



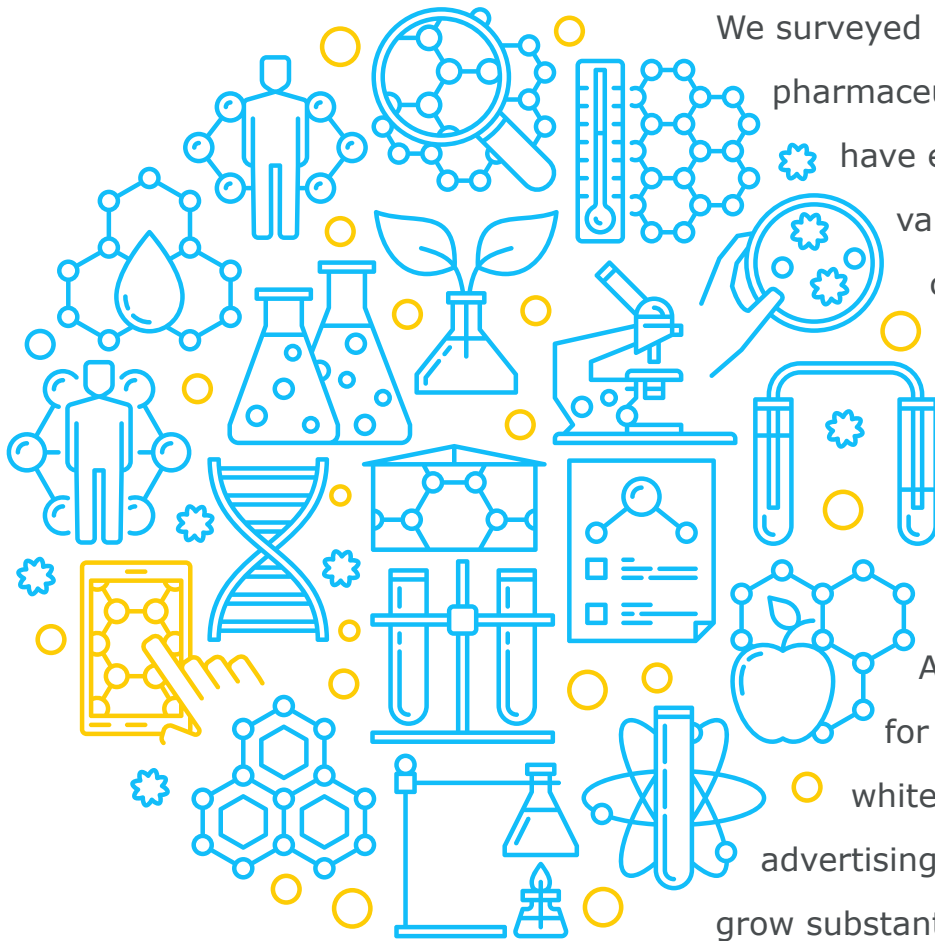
## Closing the digital gap

How pharma companies can benefit from digital advertising

The shift of advertising dollars from billboards and traditional TV ads to online is nothing new. But one sector lags way behind the rest. Pharmaceutical marketing advertising remains resolutely behind the curve and is yet to substantially switch to digital.

We surveyed pharma executives to find out why digital marketing in the pharmaceutical industry is proving such a stumbling block, when other sectors have embraced it. The reasons for failing to go digital are both clear and varied. For some, TV appears to have the greatest reach among consumers. Others believe government regulations become too onerous in an online context. We believe that the real answer is that few understand this new advertising channel. Furthermore, the pharmaceutical industry as a whole has little knowledge of how to leverage it effectively.

At MetrixLab, we believe that digital presents an exciting opportunity for pharma marketing. As in all things, knowledge is power. In this whitepaper, we explore the key insights needed to make the most of digital advertising. As understanding increases, we expect pharma digital advertising to grow substantially.

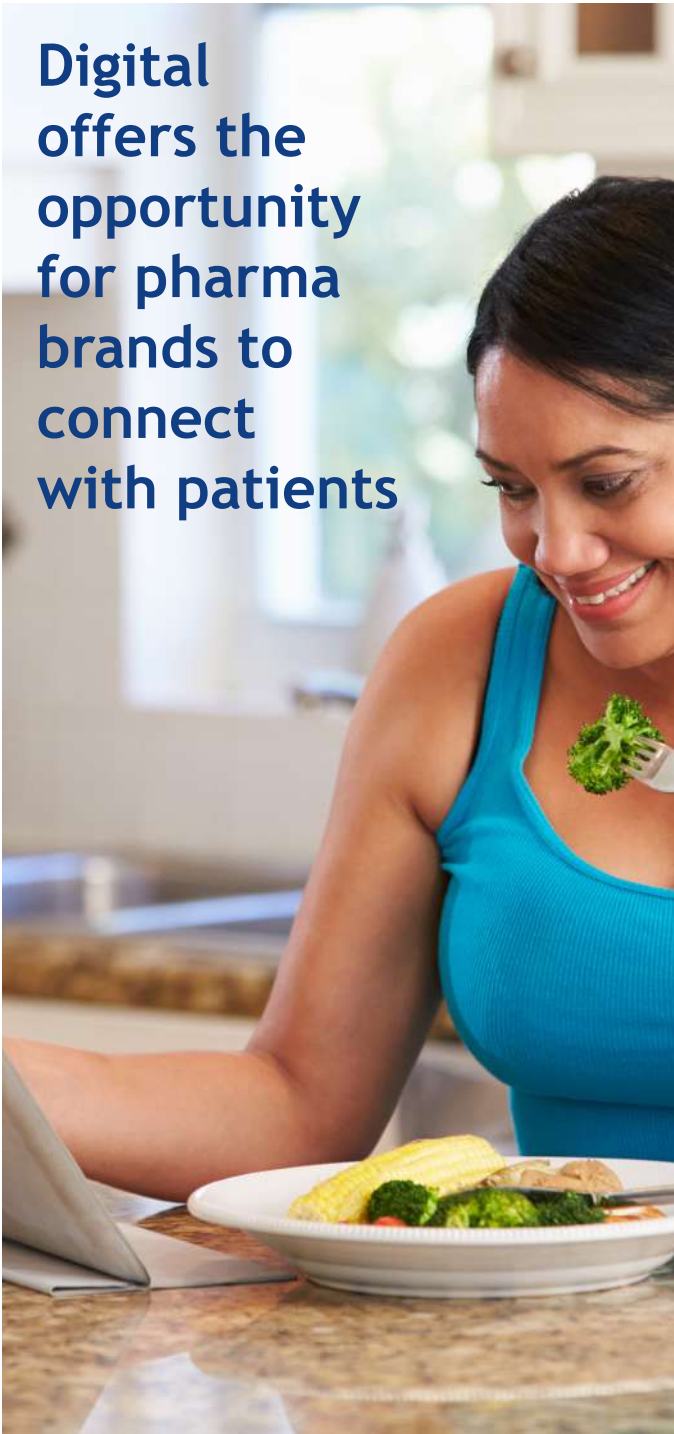


## Digital offers the opportunity for pharma brands to connect with patients

For many patients, the internet is the first port of call when researching symptoms and drugs to address them. According to our research, over 50% of patients use the internet to research their medical condition. However, many patients fail to successfully navigate the sea of information available online to find the specific information answers they seek.

Take the diabetic community, for example. A subset of these patients are highly motivated to manage their own condition. Patients talk frequently online about diet, recipes and exercise programs. A deep listening study we recently conducted online among thousands of patients shows that most are extremely naive about medical treatments. They are aware of the need to address their A1C levels. However, they have very little understanding of the role that prescription medications have to play in helping them to do this. Why is this the case? Quite simply, diabetes medicine brands are not providing the information needed by patients in a way that they can understand.

The internet is the perfect channel for this information. So, by ignoring digital, the makers of diabetic products are missing the opportunity to connect with thousands of patients.



## What makes great digital advertising?

Many of the principles of traditional advertising hold true in the digital environment. But they must be done faster, and work across a broad range of technologies. One advantage of being behind the curve is that pharma can learn from other industries.

The sector can now follow the path that is being blazed by world-leading consumer marketing companies like Unilever, Microsoft and Apple. Historically, this has been an effective tactic. When DTC advertising was first introduced in the United States, major pharma companies learned from the masters in the CPG world.

In this way, the likes of Eli Lilly, Pfizer and AstraZeneca followed proven approaches. This advertising supported the rapid growth of blockbuster drugs like Nexium, Lipitor and Cialis. Now pharma giants have the opportunity to learn how to embrace digital marketing from other industries. And the good news is, the pharma companies that move fastest into this space will have a clear advantage over their competition.





# Learnings from MetrixLab's 'Digital Playbook'

Facebook is an undisputed giant of the digital world. In a seminal meta-study of over 3,000 Facebook ads, MetrixLab unveiled the key attributes of digital ads.

The playbook from this analysis, which is available to prospective clients, includes the following:

## 1 Think like a silent movie.

Consumers will see many ads first without sound. Your visuals must capture their attention, fast.

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## 2 Be snappy.

MetrixLab's research shows that consumers will only watch digital ads for up to 7-15 seconds. That means TV commercials don't transfer well into the digital environment. Be prepared to offer an entirely new approach.

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### 3 Brand early and prominently.

Otherwise, consumers aren't likely to tie the ad to your product and so it will have no effect. Your brand must be the hero of your advertising and feature centrally. Ads that provide immediate benefit information followed by the fair balance will perform best.

### 4 Feature demos effectively.

Our research shows that demos almost always trigger patient interest. If a patient learns something about a drug online, they are more likely to speak to their doctor about it. MetrixLab's research shows that patients often ask about specific brands in a consultation because they've learned about them online. Digital advertising is a powerful driver of scripts.

### 5 Be aware of both your audiences.

Patients aren't the only ones who are influenced by ads online. The new wave of digital will blur the line between patients and doctors. So, it is good to reflect information that appeals to both audiences.

# Leveraging digital best practices within recommendations and next steps

## MAXIMIZE CREATIVE...



Brand early, and use multiple brand cues



Make the brand the star, not an accessory



Show product in use

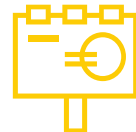


Keep it simple, use only one or two claims

## FORMAT...



Use a strong opening hook for video



Think billboard rather than print for display/posts



Think silent movie



Only use the time you need

## ...AND DEVICE



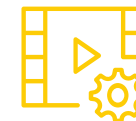
Attention is more fleeting on mobile, so ensure your brand is not lost!



For smaller screens, keep it even shorter and simpler



Zoom in for images on smaller screens



Assume video doesn't cross devices

# Maximizing effectiveness

Having a good creative is only half the battle. In order to be effective, you need a great execution. We work with clients from a range of industries to develop highly effective digital campaigns. The principles of good digital marketing hold true across all industries.

Here we offer you the guidelines to effective execution:

## **1 Know where your viewers are, and how to reach them.**

The media environment changes on a daily basis. Most viewers have long since shifted their attention away from traditional TV screens. But where are they now? Mobiles, gaming, online – these are some of the many choices consumers now have. Your challenge is to understand changing consumer behavior across media, and to deliver the right information to the right place at the right time.

## **2 Refine your targeting.**

Whereas TV offers wide reach, digital can offer pinpoint accuracy. Identify your targets, and refine your messaging to cater to their exact needs.





### 3 Take the initiative.

To date, very few pharma brands have dared to tackle digital. Those who do will dominate share of voice (SOV) online in many categories. TV advertising can generate interest, driving patients online to learn more. In some cases, digital advertising can ride the coattails of the more expensive channel. Ultimately, your success will rest on the ability to create brand memorability. What will patients remember about your brand when they visit the doctor?

### 4 Do your research before and after activity.

Pre-testing enables you to optimize your digital creative for maximum impact. Conducting a Digital Creative Evaluation (DCE) enables you to track results. These tools will enable you to measure the exact impact of your marketing on patients.



## Time to close the digital gap

With consumers increasingly relying on online information sources, it is time for pharma brands to close the digital gap.

The digital channel offers targeting efficiencies, cost advantages and the ability to convey precise information to patients. Smart testing enables brands to de-risk their digital ads and be confident that they will be well received. And the opportunity to engage with patients online is too good to be missed. The brands who take the initiative will be reap the many rewards.



## Summary

**Embrace digital to engage with both patients and the medical profession**

**Understand your online audiences to target advertising with precision**

**Maximize creative executions by learning from successes in other sectors**

**Pre-test and measure the impact of campaigns and refine them quickly**

## Author



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## Want to know more?

We're just an email away.

[Contact one of our experts](#)

## About MetrixLab

MetrixLab provides consumer insights that drive smarter business decisions. As a truly digital global research agency, we pioneer new technologies and integrate multiple data sources to push the boundaries of research.

This enables our experts to provide high-quality insights at scale, at speed and for an unparalleled value. In just one decade, we've grown rapidly and now work with more than half of the world's top 100 brands.

Our expertise, passion and solutions enable our clients to succeed at product innovation, brand engagement and customer value in over 90 countries. MetrixLab is part of the Macromill Group. [www.metrixlab.com](http://www.metrixlab.com)