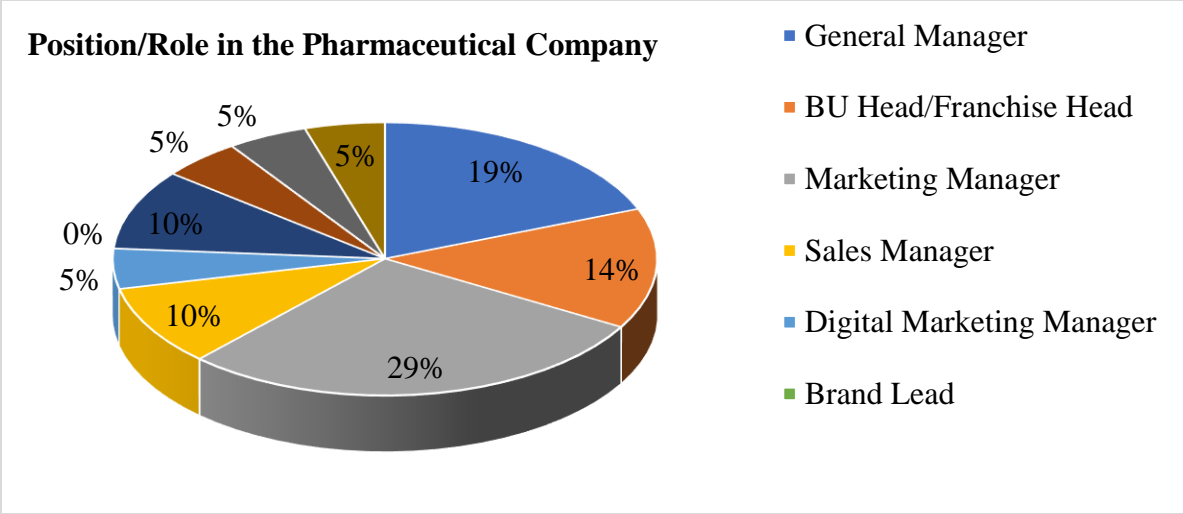
Fig 4.16: Position/Role in Pharma Company

Table 4.19: Who drives digital marketing efforts

Who mostly drive digital marketing efforts

- Marketing &Management — 8%
- Marketing + Business support — 8%
- Marketing + Sales — 4%
- Individual effort — 8%
- Medico-marketing — 4%
- Business customer support — 8%
- Management board — 4%
- Sales Department — 4%
- Marketing department Alone — 58%

Type of pharma company

Legend:
- Local Pharmaceutical Company
- Multinational Pharmaceutical Company
- Other (please specify)

Fig 4.4: Type of Pharma company

Table 4.20: Type of Pharma company

Type of company	N	%
Local Pharmaceutical Company	3	14%
Multinational Pharmaceutical Company	17	81%
Other (please specify)	1	5%
	21	

4.2.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

4.2.2.1 The questions in this section aim to assess the preparedness, challenges, and execution of digital marketing strategies in pharmaceutical companies.

Do you agree that pharmaceutical companies are ready for a marketing digitalized service?

The tendency of pharmaceutical companies went 71% towards being ready to provide digitalized marketing services yet many reasons prevent the companies from fully applying these strategies. The main one is the limited internal understanding & needed skill base to implement with 71% from the side of the pharmaceutical company's staff. On the other side, the customers, 24% showed a lack of active and relevant online community.

Readiness for digitalized service
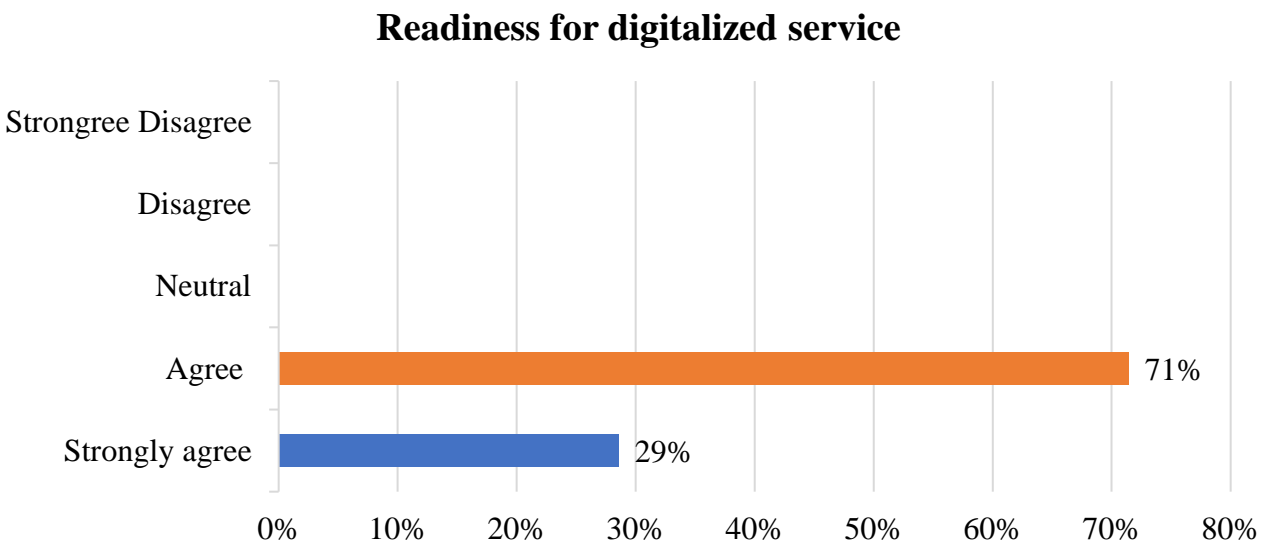
Fig 4.5: Readiness for digitalized service

Table 4.21: Reasons that prevent companies from using digital marketing

Reasons	N	%
Limited internal understanding & needed skill base to implement	15	71%
Lack of infrastructure	0	0%
Lack of active and relevant online community to engage with	5	24%
Risk of divulging too much information to competitors	0	0%
There are no significant challenges	1	5%
others	0	0%
	21	

What are the main reason(s) that prevent(s) companies from using digital marketing ?
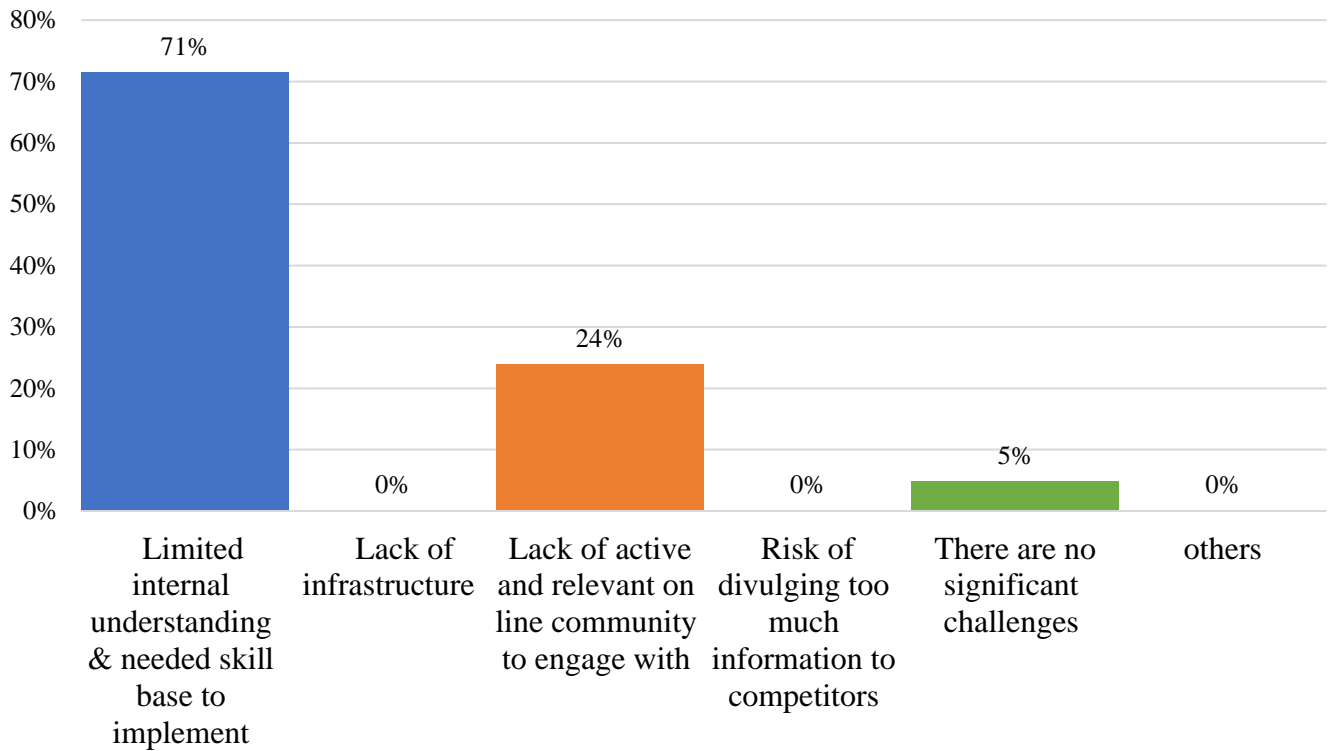

Fig 4.6: Reasons that prevent companies from using digital marketing

To explain more the results, let us see the data collected for the perception of these companies towards the digital strategy and the needed shift from the traditional way or even to blend them.

4.2.2.2 The questions in this section are to evaluate the perceptions and attitudes of pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon regarding the utilization of digital tools for client communication.

In this context, we first want to know how these companies are willing to invest in and use digital tools for client communication. Here we are talking about any effect from COVID or any other cause.

How willing are you to invest in and use digital tools for client communication within your pharmaceutical company? (Scale: 1 - Not willing at all, 5 - Very willing)
21 responses
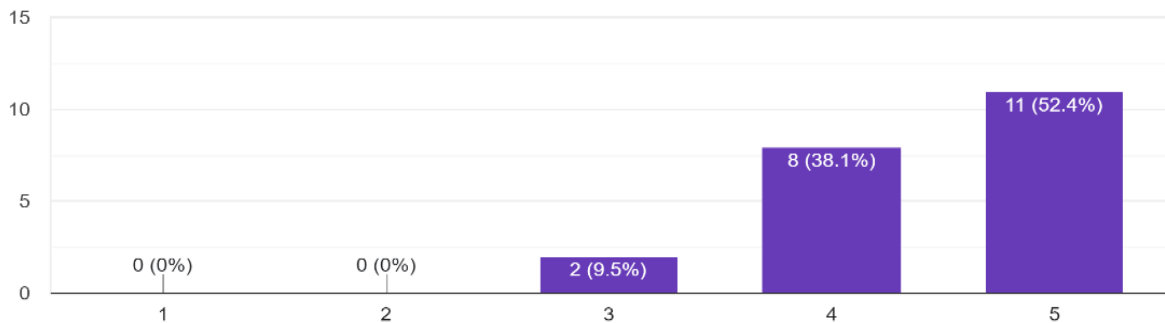
Fig 4.7 willingness to invest in using digital tools for client communication

More than half, 52.4% are very willing, and 38.1% willing, making the ground ready for a step forward to change. The main reasons to integrate digital marketing tools into their strategy were a mix of many factors ranging from following the global trends worldwide, especially since most of them are multinational companies, communication during the lockdown of COVID,

cost-effectiveness in terms of the promotional budget with the special impact of the economic crisis in Lebanon. Most of the companies are obliged to follow the main offices in Europe, especially in terms of global marketing implementation.

What was the main reason to integrate digital marketing tools into your marketing strategy:
19 responses
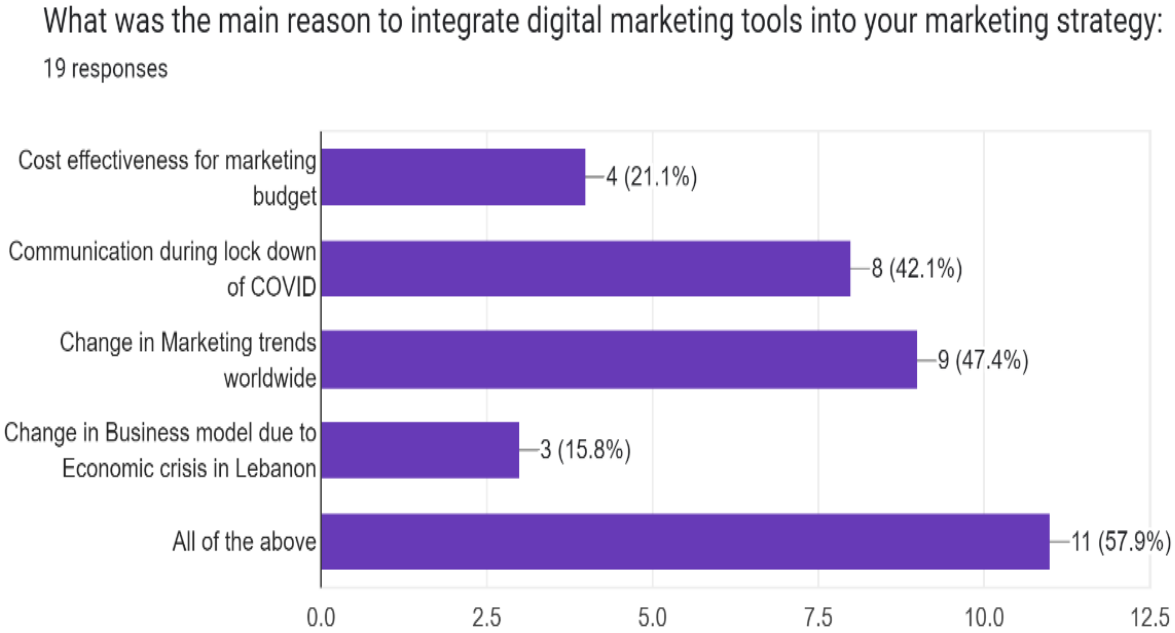

Fig 4.8: main reasons to integrate digital marketing tools in marketing strategy

As for the digital communication tools that are currently being utilized in organizations for engaging with clients, it shows a mix of many tools based on e-detailing and e-mailing.
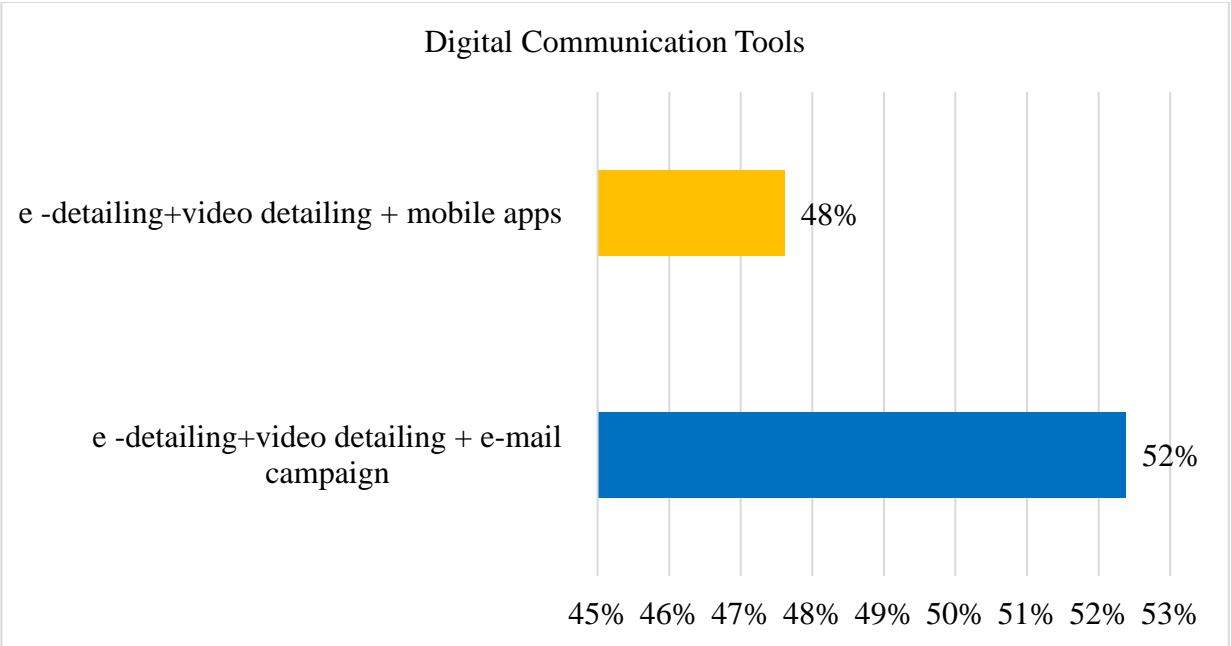
Fig 4.9: Digital communication tools
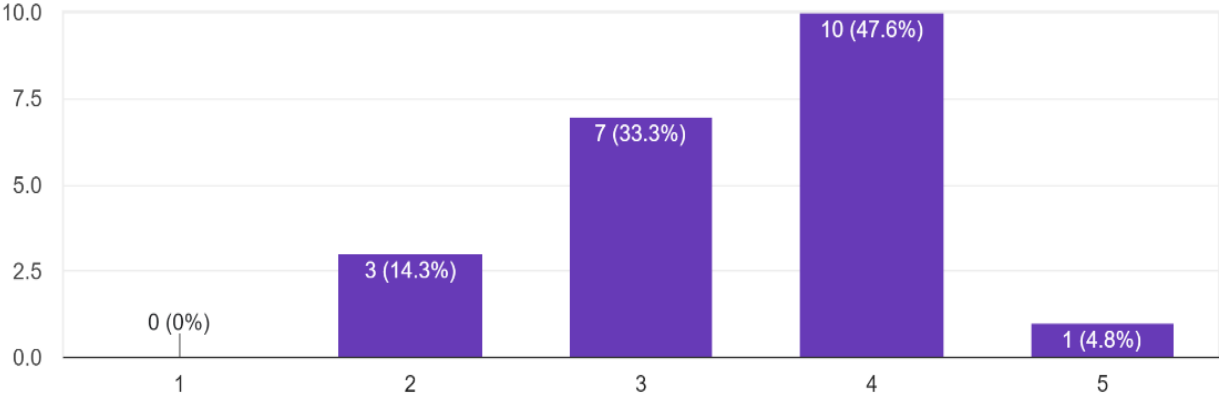
Fig 4.10: satisfaction with te current digital tools for client communication

The satisfaction level was dispersed towards positiveness. This will be further explained in the Qualitative part.

4.2.2.3 The questions in this section are to assess the effect of "digital marketing" strategies on the marketing practices of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies:

How has digital marketing influenced customer engagement in your pharmaceutical company?

How has digital marketing influenced customer engagement in your pharmaceutical company?
21 responses
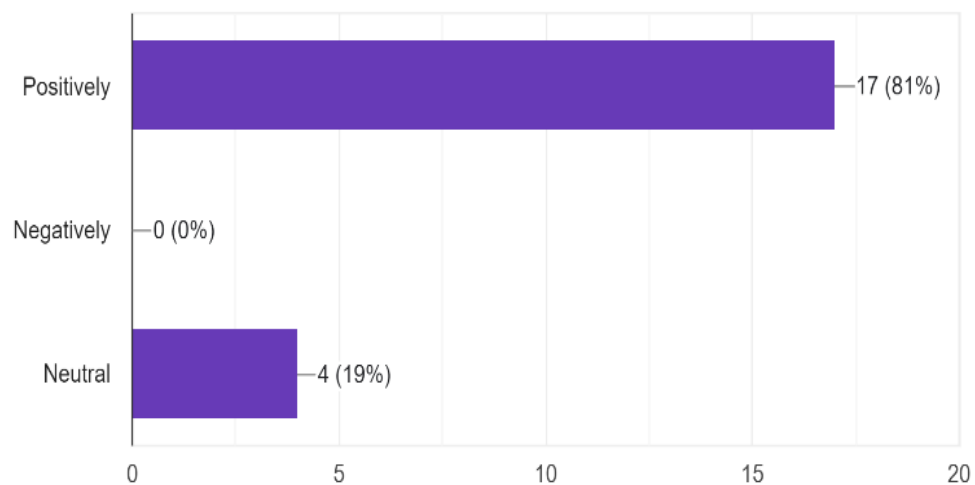
Fig 4.11: influence of digital marketing on customer engagement

Do you agree that companies can go completely digital without losing a segment of their customers?

Do you agree that companies can go completely digital without losing a segment of their customers?
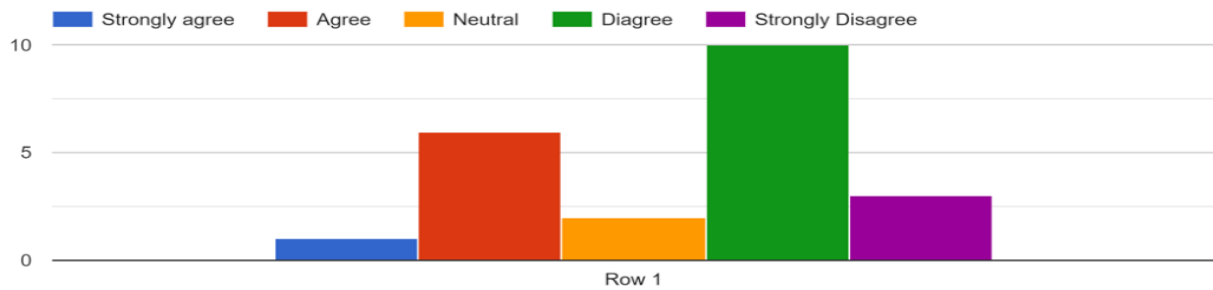
Fig 4.12: can we go completely digital?

On what criteria does your firm measure "digital marketing" effects on "business performance "attributed to the adoption of "digital marketing" strategies?

Table 4.22: criteria to measure digital marketing effectiveness

Criteria to measure digital Marketing effectiveness		
Brand awareness + Market share increase +Customer satisfaction	11	52.4%
Brand awareness /visibility	1	4.8%
Brand awareness + Market share increase	4	19.0%
Customer satisfaction	1	4.8%
We do not measure digital marketing impact	4	19.0%
	21	100.0%

Criteria to measure digital marketing effectivess
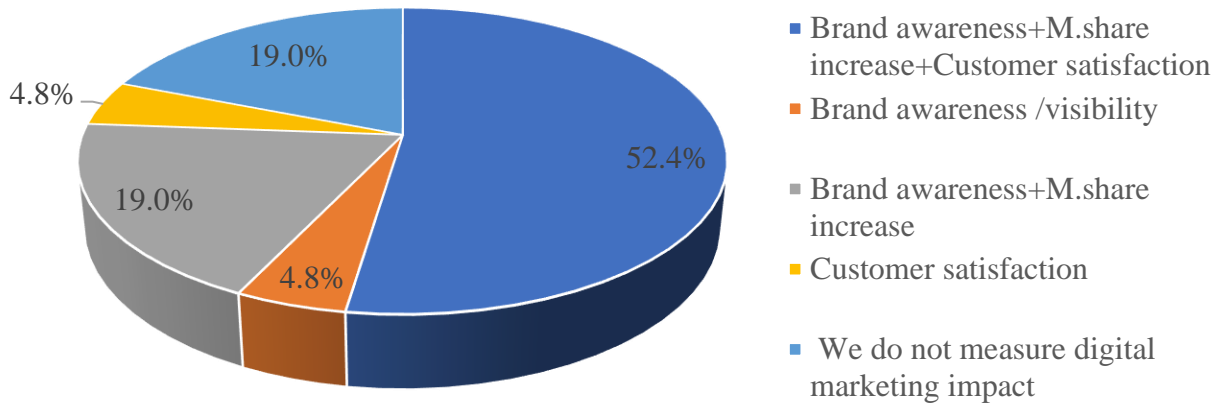
Fig 4.13: criteria to measure digital marketing effectiveness

How do you quantify the success of your "digital marketing" campaign performance?

How do you measure the success of your digital marketing campaign performance?
19 responses
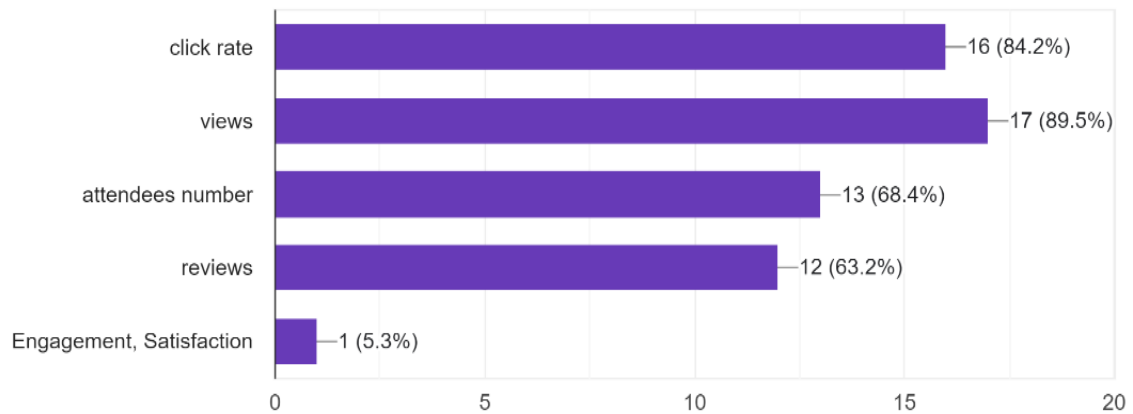
Fig 4.14: measuring the success of the "digital marketing" campaign

Rate the effectiveness of "digital marketing" in reaching your target audience.
(Scale: 1 - Not effective, 5 - Highly effective)

Rate the effectiveness of digital marketing in reaching your target audience. (Scale: 1 - Not effective, 5 - Highly effective)

21 responses
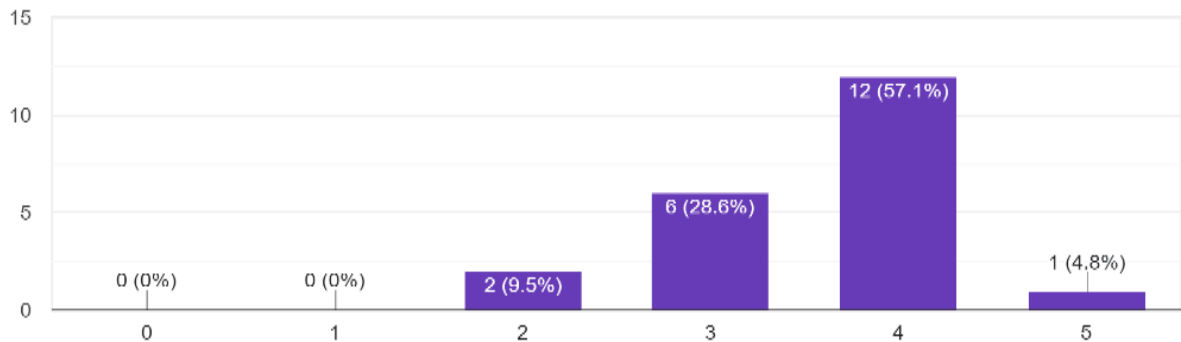
Fig 4.14: Rate of the effectiveness of digital marketing in reaching your target audience

To measure digital marketing effectiveness, more than half see it as a mixed criterion. This is good in terms of willingness to implement more and see it as positively contributing to business. However, independent KPIs to measure each effect alone need to be reviewed by pharmaceutical companies after passing from 1st stage implementation to more professionalism in this context. The good thing is that for the tools implemented, special tools began to be present like the click rate for the messages sent or attended number for e-congress or conferences; however, tools for overall strategy and its impact on every part along market patient mapping and its effect of its evolution in a quantitative manner is of prime importance.

4.2.2.4 The questions in this section explore the shift from conventional marketing methods to cutting-edge digital marketing strategies and the competitive advantages they bring about:

How would you rate your organization's readiness to transition from traditional to digital marketing? (Scale: 1 - Not ready at all, 5 - Very ready)

How would you rate your organization's readiness to transition from traditional to digital marketing? (Scale: 1 - Not ready at all, 5 - Very ready)

21 responses
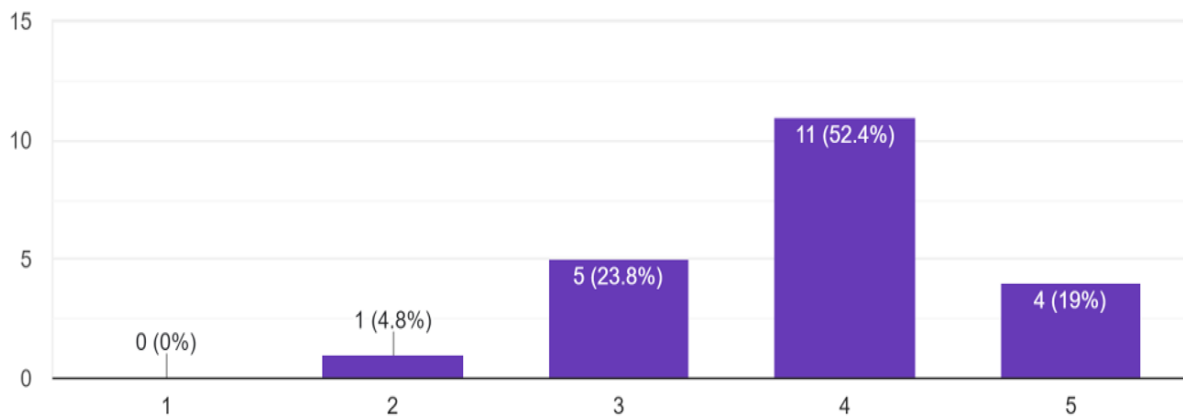
Fig 4.15: organization's readiness to transition to digital marketing

What specific challenges have you encountered while transitioning to digital marketing strategies?

Challenges encountered during Transition to implement digital marketing strategies
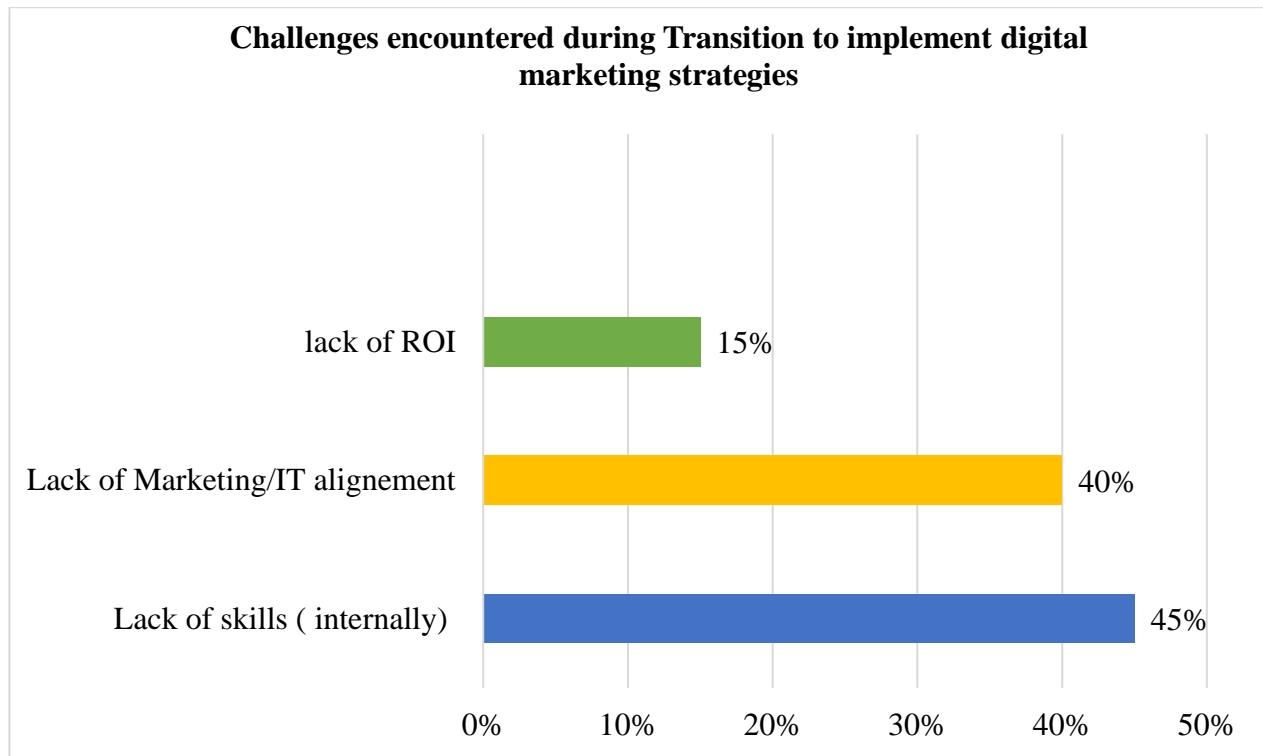
Fig 4.16: challenges for the transition to implement digital marketing strategies

52.4% of Companies are highly ready for the transition from conventional to digital marketing. However, many challenges are very clear internally from the readiness of skills (45%) to cross-departmental governance to allocate responsibilities and drive business ahead (40%) and 15% still judge any step in terms of ROI (15%).

Rank the main barriers you take into consideration when you convince a customer to interact with your digital communication tools?
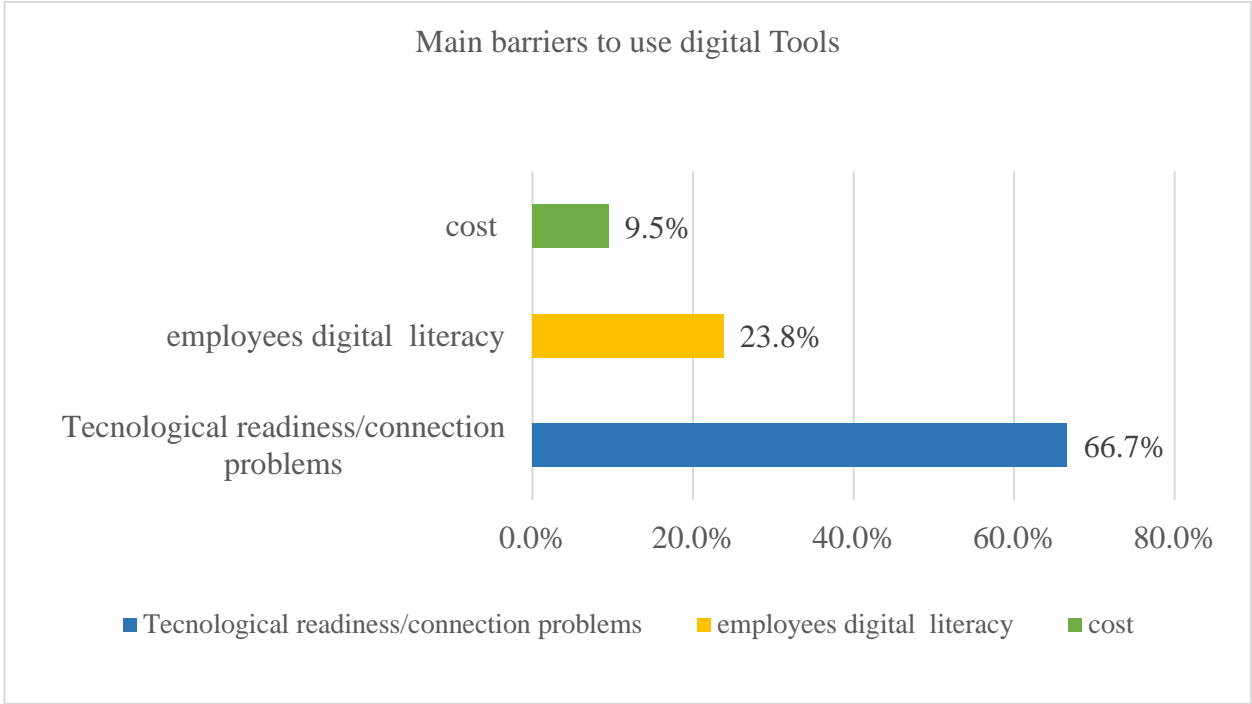
Fig 4.17: Main barriers to using digital tools

In addition to internal challenges, barriers with the customers exist. The technological readiness and connection of the internet in the country was the main one with 66.7%.

4.2.2.5 The questions of this section are to explore the problems and opportunities in the adoption of "digital marketing" in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon.
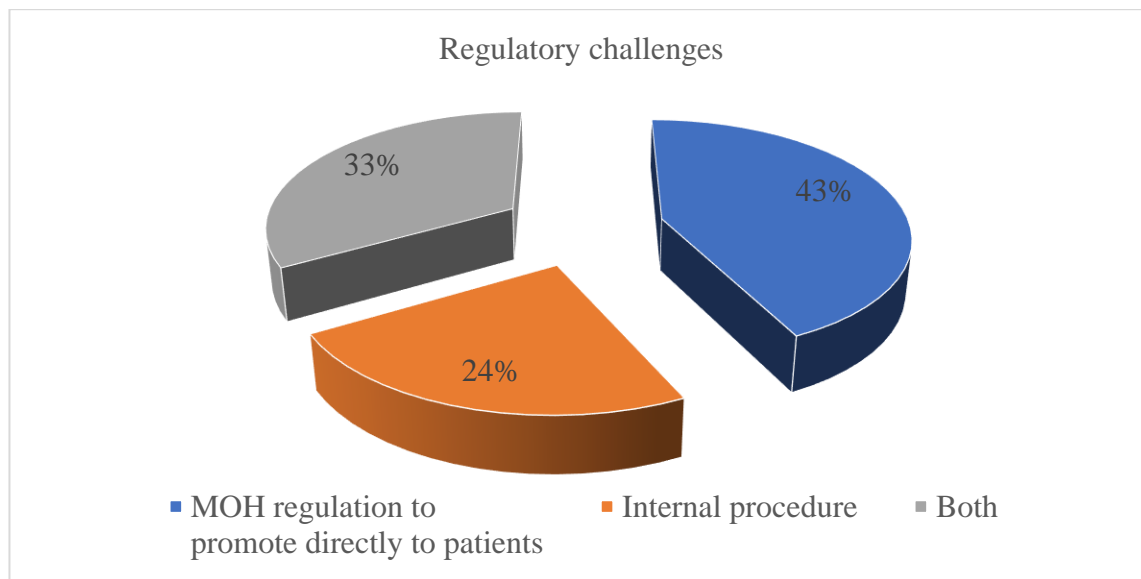
Fig 4.18: Regulatory challenges

Big challenges were faced by rigid regulations from the Ministry of Health (MOH) with about 43%. Internal procedures and SOPs (standard operation procedures) adopted by the companies put each implementation under the microscope of compliance and ethics. Although they account for 24% however, we will see in the discussion that changing these SOPs is of prime mandate.

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the cost-effectiveness of digital marketing compared to traditional marketing methods? (1 - Not cost-effective, 10 - Very cost-effective)

21 responses
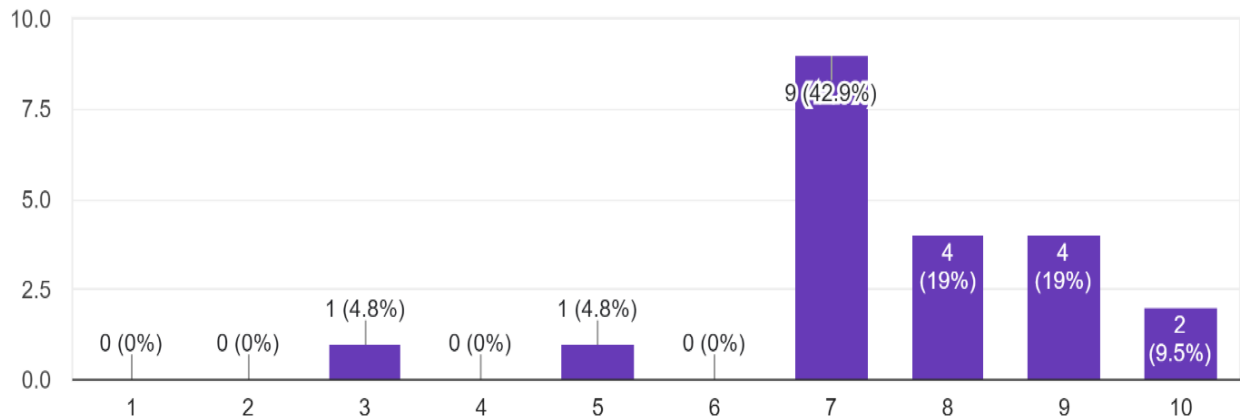
Fig 4.19 : Cost-effectiveness of digital vs. traditional marketing

How optimistic are you about the potential growth opportunities that digital marketing can bring to the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon? (Scale: 1 - Not optimistic, 5 - Very optimistic)

21 responses
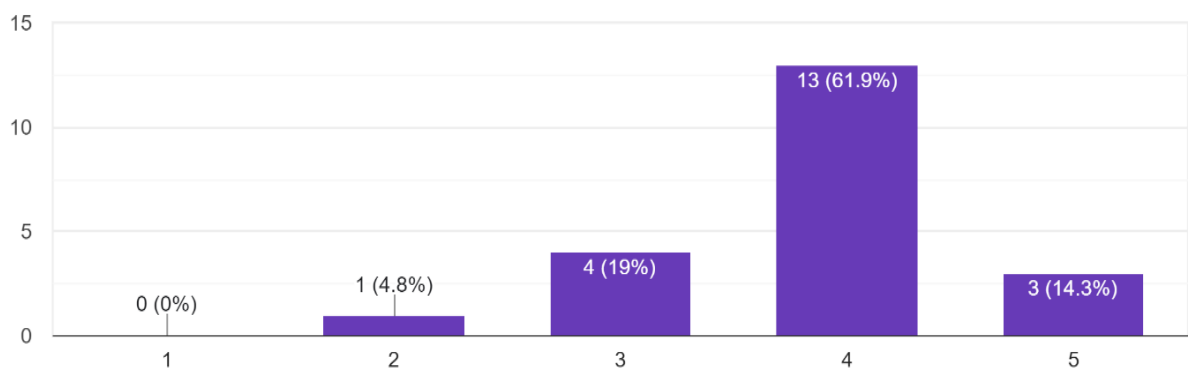
Fig 4.20: Potential growth opportunities for implementing digital marketing
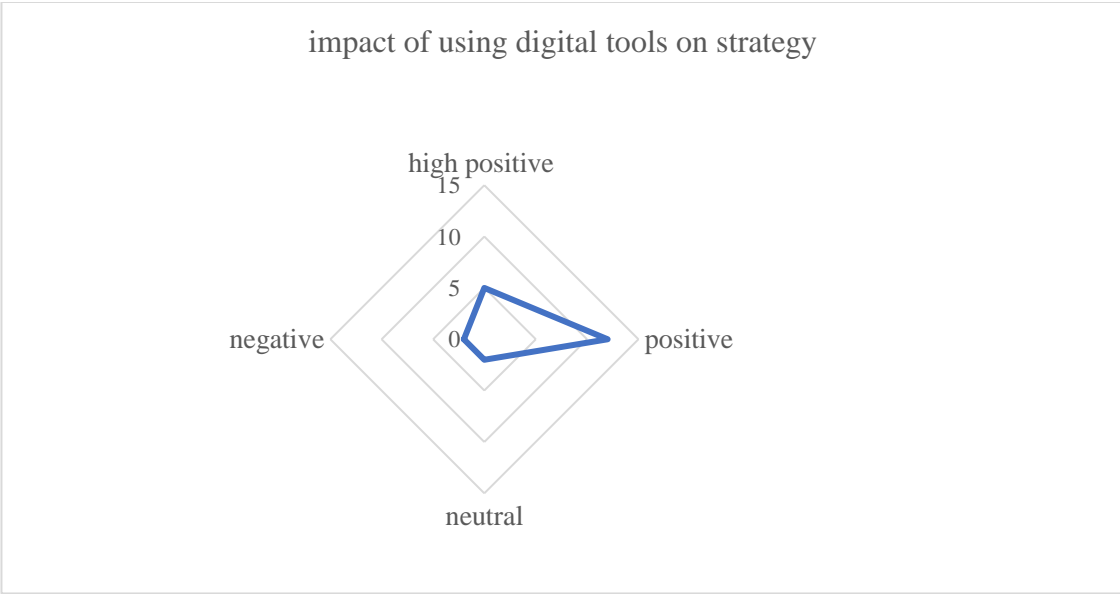
Fig 4.21: impact of using digital tools on strategy

Cost-effectiveness had already pushed digital implementation ahead and paved a positive trend of optimism toward it. It had positioned "digital marketing" as the source of growth and a pillar for competitive advantage between companies. "Digital marketing" provides a positive impact on the overall business strategy than "traditional" marketing. Cost-effectiveness might be an important pillar for the companies to rely on in any strategic decision to adopt or not this shift towards digital marketing. It will be behind the rapidity of adaptation and implementation and a reason to overcome any resistance. Let us see the qualitative data that will explain more of what the quantitative part revealed.

4.3 Primary Qualitative Data Collection

The Qualitative part was collected in a semi-structured interview manner.

Objective 1: To analyze the perceptions and attitudes of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies toward the use of digital tools for client communication

Most of the managers answered that their companies have positive perceptions about the integration of digital tools for communication. They see it as it should be part of the strategy. However, companies varied a lot in their preparedness for application. Some had begun as part of the global requirement, and some were still in the preparatory phase. This depends on the portfolio of the products, their customers' readiness, and the internal staff literacy for integrating digital projects.

Objective 2: To investigate the transition from traditional marketing approaches to innovative digital marketing strategies and their resulting competitive advantages

1. What was the main reason for integrating digital marketing tools into your marketing strategy, Has The economic crisis made it faster

 Indeed, the economic crisis in Lebanon in 2019 and after had accelerated the need to implement digital marketing tools. Some companies saw it as a must to communicate with the customer to have a competitive edge vs. competitors, especially in terms of customer satisfaction, others saw it as part of innovation for brand awareness.

But all agreed that at the back of every step, the sales and Market share were the focus in terms of Key Performance Indicators (KPI). The companies in the beginning did not set a special KPI like click rate …but rather linked it to performance then after a while they developed internally in terms of application and execution.

2. *Could you describe any challenges or obstacles your organization faced during the transition from traditional to digital marketing approaches?*

Internal readiness of employees was common in all companies. Managers and sales reps, although young, were not skilled enough to implement the digital tools. All agreed that they spent time training them that adaptation to implementation is core for business continuity. It was seen as internal competition also and between companies to deliver and implement faster in the market. Customers on the other hand which are mainly physicians were not ready. companies sometimes interfered to train them so that it could continue the win-win situation.

3. *In your experience, what were the most significant advantages gained by your organization after transitioning to innovative digital marketing strategies?*

The companies quickly saw advantages. Increase of Reach for their customers, creation of additional communication channels, a plus over competition in brand awareness, and customer satisfaction. Companies integrate digital KPIs in assessing the employees and relate it directly to an increase in sales and Market Share.

4. *What strategies or methods were particularly effective in making the transition smooth and successful for your organization?*

To gather the data collected, the companies began with internal training to staff, setting KPI for implementation, creating champion challenges, and Re-mapping for customers based on digital persona. However, others emphasized their activities on e-detailing as the main activity, so it did not take much preparation.

Objective 3: To assess the impact of "digital marketing" strategies on the marketing practices of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies:

1. *How has the implementation of digital marketing strategies impacted the overall marketing practices within your pharmaceutical company?*

Bigger role for the Marketing department within the companies, from content creation to execution. More cooperation between departments, especially with IT, sales, and medical. The need to change the content continuously and feed it with up-to-date information created more interest from the customer translating later into satisfaction, engagement, and probably sales.

3. *what are the major advantages and disadvantages of utilizing" digital marketing" strategies in the pharmaceutical industry?*

Advantages were summarized in terms of multiple channels of communication, transparency in communication, and cost reduction. Scheduling of messages to form a puzzle for storytelling strategy. Disadvantages were revealed in the abuse of implementation of digital tools for example four zooms e-detailing per month with one specialty from the same company regardless of the real need and objective which had created a bad impact on physicians from some companies. Loss of value in some cases is due to repetition. The regulations internally and officially for using social media have limited the communication process.

3. *Can you provide specific examples of successful digital marketing campaigns and how they influenced customer engagement or brand visibility?*

Campaign on COPD tailored to patient profile, patient support programs, apps for patients, e-congresses, blogs for diabetic patients, and another one for cancer patients. All were mostly successful for chronic diseases.

Objective 4: To discover the difficulties and opportunities associated with the adoption of "digital marketing "in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon:

Most of the managers answered that MOH regulation and approval for content communication were mostly the main challenges. MOH prohibits direct contact from any company with the patient about the product. It is only permitted as disease awareness. Besides the rule to use social media by any company.

In your view, what untapped opportunities are present in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon for the effective adoption of digital marketing strategies?

Untapped opportunities were mainly to change regulations to use more social media and create more channels of communication even with patients especially if related to OTC products. Some had suggested having an app that can help physicians with more diagnostic parameters if used by patients and liaise with their physicians. Examples were allergy products, hypertension, and diabetes.

4.3 Summary of Findings

The role of "social media" and "e-mail" marketing is key nowadays for any pharmaceutical sector as it creates a brand image of any organization and can also promote its own products' advantages. Also, organizations can spread the information to the maximum number of physicians and patients in minimum time. By following repetitive and frequent communication, they can show their latest innovation they adopt. The impact of "digital marketing" is huge in promoting a competitive advantage in business. The development of "digital marketing" by the pharmaceutical companies can help communicate better with their customers and provide answers to their questions. This helps in maintaining transparency and good reputation.

Furthermore, the proper customization of the use of "digital marketing" tools will help the companies in promoting their products according to the needs of the customers which will help in the sustainable growth of the company. Also, the development of advanced marketing channels of promotion can help companies to understand the various ways that would help them to grow.

4.4 Conclusion

Based on the interviews done, the participants were mostly in favor of digital marketing tools. Different "marketing tools" are beneficial for the growth their company. This chapter helps in studying the data that has been collected from the survey and the interviews and understand the uses of different "digital marketing" tools applied in the promotion of pharmaceutical companies.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

We will present a detailed interpretation of the information gathered from surveys and interviews conducted in Lebanon. The core of this academic study is to explore the adoption and impact of "digital marketing" strategies as a tool for creating and sustaining competitive advantage in the pharmaceutical market in Lebanon. The Pillars for this analysis were based on the relationship and correlation between adopting digital marketing tools and its relationship with brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share within this sector.

The quantitative analysis employed statistical tools to observe the relation between the adoption of "digital marketing" tools and these indicators to see the impact. We evaluated the extent of digital tool adoption and implementation. We assessed brand awareness levels, customer satisfaction, and market share among respondent companies representing the main players in the Lebanese pharma market. Additionally, we conducted regression analyses to identify any significant correlations between digital marketing adoption and these performance metrics.

Complementing the quantitative findings, the qualitative data from in-depth interviews provided insights into the challenges, perceptions, and attitudes of pharmaceutical managers toward digital marketing transformation. Through these interviews, we explored the readiness of companies to

embrace digital strategies, encountered obstacles during the transition, and uncovered potential opportunities for innovation and growth.

The analysis provides an understanding of the current digital landscape within Lebanese pharmaceutical companies. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, we aim to unveil actionable insights that can guide strategic decisions and enhance marketing effectiveness in this evolving industry. The discussion will disclose our findings and offer some recommendations for optimizing the use of "digital marketing "strategies in the Lebanese pharmaceutical sector.

It paints a clear picture of how Lebanese pharmaceutical companies are using digital marketing today. By combining statistical data with real-world experiences, this research aims to provide practical advice for companies looking to improve their marketing strategies and gain an edge in this ever-changing industry. The discussion will explore the meaning of the findings and offer recommendations for getting the most out of digital marketing to achieve a leading position and long-term success in the Lebanese pharmaceutical market. Some general guidelines will be common between all companies, however the implication of each tool in relevance to the company's needs and product scope will define its impact. No need to elaborate that if a company did not complete its digital mapping and persona, it cannot implement a clear and concise digital journey.

5.2 Findings from the Quantitative Results Discussion

The quantitative analysis conducted on data collected from pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon offers valuable insights into the adoption and impact of digital marketing tools. Let us go deeper into the interpretation of these findings:

5.2.1 Adoption of Digital Marketing Tools

The high adoption rate of digital marketing tools (94.1%) among respondents signifies a proactive approach towards embracing technology for marketing purposes within the pharmaceutical sector. This readiness was present in some companies before COVID however the implementation was boosted by the lockdown and the urgent need for business continuity. This widespread adoption suggests that companies recognize the importance of digital strategies in enhancing market presence and customer engagement. It aligns with global trends where digital transformation is becoming integral not only to enhance communication with customers and the creation of a competitive edge but also to business success and a means for sustainability. Although the implementation was shy at the beginning, the lack of experience of internal staff and sometimes the customer's reluctance in some cases made adopting some tools selective and progressive.

5.2.2 Discussion of Quantitative Results

5.2.2.1 Implications of the general information from the survey

The survey sample comprised 21 respondents from the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon, with a notable gender distribution where 62% were female and 38% were male. This skew towards female respondents is an interesting finding given the typically male-dominated landscape in certain industries.

In terms of age distribution, most respondents (47.62%) fell into the 45-54 age bracket, followed by 38.1% in the 35-44 age group. Notably, there were no respondents under the age of 25 or over the age of 55. This age profile suggests a cohort of experienced professionals in the industry, likely with extensive backgrounds in traditional marketing methods.

The dominance of respondents in the 35-54 age range suggests that most individuals surveyed have substantial experience in traditional marketing methodologies. While this experience is valuable, it also implies potential challenges in adapting quickly to digital marketing strategies, which may require a shift in mindset and skillset.

However, this experienced cohort also brings unique advantages. Their deep understanding of the market and customers can be of great importance in shaping effective digital marketing strategies designed to the specific needs of the Lebanese pharmaceutical sector.

Level of Experience and Position:

The survey respondents overwhelmingly demonstrated significant tenure in their roles, with 90% having more than 10 years of experience. This high level of experience is reflected in their positions within pharmaceutical companies, where marketing managers represent the largest proportion (29%), followed by general managers (19%) and BU/franchise heads (14%).

The predominance of managerial roles among respondents, especially in marketing, underlines the strategic importance placed on digital marketing initiatives within these organizations. The seniority and experience of these individuals are likely influential in driving digital transformation efforts within their respective companies.

Company Type:

Most respondents (81%) belonged to multinational pharmaceutical companies, indicating a strong presence of global players in the Lebanese market. They are presented as scientific office representatives or direct pharma office trading entities. This finding is significant, as multinational corporations often set trends and standards in digital marketing practices, influencing the strategies adopted by local and regional players.

Interpretation and Implications:

The demographic profile of the survey respondents reflects a mature and experienced cohort predominantly from multinational pharmaceutical companies. While this demographic brings extensive industry knowledge and strategic acumen, it also presents challenges in terms of adopting agile digital marketing strategies. Understanding the perspectives and roles of these professionals is crucial for tailoring digital marketing initiatives that resonate with their expertise and align with organizational objectives. The findings highlight the need for targeted training and change management strategies to facilitate a smooth transition toward digital marketing excellence in the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry. Furthermore, insights gained from these profiles can advise for the development of customized "digital solutions" that address specific challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities within this sector. It explained the delay in beginning the implementation of digital tools. However, it reflects also the maturity in implementation decisions on a ground that needed to be more ready for the kickoff.

5.2.2.2   Analysis and Discussion of Digital Marketing Strategies in Lebanese Pharmaceutical Companies:

The data presented in sections 4.2.2.1 to 4.2.2.5 sheds light on the readiness, challenges, and perceptions surrounding the adoption of digital marketing strategies within pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon. Let's examine the findings and their implications in a professional academic manner.

5.2.2.1 Readiness and Challenges:

The majority (71%) of pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon acknowledge the importance of digitalized marketing services. However, internal limitations, particularly a lack of understanding and necessary skills (71%), hinder full implementation. Interestingly, 24% cite a deficiency in an active online community as a challenge from the customer side.

This highlights a critical gap in skill sets within the industry, underscoring the need for targeted training programs to equip professionals with the expertise required for effective digital marketing strategies. Furthermore, raising an engaged online community should be a priority to enhance customer interaction and drive digital marketing success.

5.2.2.2 Perceptions and Utilization of Digital Tools:

A significant proportion of pharmaceutical companies (90.5%) express willingness to invest in and utilize digital tools for client communication. Motivations behind this inclination include global market trends, communication needs during the COVID-19 lockdowns, and cost-effectiveness amidst economic challenges in Lebanon. This readiness signifies a positive outlook toward integrating digital marketing into business strategies.

The prevalent use of e-detailing and e-mailing tools for client engagement features the initial steps taken toward digital transformation. However, the satisfaction level with current tools hints at opportunities for improvement and diversification to optimize client communication.

5.2.2.3 Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies:

Respondents recognize digital marketing's positive impact on customer engagement, with 52.4% attributing its effectiveness to increased brand awareness, market share, and customer satisfaction. Despite this acknowledgment, only a minority (19%) actively test and measure the impact on business performance, suggesting a need for KPI frameworks. While respondents perceive digital marketing as effective in reaching target audiences, a more comprehensive approach to measuring its success beyond mixed criteria is recommended. This includes quantifying effects on brand visibility, customer satisfaction, and market mapping for holistic performance evaluation.

5.2.2.4 Transition from Conventional to Digital Marketing:

Pharmaceutical companies demonstrate a high readiness (52.4%) to transition from traditional to digital marketing. However, challenges persist, primarily related to skill readiness (45%) and internal governance (40%) to drive cross-departmental collaboration effectively. Customer interaction barriers, particularly technological readiness (66.7%), highlight external challenges that require infrastructure improvements for seamless digital engagement.

5.2.2.5 Challenges and Opportunities:

Rigid regulations from the Ministry of Health (43%) pose significant challenges to digital marketing implementation, emphasizing the need for compliance and ethical considerations in strategy development. Internal procedures and SOPs (standard operating procedures) further accentuate the scrutiny of implementation.

Despite challenges, cost-effectiveness emerges as a driving force behind digital implementation, positioning it as a growth catalyst and competitive advantage in the pharmaceutical sector. Digital marketing is increasingly perceived as a strategic pillar for business growth, surpassing traditional methods.

5.2.2.6 Conclusion and Implications:

The data shows a positive inclination towards "digital marketing" adoption within Lebanese pharmaceutical companies, driven by global trends, communication needs, and economic considerations. However, significant challenges exist, including skill gaps, internal governance issues, regulatory hurdles, and technological limitations.

To capitalize on digital opportunities effectively, targeted initiatives are necessary. These include comprehensive training programs, improved analytics frameworks, enhanced cross-departmental collaboration, and infrastructure investments.

Addressing these challenges will enable pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon to leverage digital marketing as a transformative force for business growth and competitive advantage in the evolving healthcare landscape.

To take the effect of transformation to "digital marketing" and based on the three main pillars discussed previously (Impact on Brand Awareness, Customer Satisfaction, and Market Share), let us link the result with the significance of statistical data:

Brand Awareness: The regression analysis indicates a weak and statistically insignificant relationship (Beta = 0.185, p = 0.195) between digital marketing adoption and brand awareness. This suggests that while digital tools are extensively used, they may not directly translate into noticeable improvements in brand visibility within the Lebanese pharmaceutical market. The lack of a significant correlation emphasizes the need to explore other factors influencing brand awareness, such as content quality and channel effectiveness.

Customer Satisfaction: Similarly, the analysis reveals a weak and non-significant relationship (Beta = 0.161, p = 0.258) between digital marketing adoption and customer satisfaction. This finding implies that "customer satisfaction" levels are influenced by factors beyond digital strategies, such as product quality, customer service, and pricing. Pharmaceutical companies should focus on holistic approaches to enhance customer experience alongside digital initiatives. It may build a customer mapping and build a customer journey along the ladder of customer adoption/satisfaction.

Market Share: The analysis identifies a moderately positive relationship but significant (Beta = 0.339, p = 0.015) between digital marketing adoption and market share. This suggests that companies leveraging digital tools tend to experience higher market share, possibly due to increased reach and engagement with target audiences. The statistically significant correlation highlights the potential of digital strategies in driving market expansion and competitiveness.

5.3 Qualitative Analysis of Digital Marketing Strategies in Lebanese Pharmaceutical Companies

The qualitative insights gathered through semi-structured interviews provide an understanding of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies' perceptions, challenges, and advantages associated with the transition to digital marketing strategies. Let us analyze the findings and link them with the quantitative data presented earlier.

Objective 1: Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Digital Tools

Managers exhibit positive perceptions towards integrating digital tools into communication strategies, considering them essential for modern business practices. However, preparedness varies based on product portfolio, customer readiness, and internal staff literacy. This aligns with the quantitative data highlighting the industry's willingness (90.5%) to invest in digital tools, tempered by internal skill gaps (71%).

Objective 2: Transition to Innovative Digital Marketing

The economic crisis in Lebanon acted as a catalyst for adopting digital marketing tools, emphasizing communication needs and competitive advantages. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) initially focused on sales and market share align with the quantitative findings highlighting customer engagement (52.4%) and brand awareness as significant outcomes. Challenges during the transition primarily revolved around internal readiness and customer receptivity. Training efforts were pivotal in overcoming employee skill gaps and customer resistance, reflecting the quantitative data's emphasis on internal skill limitations (71%) and external customer engagement challenges (66.7%).

Objective 3: Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies

Digital marketing strategies have transformed marketing practices within pharmaceutical companies, elevating the role of the Marketing department and developing interdepartmental collaboration, especially with medical, IT, and others. The focus on continuous content adaptation resonates with the quantitative data highlighting the need for innovative strategies (52.4%) and customer satisfaction metrics (52.4%).

Advantages include enhanced communication channels and cost reduction, while disadvantages highlight the potential for overuse and regulatory limitations. Successful campaigns targeting chronic diseases demonstrate effective engagement strategies and brand visibility enhancements, correlating with the quantitative data's emphasis on customer satisfaction and market mapping.

Objective 4: Outside Challenges and Opportunities

Regulatory challenges, particularly Ministry of Health (MOH) restrictions, emerge as primary obstacles. Untapped opportunities revolve around regulatory reform to enable more direct patient communication and app-based patient-physician interactions, aligning with the need for regulatory adaptation (43%) highlighted in the quantitative findings.

5.4 Conclusion and Integration of the Qualitative with Quantitative Data

The qualitative results complement the quantitative ones, emphasizing the importance of addressing skill gaps, regulatory constraints, and customer engagement challenges. Successful adoption of digital marketing centers on comprehensive training initiatives, innovative content strategies, and regulatory reforms to unlock untapped market potential.

The merging of qualitative perceptions and quantitative metrics highlights the transformative impact of digital marketing strategies on Lebanese pharmaceutical companies. Overcoming challenges and capitalizing on opportunities will enable companies to leverage digital tools effectively, enhancing customer engagement, brand visibility, and competitive advantage in the dynamic pharmaceutical landscape.

5.5 Linking the results with the objectives of the thesis

5.5.1 Objective 1: Assessing the Effect of "Digital Marketing "Strategies

The combination of both quantitative and qualitative data reveals a direct impact of "digital marketing" strategies on the marketing practices. Quantitatively, there is a high readiness (71%) among companies to embrace digitalization, driven by the need for innovative strategies and customer engagement metrics. Qualitatively, this is validated by insights into transformed marketing practices, where digital tools have elevated the role of Marketing departments, raised interdepartmental collaboration, and emphasized continuous content adaptation to enhance customer satisfaction and engagement.

5.5.2 Objective 2: Analyzing Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Digital Tools

Quantitative findings highlight a positive perception (90.5%) regarding the integration of digital tools for client communication, tempered by skill gaps (71%) and external customer engagement challenges (66.7%). Qualitative interviews expand on these perceptions, emphasizing varying levels of preparedness across companies based on product portfolios, customer readiness, and internal staff literacy. This suggests an understanding of attitudes towards digital tools, shaped by both internal capabilities and external market dynamics.

5.5.3 Objective 3: Investigating Transition to Innovative Digital Strategies

The transition from traditional to digital marketing is accelerated by external factors like the economic crisis (71%) and internal drives for innovation and brand awareness. Quantitative data on KPIs (52.4% focusing on sales and market share) aligns with qualitative insights highlighting the importance of adapting content strategies and overcoming internal skill gaps to ensure successful implementation. Challenges identified as internal readiness and customer receptivity stress the complexities of this transition and the necessity of comprehensive training and strategic adaptation.

5.5.4 Objective 4: Exploring Challenges and Opportunities

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches identify regulatory hurdles (43% highlighted Ministry of Health restrictions) as primary challenges in adopting digital marketing. However, untapped opportunities lie in regulatory reform to facilitate direct patient communication and innovative app-based interactions. This aligns with the broader exploration of challenges and opportunities associated with regulatory compliance and market dynamics, emphasizing the need for industry-wide adaptation and strategic reform.

5.5.5 Conclusion

   The quantitative and qualitative data highlights the multidimensional impact of digital marketing strategies on Lebanese pharmaceutical companies. It highlights the interplay between internal perceptions, external challenges, and strategic adaptations necessary for successful digital transformation. To Move forward, addressing skill gaps, regulatory constraints, and customer engagement challenges will be pivotal in leveraging digital tools to enhance marketing practices, drive innovation, and capitalize on emerging opportunities in the pharmaceutical sector.

<div align="center">**Chapter VI:**</div>

<div align="center">**SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**</div>

6.1 Introduction

Digital marketing is nowadays considered as the center of marketing for any industry, and particularly, the pharmaceutical industry. It is about creating a platform for awareness, information, and solutions about healthcare in the pharmaceutical industry. "Digital marketing" is gradually changing traditional marketing strategies. "Digital marketing tools are offering a way to revise the business model as well as to improve it to make it more efficient in increasing "customer loyalty" and development in the industry" (Dwivedi et al., 2020). "Digital marketing" promotes the services of healthcare through different online modes. "The most important impact of digital marketing tools is that it is more cost-effective and less time-consuming methods to communicate and provide service to customers during emergencies" (Jawaid and Ahmed, 2018). "Digital marketing" has impacted pharmaceutical industries in ways to explain efficient treatments and drug development, and to increase the customer base by extending "reach". Nowadays, pharma industries can estimate the expected results of certain business strategies.

Recommendations from this study will also enhance the possibility of change or reform of legal regulation and the renewal of the internal ones of each company as well.

6.2 Implications of the Findings

Overall, the thesis reveals a landscape where Lebanese pharmaceutical companies are adopting digital marketing strategies but face many challenges, including skill gaps, regulatory constraints, and customer engagement barriers. Successful digital transformation focuses on strategic adaptations, comprehensive training, and regulatory reforms to leverage emerging opportunities and enhance marketing practices within the pharmaceutical sector.

The analysis of digital marketing strategies within Lebanese pharmaceutical companies highlights several critical insights, shedding light on industry perceptions, challenges, and potential opportunities for transformative change.

The readiness assessment reveals a paradox: while most companies express readiness for digitalization, substantial internal and external challenges impede full implementation.

Limited internal understanding and skill gaps emerge as primary barriers, indicating a critical need for targeted training and capability development to bridge the transition effectively.

Moreover, the qualitative insights deepen our understanding of the complex interplay between perception and action within pharmaceutical companies. Positive attitudes towards digital tools coexist with varying levels of preparedness, influenced by product portfolios, customer dynamics, and internal literacy. This highlights the importance of tailored strategies that account for specific organizational contexts. Significantly the advantages that will grow post-transition, including enhanced customer reach and interdepartmental collaboration, highlight the importance of the transformation potential of digital strategies.

However, the regulatory challenges revealed the need for systemic reforms to optimize digital interactions and patient engagement, aligning with evolving industry norms.

The Pharma market is taking practical effective steps in implementing "digital marketing" and modifying the conventional strategies that are practicing. As stated by Ayodeji, and Kumar, (2019), "different FAQs and surveys also can be established in a specific way from the customers as these will bring better ways for development in the future as well". Also, "pharmaceutical companies can get better competitive sustainability to cope with the different challenges as per the modern market requirements" (Bhat, and Momaya, 2019). They can take effective steps to involve relevant stakeholders with the company as better sustainable growth can be achieved.

This thesis contributes valuable insights to a scholarly dissertation emphasizing the imperative for strategic adaptation, comprehensive training, and regulatory reform to harness the full potential of digital marketing in the pharmaceutical sector. The analysis paves the way for informed recommendations for future research aimed at making sustainable innovation and competitive advantage within the evolving landscape of pharmaceutical marketing.

Regulatory constraints, particularly from the Ministry of Health, emerge as major obstructions to fully leveraging digital tools for marketing and customer engagement. Interviews show the need for regulatory reforms to facilitate innovation and unlock untapped opportunities in digital marketing strategies.

Strategic alignment of digital initiatives with business objectives, continuous capacity building, and proactive engagement with regulatory authorities are recommended to navigate the evolving digital landscape effectively.

6.3. Recommendations

The implications of digital marketing adoption within the pharmaceutical market in Lebanon are far-reaching and roll out for a transformative shift in industry dynamics. The analysis highlights many key implications across organizational, regulatory, and market dimensions. I will suggest several steps at a strategic level and on a tactical level.

6.3.1 Recommendation at the strategic level:

Organizational Transformation: The data indicates a need for digitalization-driven organizational transformation. While many companies express readiness for digital marketing, internal challenges such as limited understanding and skill gaps pose significant hurdles. This highlights the imperative for targeted capacity-building initiatives to equip employees with the requisite skills and competencies needed to navigate the digital landscape effectively.

Enhanced Customer Engagement: The adoption of digital marketing strategies presents unparalleled opportunities for enhancing customer engagement and reach. Insights from the data reveal that successful transitions yield advantages such as increased customer reach, the creation of additional communication channels, and improved customer satisfaction. This highlights the pivotal role of digital tools in taking in meaningful interactions and driving customer-centric approaches in the pharmaceutical sector.

Competitive Advantage: The transition to digital marketing strategies offers distinct competitive advantages, including improved brand visibility, market share expansion, and enhanced brand awareness. Companies that effectively leverage digital platforms can gain a competitive edge by optimizing resource allocation, streamlining communication, and adopting innovation across marketing practices.

Regulatory Challenges: Regulatory constraints emerge as a critical barrier to the adoption of digital marketing strategies. The data highlights challenges related to Ministry of Health regulations and restrictions on direct patient communication, underscoring the need for regulatory reforms that facilitate responsible and compliant digital engagement within the pharmaceutical sector. Add to it each company's internal regulation or SOP (Standard of operation procedure) that is becoming extremely important to all companies. This is a big element to be taken into consideration since most of the companies are international ones and they are obliged to follow global SOP in the implementation of such projects.

Opportunities for Innovation: Despite challenges, the data reveals untapped opportunities for innovation and growth. Suggestions such as leveraging social media for enhanced communication, developing diagnostic apps for patient engagement, and exploring new channels for customer interaction. The presence of influencers on "social media" platforms already has been proven very effective in promoting awareness for a specific disease. Also need to follow a better approach towards the messaging tools applied for physicians and for patients. Frequent interactions through e-detailing with the company's target physicians can offer greater chance for focused communication and feedback from the users. However, the use of platform should be validated from a legal perspective.

The use of E-detailing has not been exploited yet. It is used more as a product promotion medium although it offers scientific details regarding the products that may be missed by the sales representatives during face-to-face meetings. Thus, e-detailing of pharmaceutical products can offer a greater competitive advantage to the firms.

Along with this, every individual among the customers (physicians, pharmacists, or patients) will get an optimum level of service assistance. Better reliable content with a certain value also can be delivered to the customers in a specific manner.

Better engagement from the customers also can be achieved with chatbots to deal with some specific inquiries can be easier as the chatbots already have automated scripts.

Steps regarding organizing the official website with more relevant and valuable information also need to be taken in a specific manner.

Strategic Adaptation: The data revealed the need for strategic adaptation and agile decision-making to capitalize on digital marketing opportunities. Companies that proactively invest in talent development, regulatory compliance, and technology adoption are likely to emerge as industry leaders poised for sustained growth and market success.

In conclusion, the adoption of digital marketing strategies represents a transformative shift with profound implications for the pharmaceutical market in Lebanon. The data accentuates the need for holistic organizational change, regulatory reform, and strategic innovation to gain from the full potential of digitalization. By involving digital tools effectively, pharmaceutical companies can drive "customer-centric" approaches, unlock new growth opportunities, and navigate evolving market dynamics with agility and resilience.

6.3.2   Tactical Future Implications

The adoption and impact of "digital marketing" strategies within the pharmaceutical market in Lebanon, capitalize on its potential role in competitive advantage:

1-Invest in Continuous Training and Development: Given the identified skill gaps and internal challenges related to digital readiness, prioritize ongoing training and development programs for employees across all levels. By enhancing digital literacy and skill sets within the organization, companies can improve their capacity to implement and leverage digital marketing tools effectively.

2-Align Digital Strategies with Business Objectives: Establish a clear alignment between digital marketing strategies and key business objectives such as brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share. Develop tailored digital strategies that directly contribute to these metrics, ensuring a measurable impact on overall business performance. This of course should be reviewed every semester or even less according to the seasonality of the product or even life cycle.

3- Enhance Customer Engagement and Experience: Leverage digital tools to optimize customer engagement and enhance the overall customer experience. Implement personalized communication strategies, interactive platforms, and value-added services that resonate with customer needs and preferences, ultimately driving satisfaction and loyalty. Here the implementation of a digital persona to tailor the message can be very effective in tracking the customer along the adoptability ladder.

4-Navigate Regulatory Challenges with Innovation: Collaborate with regulatory authorities to navigate existing constraints while advocating for progressive regulatory reforms that support responsible digital engagement. Explore innovative approaches to compliance, ensuring that digital marketing initiatives adhere to regulatory standards without compromising effectiveness. Business ethics should be respected to preserve overall transparency and accountability.

5-Push Cross-Functional Collaboration: Promote cross-functional collaboration between marketing, sales, IT, and medical departments to advance a holistic approach to digital marketing implementation. Encourage knowledge-sharing, synergy, and alignment of efforts to maximize the impact of digital strategies across the organization. This is internal; however, it can extend to collaboration with different health bodies like WHO or the Ministry of Health if it is related to disease awareness programs.

6- Monitor and Measure Performance Metrics: Implement robust monitoring and measurement frameworks to track the performance and impact of digital marketing initiatives. Define key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share, enabling data-driven decision-making and continuous optimization.

These KPIs should not be purely technical for example click rate …etc. but to study its impact on brand recall and effect on business metrics.

7-Embrace Innovation and Experimentation: Build a culture of experimentation within the organization to explore new digital channels, technologies, and strategies. Encourage pilot projects, beta testing, and agile methodologies to identify emerging opportunities and stay ahead of market trends.

8- Collaborate with External Partners and Stakeholders: Cultivate strategic partnerships with external agencies, industry experts, and technology providers to leverage specialized expertise and resources. Collaborate with stakeholders to co-create innovative solutions and explore collaborative opportunities for mutual benefit. Companies can share best practice projects across countries.

In summary, by implementing these recommendations, pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon can attach the transformative potential of digital marketing strategies to drive competitive advantage, enhance brand equity, and optimize customer relationships. By integrating digital marketing into core business strategies and addressing key challenges proactively, organizations can position themselves as industry leaders poised for sustained growth and success in a dynamic marketplace.

6.4 Conclusion

The adoption of digital marketing strategies within the pharmaceutical market in Lebanon represents a pivotal shift towards innovation and competitiveness. Through an in-depth exploration of perceptions, challenges, and outcomes associated with digitalization, this study has unveiled critical insights into the influence of digital marketing on brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and market share.

Key findings indicate that while there is a strong willingness among pharmaceutical companies to embrace digital tools for client communication, challenges such as skill gaps, regulatory constraints, and customer readiness persist. However, companies that successfully navigate these challenges stand to benefit from enhanced customer engagement, expanded market reach, and improved business performance.

The convergence of digital marketing strategies with traditional approaches points out the importance of holistic integration and strategic alignment with overarching business objectives. By adopting an innovative and collaborative approach, for continuous improvement, pharmaceutical companies can unlock the full potential of "digital marketing" to drive sustainable competitive advantage in a dynamic marketplace.

6.5 Recommendation for Upcoming Research

Building on this research, future research endeavors can investigate deeper into the following areas to advance understanding and inform strategic decision-making within the pharmaceutical sector:

Among the recommendations that can be taken into consideration:

- Initiate longitudinal studies to assess the evolution and impact of "digital marketing "strategies on brand equity, customer loyalty, and market positioning within the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry.

- Investigate customer behavior and preferences in response to digital marketing initiatives, leveraging advanced analytics and behavioral insights to optimize engagement strategies.

- Explore the evolving regulatory landscape governing digital marketing practices in Lebanon and assess its implications on compliance, innovation, and industry competitiveness.

- Conduct comparative studies with other regional or global pharmaceutical markets to identify best practices, emerging trends, and cross-cultural nuances in digital marketing adoption and effectiveness.

- Make a Technological Innovation Assessment by evaluating the use of evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR), for their potential to disrupt and enhance digital marketing capabilities within the pharmaceutical sector.

- Investigate organizational resilience and change management strategies to facilitate smooth transitions from traditional to digital marketing paradigms, addressing internal barriers and promoting a culture of digital readiness.

- Explore ethical considerations and guidelines for responsible digital marketing practices, ensuring transparency, privacy, and ethical engagement with healthcare professionals and consumers.

One last suggestion could be to build a model to follow to make each step of implementation clear in terms of objectives, strategy, tactics, and KPIs. This model could be then replicated to be implemented in hospital settings, pharmacy settings, and not only between pharmaceutical companies and their direct customers as the physicians. It can help to build a holistic solution model that involves all stakeholders even patients without forgetting the insurance and governmental bodies.

By advancing inquiries in these areas, scholars and practitioners can contribute to the continuous evolution of "digital marketing" strategies, driving innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable growth in the digital era.

With the introduction of different applications related to different pharmaceutical companies, people can get better health care.

"Digital marketing" also can bring different ways to serve the customer with quality service but also with less labor. Advanced patient mobile applications can bring a better utilization of the concept of artificial intelligence by which they also can meet the process order in a certain manner" (Satalkina, and Steiner, 2020).

6.6 Closure

Digital marketing is replacing traditional marketing strategies. This is primarily due to ease of interaction with end users, less time-consuming, and better cost-effectiveness. Moreover, "digital marketing" has led to greater interest by physicians in the use of these digital tools.. This also affects how patients, physicians, and healthcare organizations interact all together.

The way to access health care information for both patients and physicians justifies the global potential value of digital tools. Moreover, the identification of gaps in awareness and the access and use of digital tools by physicians is essential to building future strategies.

While most companies in our study use digital tools with varying degrees of influence, "digital marketing" can be improved. Some of the suggested strategies include collaboration among the firms via the syndicate or governmental bodies, launching mobile applications, building dedicated e-marketing teams, and keeping physicians updated with the latest digital marketing tools. The tendency of physicians towards digital tool use during working hours is understandable, given online information is easily accessible relatively quickly and, therefore, can save time.

The pharmaceutical market is highly competitive, given the limited time of a physician. To be effective, pharmaceutical marketing must be innovative and embrace new ways to engage its audiences, such as workshops, focused e-detailing, and digital links to scientific studies. However, digital interactions between physicians and patients are limited. Many of our study participants indicated a willingness to explore digital patient interactions. The availability of digital tools influences the practice of physicians and changes the doctor-patient relationship.

In the past, the common sources for increasing a physician's medical knowledge were traditional libraries, paper textbooks, research journals, …. etc. However, digital knowledge and their increased accessibility have changed the search for medical information for physicians with less time for such research. Currently, new tools are widespread for books and research journals as well, which are available in digital formats

The traditional techniques in communication such as the use of emails will eventually become less frequently used. This is mainly because of the fast changes in the "digital marketing" industry that have created a higher level of competition. Hence, most of the emails goes to the junk folder or remain unopened in the inbox. "We found that "e-detailing" and video conferencing have made a change in clinical practice compared with other tools of communication. The use of webinars can focus the nature of the discussion on a specific topic, the interactive "question and answer" sessions are more specific, and also the time commitment" (Hamadeh L, 2022).

We can add also that the information delivered in any industry-sponsored continuing medical education (CME) event (whether digital or traditional) may carry some bias in the information presented. Our study does not explore the impact of biased information in (CME) meetings, but future studies may explore this issue. In fact, pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon do not spend a lot of budgets on "digital marketing efforts" now due to a lack of experience but hey have the will to do so. Some of them have recently built special teams to focus on creating strategies and initiatives for "digital marketing". This indicates "digitalization" in marketing will grow in time.

 Initially, some initiatives included only a few segments in marketing, with a focus on "over the counter" medications. The trend has since spread rapidly and included almost all prescription medications.

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As a global conclusion, "Digital marketing" needs to be implemented to bring better "client engagement", and better communication.

Despite limited use compared to European countries, Still, the Lebanese Pharmaceutical market is showing a high willingness to engage more in all digital approaches and to integrate a new vision in any strategy to include digital as a pillar for sustainability and competitive edge.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY COVER LETTER

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Title of the Study: "The Role of Digital Marketing as a Tool for Creating and Sustaining Competitive Advantage in Pharmaceutical Market in Lebanon".

This survey is conducted as part of a dissertation undergoing my "Doctorate in Business Administration "(D.B.A) at the "Swiss School of Business and Management". The long-term goal of the research is to develop a formalized road map or a system model to follow to provide a smooth transition and integration of digital marketing in pharmaceutical companies. following a process of identifying, classifying, modeling, and resolving constraints to create a sustainable competitive edge.

Thank you for participating in our study which will remain anonymous, taking 10-15 minutes of your time, and will represent a value-added outcome to our study. Your input is valuable in understanding the digital landscape within the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon.

By proceeding with this questionnaire, you consent to participate in the study. Your responses will remain strictly confidential and will be only used for research purposes.

SURVEY COVER LETTER

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW

Title of the Study: "The Role of Digital Marketing as a Tool for Creating and Sustaining Competitive Advantage in Pharmaceutical Market in Lebanon".

These qualitative questions aim to gather in-depth insights, opinions, and experiences related to the impact of "digital marketing" strategies in the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry, aligning with the research objectives.

This survey is conducted as part of a dissertation undergoing my "Doctorate in Business Administration" (D.B.A) at the "Swiss School of Business and Management". The long-term target of the research is to develop a formalized road map or a system model to follow to provide a smooth transition and integration of digital marketing in pharmaceutical companies. following a process of identifying, classifying, modeling, and resolving constraints to create a sustainable competitive edge.

CONSENT FORM

Research project title: **"The Role of Digital Marketing as a Tool for Creating and Sustaining Competitive Advantage in Pharmaceutical Market in Lebanon".**

Research investigator: Dana BAYOUN

Research Participants name

"The interview will take (15 -20 MN.) either face-to-face or via Zoom. We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time" (SSBM template).

"Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research require that interviewees explicitly agree to be interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation." Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form or give us your verbal consent before beginning to ensure that you approve the following:"

- the interview will be recorded, or notes will be taken, and a transcript will be produced

- you will be sent the transcript and allowed to correct any factual errors

- the transcript of the interview will be analyzed by myself (Dana Bayoun) as a research investigator

- access to the interview transcript will be limited to (Dana Bayoun) and academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process

- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publications or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed

- the actual recording or notes will be destroyed once the thesis is submitted

- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval".

Quotation Agreement

"I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used". All or part of the content of your interview may be used:

- "In academic papers, policy papers or news articles"

- "On our website and in other media that we may produce such as spoken presentations"

- "On other feedback events"

- "In an archive of the project "

1.   "I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time".

2.   "The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above".

3.   "I have read the Information sheet".

4.   "I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation".

5.   "I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality".

6.   "I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future".

Printed Name"

Participants Signature and Date:

Researchers Signature and Date:

Contact Information:

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Name of researcher Full address: Dana Bayoun

Telephone: +009613178082

E-mail: danabayoun@hotmail.com

You can also contact (Researcher name) supervisor: Dr Amrinder Singh

  e-mail researcher: amrinder@ssbm.ch>

What if I have concerns about this research?

"If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how, it is being conducted, you can contact SSBM by email at contact@ssbm.ch" *.

*SSBM template

Quantitative survey questions

Title of the Study: "The Role of Digital Marketing in Creating and Maintaining Competitive Advantage in the Lebanese Pharmaceutical Market".

This survey is part of my doctoral dissertation in Business Administration (D.B.A) at the "Swiss School of Business and Management". The general intention of this research is to develop a systematic approach or a model that can facilitate the seamless integration of digital marketing in pharmaceutical companies. This process involves identifying, categorizing, modeling, and resolving constraints to establish a sustainable competitive edge.

Thank you for taking part in our study, which guarantees your anonymity and will only require

"10-15 minutes" of your time. Your contribution will significantly enhance our understanding of the digital landscape within the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon.

By continuing with this questionnaire, you are giving your approval to take part in the research.

All the responses will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

1.   Email *: …………………………………

General Information:

2.   Age (Mark only one oval.):

   a.   under 25

   b.   Between 25-34

   c.   Between 35-44

   d.   Between 45-54

   e.   55 and above

   f.   Other:

3.   Gender (Mark only one oval per row.)   □ Male   □Female

4.   Position/Role in the Pharmaceutical Company Mark only one oval.

a)   "General Manager"

b)   "BU Head"/ "Franchise Head"

c)   "Marketing Manager"

d)   "Sales Manager"

e) "Digital Marketing "Manager

f) "Brand Lead"

g) "medical representative"

h) Other:

5. Who mostly drives digital marketing efforts in your company? Check all that apply

   a) Marketing department

   b) Sales Department

   c) Management Board

   d) Business customer support

   e) Medico-marketing

   f) Individual effort

6. Years of Experience in the Pharmaceutical Industry (Mark only one oval.)

   a) Less than 1 year

   b) Between 1 to 5 years

   c) Between 6 to 10 years

   d) More than 10 years

   e) Other:

7.   Type of Pharmaceutical Company (Mark only one oval.)

a)   Multinational Pharmaceutical Company

b)   Local Pharmaceutical company

c)   Distributer /Agent

d)   Other:

These questions aim to assess the preparedness, challenges, and execution of digital marketing strategies in pharmaceutical companies

9. Do you agree that pharmaceutical companies are ready for a marketing digitalized service? (Check all that apply).

□ Strongly agree   □ Agree   □ Neutral   □ Disagree   □ Strongly Disagree

9. What are the reasons that prevent(s) companies from using digital marketing? (Check all that apply).

a)   Limited internal understanding & needed skill base to implement

b)   Lack of infrastructure

c)   Lack of active and relevant online community to engage with

d)   Risk of divulging too much information to competitors

e)   There are no significant challenges

f)   Others specify

The purpose of these questions is to evaluate the perceptions and attitudes of pharmaceutical companies in Lebanon regarding the utilization of digital tools for client communication.

10. How willing are you to invest in and use digital tools for client communication within your pharmaceutical company? (Scale: 1 - Not willing at all, 5 – Very willing)

<div align="center">

1   2   3   4   5

</div>

11. What was the main reason to integrate digital marketing tools into your marketing strategy

Check all that apply

a)   Cost-effectiveness for marketing budget Communication during the lockdown of COVID

b)   Change in Marketing trends worldwide

c)   Change in Business model due to the Economic crisis in Lebanon

d)   All of the above

12. What digital communication tools are currently being utilized in your organization for engaging with clients? Check all that apply.

      a)   e-detailing video detailing

      b)   e-mail campaigns Mobile apps Website

      c)   Business WhatsApp

      d)   others …

13. What percentage (out of 100%) does each represent in the total digital approach of your company?

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14. How satisfied are you with the current digital tools being used for client communication?

(Scale: 1 - Not satisfied, 5 - Very satisfied)

Mark only one oval.

              1   2   3   4   5

Section II

The next questions are to assess the effect of "digital marketing "strategies on the marketing practices of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies:

15. How has digital marketing influenced customer engagement in your pharmaceutical company? Check all that apply

　　　　　　□ Positively　　　　　□Negatively　　　　　□Neutral

16. Do you agree that companies can go completely digital without losing a segment of their customers? (Check all that apply).

□ Strongly agree　　　　　□ Agree　　□ Neutral　　□ Disagree　　□ Strongly Disagree

17. On what criteria does your firm measure "digital marketing" effects on business performance attributed to the adoption of "digital marketing "strategies? (Check all that apply).

a)　　Increase in Sales

b)　　Profits

c)　　Brand awareness /visibility

d)　　Market share

e)   Customer satisfaction

f)   We do not measure "digital marketing" impact

18. How do you measure the success of your "digital marketing" campaign performance?

a)   click rate views

b)   attendees' number

c)   reviews

d)   Other:

19. Rate the effectiveness of digital marketing in reaching your target audience.

(Scale: 1 - Not effective, 5 - Highly effective) Mark only one oval.

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

▪ The objective of this section is to explore the shift from conventional marketing methods to cutting-edge digital marketing strategies and the competitive advantages they bring about:

20. How would you rate your organization's readiness to transition from traditional to digital marketing? (Scale: 1 - Not ready at all, 5 - Very ready)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

21. What specific challenges have you encountered during the transition to implementing digital marketing strategies? Check all that apply.

    a) Lack of skills (mainly internally)

    b) Lack of marketing and IT alignment?

    c) Lack of ROI certainty?

    d) High cost

    e) e- Tools for implementation

    f) Lack of Management endorsement

22. Rank the main barriers you take into consideration when you convince a customer to interact with your digital communication tools. (Check all that apply).

    a) Technological readiness

    b) Connection problems

    c) Cost

    d) Employees' Digital Literacy

This section aims to study the difficulties and opportunities associated with the adoption of "digital marketing" in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon:

23. What major regulatory challenges have you faced in implementing digital marketing strategies in the pharmaceutical sector? Check all that apply.

    a) MOH regulation

    b) to promote directly to patients

    c) Internal procedure and approval

    d) Others: please specify

24. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the cost-effectiveness of digital marketing compared to traditional marketing methods? (1 - Not cost-effective, 10 - Very cost-effective)

              1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

25. How optimistic are you about the potential growth opportunities that digital marketing can bring to the pharmaceutical industry in Lebanon? (Scale: 1 -Not optimistic, 5 - Very optimistic)

             1   2   3   4   5

26. How do you consider the impact of using digital tools on your strategy?

             Positive   neutral   negative

APPENDIX E

Qualitative Interview Questions

Title of the Study: "The Role of Digital Marketing as a Tool for Creating and Sustaining Competitive Advantage in the Pharmaceutical Market in Lebanon".

These qualitative questions aim to gather in-depth insights, opinions, and experiences related to the impact of "digital marketing" strategies in the Lebanese pharmaceutical industry, aligning with the research objectives.

This survey is conducted as part of a dissertation undergoing my "Doctorate in Business Administration" (D.B.A) at the Swiss School of Business and Management. The long-term aim of the research is to develop a formalized road map or a system model to follow to provide a smooth transition and integration of digital marketing in pharmaceutical companies. following a process of identifying, classifying, modeling, and resolving constraints to create a sustainable competitive edge.

Objective 1: To analyze the perceptions and attitudes of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies toward the use of digital tools for client communication:

What are the current perceptions and attitudes of your pharmaceutical company regarding the integration of digital tools for communication with clients?

Objective 2: To investigate the transition from traditional marketing approaches to innovative digital marketing strategies and their resulting competitive advantages:

1. What was the main reason for integrating digital marketing tools into your marketing strategy, Has the Economic crisis made it faster

2. Could you describe any challenges or obstacles your organization faced during the transition from traditional to digital marketing approaches?

3. In your experience, what were the most significant advantages gained by your organization after transitioning to innovative digital marketing strategies?

4. What strategies or methods were particularly effective in making the transition smooth and successful for your organization?

Objective 3: To assess the impact of "digital marketing" strategies on the marketing practices of Lebanese pharmaceutical companies:

1. How has the implementation of digital marketing strategies impacted the overall marketing practices within your pharmaceutical company?

2. In your "opinion", what are the major advantages and disadvantages of utilizing "digital marketing"strategies in the pharmaceutical industry?

3. Can you provide specific examples of successful digital marketing campaigns and how they influenced customer engagement or brand visibility?

Objective 4: To investigate the difficulties and opportunities associated with the adoption of digital marketing in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon:

1. What are the specific challenges your organization has encountered in adopting digital marketing strategies within the pharmaceutical sector?

2. In your view, what untapped opportunities are present in the pharmaceutical sector in Lebanon for the effective adoption of digital marketing strategies?

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