

WHITE PAPER

TAKING THE PULSE® EUROPE

*Opportunities for Physician Marketing
in the Networked European Economy*

manhattanRESEARCH

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“Although the vast majority of physicians in the major European markets are online, we continue to see unique strategic opportunities emerge, largely driven by cultural differences and technology offerings at the country level.

Simply stated, an overlay of the U.S. approach does not fit the European markets.”

**Joe Farris
Chief Operating Officer
Manhattan Research**

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The age of e-marketing in the health and pharmaceutical industry has clearly arrived. Globally, product teams and marketers routinely spend millions on the website(s) for a blockbuster product, and online media placement within physician portals has become an accepted piece of the launch puzzle for new products. However, the current state of e-marketing is not as clear when it comes to regional or specific markets on a country-by-country basis.

Given that most pharmaceutical companies address the world with respect to the revenue contribution of each country or region, "international" e-marketing (outside the U.S.) is essentially comprised of Japan and the "Big 5" (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK) in Europe. In an effort to better understand the current state of these international e-marketing opportunities, Manhattan Research recently conducted a large telephone-based study of practicing physicians in these European countries as a starting point to analyze global e-marketing opportunities.

Why the strict focus on the physician audience? From an international perspective (excluding the U.S.), e-marketing is clearly a physician-focused strategy today. Due to regulatory restrictions, consumer advertising and online promotions are not viable options for pharmaceutical e-marketers. Although international consumers do visit product sites online, they typically end up at the U.S.-controlled site (i.e., the product.com site). Therefore, by default the strategy and content are typically controlled by their U.S. product teams.

As a result of these limitations on consumer marketing, the real opportunity for impact lies with physicians – and the data surrounding physician technology utilization and interest in online pharmaceutical information uncovers significant opportunities in the realm of physician e-marketing strategies in Europe. The research reveals widespread adoption of core activities such as visiting professional journals online, accessing information from professional societies, and searching literature databases. However, certain activities that have become widespread in the U.S. market have yet to attract a core group of international physician users. One key example is electronic detailing, where adoption rates significantly lag behind the U.S. market. That said, it is not simply for lack of interest among European physicians, but rather for a lack of offerings and awareness among physicians – leaving substantial room for growth in this area.

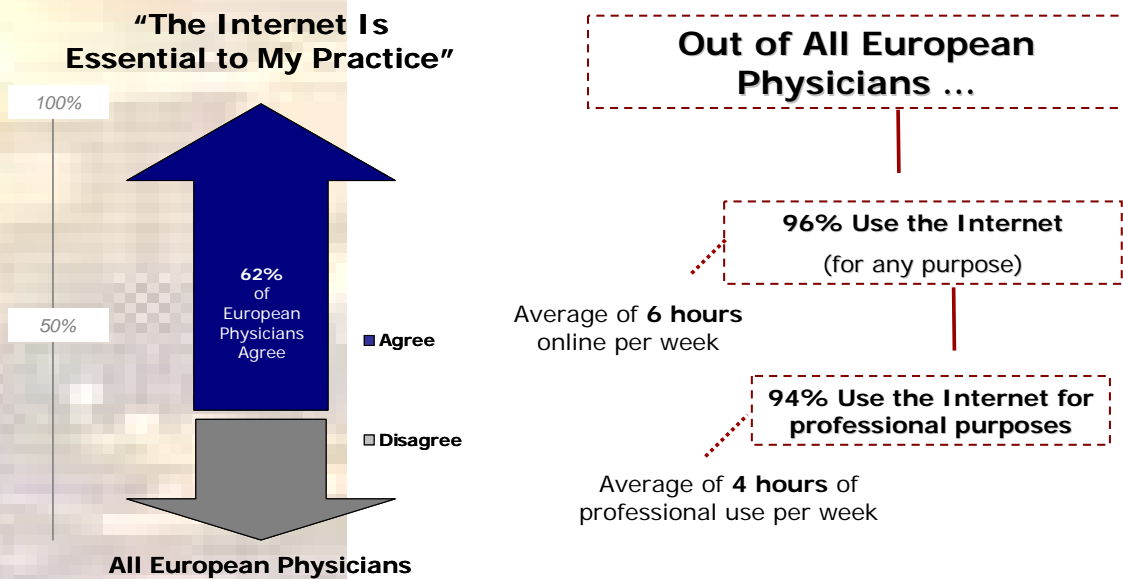
There are also substantial differences in overall adoption when comparing country-level trends, with Spain typically lagging behind the average adoption rates while Germany and the UK lead the pack – a finding that underscores the necessity of localizing physician marketing efforts. For instance, the majority of European physicians still demand professional content online in their native language. That said, the data reveal a core group of key indicators surrounding learning and promotional preferences that can drive best practices for e-marketing strategies across Europe – and on a truly global basis.

The research clearly demonstrates that European physicians have embraced the Internet for professional purposes – and health and pharmaceutical marketers must recognize the critical window of “first mover” advantage in many of these markets. In other words, there remains an opportunity to make investments and capture critical mindshare – unlike the U.S. market where moving a few points of online market share may be extremely

difficult, with very large established content and service providers growing each year. So, as with most sales and marketing strategies, time is of the essence.

For starters, we may look to the data to summarize the general feelings of physicians in Europe towards the Internet as a “resource” for their practice. The data for all European physicians reveal physicians are generally positive about the value of the Internet as a professional and education resource, with 62% of all European physicians reporting the Internet is essential to their practice today (see Figure 1). Furthermore, we find that 94% of all European physicians report any use of the Internet for professional purposes in the past 12 months. Clearly, the Internet has moved beyond a “diversion” to becoming an accepted information, education, and communication channel for almost every practicing physician in Europe to some extent.

Figure 1
Level of Agreement the Internet is Essential, Frequency of Access



Despite the fact the majority of European physicians find the Internet essential, and almost all use it to some extent professionally, it is important to place the channel in perspective. For example, it is still rare to find a physician that only relies on the Internet as a source of clinical information – for obvious reasons. The role of journals, colleagues, congresses, and medical references remains clear – and very strong. However, the data shows large segments of physicians are shifting their information consumption and making the online channel part of the weekly routine – and in some markets there are already segments that routinely use the Internet for professional purposes on a daily basis.

In addition to the value of looking at the level of adoption and integration at a regional level (i.e., the five major markets in Europe), there is also significant value in viewing the research through the lens of the individual markets. For example, if a company wanted to prioritize investments at the regional level, insight into adoption by market can dictate relative value derived from investments in technology and the online channel collectively. Although the majority of physicians are online to some extent in each major market, the research reveals the level of integration and frequency can shift significantly by country (as well as by specialist segment).

The purpose of this white paper is to summarize the Taking the Pulse® Europe study findings by country, and not to analyze every possible segment available from the research (of five markets across numerous specialist segments). As such, the following market summaries provide initial insight into market trends on a country-by-country basis.

Germany ... This key market in Europe represents a very active market online. German physicians are very likely to be online in some capacity. However, despite widespread adoption of the Internet by the majority of physicians in Germany, the total time spent online per week by German physicians is slightly below the average for all physicians in Europe. Furthermore, adoption of broadband or “high speed” Internet access (in the office or at home) tends to lag behind other “large” markets in Europe.

United Kingdom ... Clearly an advanced market in terms of technology at the country level, UK physicians online spend more time online than any other European physician segment analyzed in this research. In addition to spending more total time online, physicians in the UK are much more likely than their European colleagues to find ways to integrate online access into the workplace and professional workflow (i.e., between patient consultations). The research also reveals the UK market is relatively advanced with respect to overall adoption and use of electronic mail for professional purposes.

France ... If there is an “average” physician market segment in Europe, French physicians would be it. Although not at the high or low end of the scale for online adoption, hours online, and speed of access, the market does find time to visit a growing number of physician portals online (including global destinations). One notable difference is that the frequency of conducting professional activities online is below average among French physicians (when compared to European physicians at large). While they are just as likely to perform many activities, they tend to perform them with less frequency than physicians in other markets.

Italy ... Although physicians in Italy are less likely than other markets such as the UK and Germany to be online in the first place, the research reveals that a majority of physicians still report using the Internet to research prescription drugs, read journals, or access patient education materials monthly or more often. Furthermore, Italian physicians are one of the few markets utilizing market-specific search engines to find medical information online. In the case of Italian physicians, the site Virgilio had a strong following ... although slightly bested by global behemoth Google in terms of pure reach among Italian physicians.

Spain ... Although considered a smaller market in terms of overall size, Spain remains a key market in terms of the overall European landscape today. Despite the fact Spanish physicians are less likely than their “average” European physician counterpart to be online in the first place, those Spanish physicians who are online tend to be just as active as their colleagues in other markets. Furthermore, the online segment of Spanish physicians demonstrates relatively high frequency of activities such as journals online, practice guidelines, and using the Internet to research prescription drugs.

In closing, it is clear to see that physicians – like a rapidly growing segment of consumers overall in Europe today – see the Internet as a critical information, education, and communication channel. However, it is vital to place the “e” or online channel in context. Given the channel is relatively new to many European markets and users (“new” defined as less than 10 years), it is clear that physicians across Europe have not instantly become reliant on the Internet as their sole – or even primary – source of medical information. However, the research clearly shows where the channel excels – access to timely information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Outlets such as professional journals, medical news clipping services, searchable medical references, search engines providing access to global content, and indexed literature databases have already pulled the first wave of European physicians online and will continue to serve as a key resource for the many waves of new physicians to come online in the future.

That said, it is also critical to remember that technology for technology's sake is not the answer to the increasingly challenging problem of getting access to a physician audience. Technology is simply the channel and can never replace solid strategy, content, or most importantly – a superior product. What the channel does offer is ubiquitous and relatively efficient access to physicians on their terms. Furthermore, it is getting harder to ignore the growing audience of physicians who are quickly transitioning their traditional offline behaviors into the online realm – notably activities such as medical education, reading journals, and accessing medical references and textbooks.

As many successful marketers and executives have learned through experience, the winning team must be willing to go to where the target market will be tomorrow, and not be content to simply exist with the world as it exists today.

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In addition to a robust analysis by individual countries, the technology and information seeking preferences of European physician specialties are available immediately to subscribing clients. Available segments include analyses of General Practitioners, Pediatricians, Cardiologists, Dermatologists, Infectious Disease Specialists, Psychiatrists, Rheumatologists, Obstetricians, Gynecologists, Surgeons, and Oncologists.

Research Topics Covered

Internet use and experience by location and frequency, email, mobile technology (PDA), electronic prescribing, electronic CME, professional activities conducted online, future interest in web-based communication systems, physician websites, portals and search engine usage, visits to pharmaceutical-owned websites, web-based sample systems for Rx products, participation in electronic detailing (edetailing).

Manhattan Research

In addition to *Taking the Pulse® Europe*, Manhattan Research conducts numerous research studies among physicians and consumers. Each study serves a unique purpose and focuses on different aspects of information technology adoption. Broad research is complemented by targeted analysis among more than 30 consumer therapeutic segments and 20 physician specialist segments.

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