

Multi-channel Cardiologists: clinicians are a step ahead in the digital world

A survey of hospital- and office-based cardiologists sheds light on which information channels this group of physicians prefers. In addition, it provides insights on how the information should be prepared. The results from multi-channel (MC) research are the basis for the 'Healthcare Marketing MC Monitor', published by this journal in cooperation with Eumara AG, Saarbrücken.

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The results of the current 'Healthcare Marketing MC Monitor' reveal that the acceptance of digital communication channels and the likelihood of using them clearly depends on the cardiologists' work setting – private practice versus hospital / clinic.

In two representative surveys of both cardiologist groups (4,000 hospital-based and 2,700 office-based physicians), one of the aspects under investigation was the reach potential, i.e. the likelihood of using the different channels. Both online and offline channels were considered here.

The following digital channels were part of the survey:

- Online medical journals
- Newsletters / emails
- Online portals for doctors
- Moderated online education
- Unmoderated online education
- e-Rep (sales activities by phone or online tool)
- Mobile apps
- Chat with pharmaceutical companies

It basically holds for the cardiologists: traditional, established channels like e.g. personal education events, congresses and printed medical journals are still preferred to the new digital channels. But does this mean companies should ignore digital channels for the target group of cardiologists? Which of these communication options will be used by the respondents at all in the future? It becomes evident that the division of the target group into hospital- and office-based cardiologists plays a decisive role in answering these questions.

The results of the survey clearly show that hospital-based cardiologists are generally more open to digital communication channels than their office-based colleagues (see chart page 53).

The clinicians can be described as comparatively early digital adopters. This presents companies with many different opportunities to reach the target group of hospital-based cardiologists via digital channels (too).

Online medical journals: top the digital channels

The great interest of clinicians in online medical journals shows that publications in this medium are a meaningful addition to the still highly relevant medical journals in printed form.

Big differences between the hospital-based cardiologists and their office-based colleagues likewise appear on the subject of education.

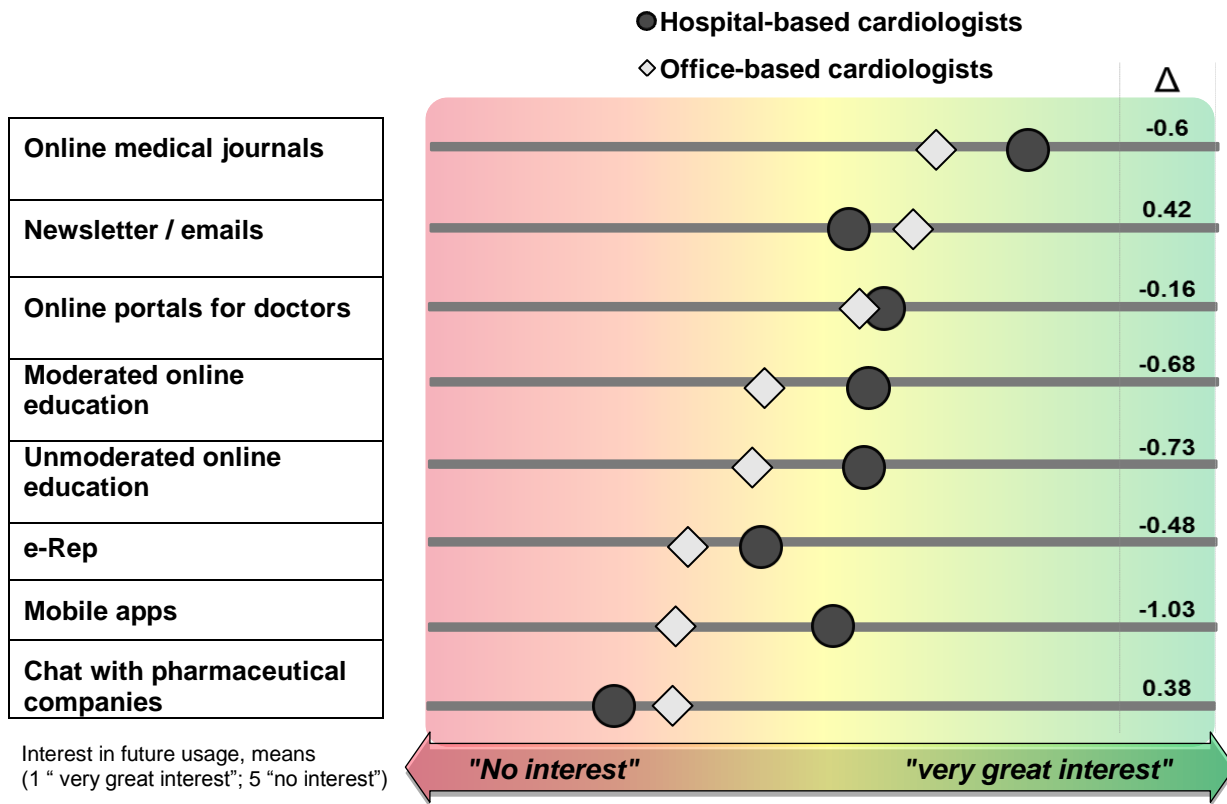
Personal education events (whether regional or national) are still more likely to be accepted by both target groups than their modern digital alternatives.

But online education is also a communication option with future potential for hospital-based cardiologists in particular. Companies can offer online education with specific contents for clinicians with or without moderation as the clinicians are receptive to both forms. The colleagues in private practice appear to be rather less open to this offer of education.

Big differences in app usage

The biggest difference between hospital- and office-based cardiologists becomes apparent for the likelihood of using mobile apps. The clinicians are again more receptive to the medium whereas the office-based colleagues show just little interest in the use of apps. Consequently, this also has an influence on

Fig. 1: Likelihood of using the digital channels



Hospital-based cardiologists can be described as comparatively early digital adopters

the design and content of a cardiologist app. When developing an app for cardiologists, companies should mainly focus on the benefit for clinicians to start with. By contrast, the development of chat functions with the pharmaceutical company should not play a major role in the company’s marketing plans as both interviewed groups of cardiologists show no enthusiasm for chatrooms.

What does this mean for companies?

Overall, the offer of digital channels is an additional opportunity to meet the communication needs of hospital-based cardiologists. Aside from the classic channels (sales force, personal education events, etc.), companies can reach hospital-based cardiologists with online medical journals, online education and mobile apps in particular. For all the focus on choice of channels, content and usability must not be neglected as success factors.

The market research agency Eumara, Saarbrücken, and this journal started the ‘Healthcare Marketing MC Monitor’ last year’. In times of multi-channel communication, it is intended to reveal which channels physicians like (or don’t so much like) for obtaining information and which ones they prefer to use for their own communication. The Monitor is based on Eumara’s own tools and on learnings from mc-Pilot. mc-Pilot is a joint product of Eumara and marian Kommunikationsforschung in Frankfurt (subsidiary of the Brand Health agency), which has developed a doctor typology by communication behaviour, intended to

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enable the development of appropriate messages – along with success measurement. The 'Healthcare Marketing MC Monitor' is to provide answers to e.g. the following questions: How do target groups experience the information and communication channels of pharmaceutical companies? Which offerings are accepted, which are preferred, but which ones also remain unconsidered? Which changes or developmental dynamics affect the communication and information behaviour of target groups? How is the acceptance and use of new digital channels in particular developing? What opportunities do these channels present for marketing?

Method design

Eumara tool MC-Monitor ('ongoing tool')

- Conducting of telephone interviews
- Sample: 120 cardiologists (60 office-based and 60 hospital-based), nationwide
- Timing: mid-August – mid-November 2016

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