Enhancing Omnichannel Marketing with Artificial Intelligence

Executive Summary

Over the past several years, pharmaceutical marketing organizations have completed the first phase of developing omnichannel marketing capabilities. For most organizations, this has required integration of marketing technology components, changes to marketing planning processes, upskilling of internal resources and increasing demands on external partners. Just as leading pharmaceutical companies progressively excel in implementing omnichannel marketing, the landscape is on the brink of a second phase of disruption from the availability of large language model generative artificial intelligence applications. These applications offer an enticing vision of a future where AI is utilized to create, execute and enhance omnichannel campaigns. This proposition holds even greater appeal due to the potential for accelerated time-to-market and elevated levels of customer engagement driven by better and more efficient personalization and campaign optimization.

In this POV, we discuss the potential of AI in omnichannel marketing to enhance the effectiveness of campaigns, and boost efficiency and speed of campaign development. We'll review challenges of implementing omnichannel marketing in pharmaceutical marketing organizations and explore specific applications of AI to omnichannel including content creation, regulatory review, identification of meaningful customer behavior patterns, personalized customer experiences, suggested next best actions, and campaign optimization.

Omnichannel Adoption

Developing omnichannel marketing capabilities has been time-consuming and costly[1], partly due to technical hurdles and because cloud-based technology stacks, despite their user-friendly interfaces, demand substantial changes to upstream processes in campaign design, planning and execution. Change management efforts to upskill and coordinate activities among teams, external agencies and vendors, and ensure seamless integration of all components, has also proven to be a considerable time investment.

Marketers have gained valuable insights from these experiences. They've realized that attaining omnichannel success requires more than mere technology and content. It mandates meticulous coordination across various domains, including marketing analytics, strategic planning, content creation, and media implementation.

AI and Omnichannel

What impact will AI capabilities have on organizations' hard won omnichannel success? Just as organizations have finally succeeded in learning how to orchestrate omnichannel customer experiences, will AI propel us forward or necessitate a step backwards to retool operational models and technological requirements? It is our view that ideally, organizations should initially adopt omnichannel AI solutions that fit into their existing operational model.

While generative AI has garnered enormous media attention, from warnings about AI's potential to harm humanity or to make human jobs obsolete, there are other types of AI that have been used in the healthcare space for some time with little fanfare or disruption. Examples include use cases for diagnostics, clinical data analytics and a range of specialty AI applications designed to support drug discovery[2,3,4,5].

Generative AI has been a focal point for good reason, given its uncanny human-like use of language and emergent properties. However, like most emerging technologies, only by engaging with it directly can we understand its true potential and limitations. And more importantly for omnichannel marketing, some of the most powerful AI applications will combine both analytical and generative AI.

For the early adopters of generative AI, its true power and current limitations are beginning to come into focus. Generative AI possesses the capacity to dynamically create video content, engage in dialogue and personalize content for practical applications today, provided controls to ensure compliant messaging are implemented. For instance, video avatars combined with scripted dialogues are being used to simulate interactions with key opinion leaders (KOLs), model HCP-representative discussion for sales training, deliver customer support, and facilitate extended peer-to-peer interactions[6]. But it's also become evident that generative AI's potential is fully realized when guided by human expertise in strategy and implementation, with AI employed to streamline creative and production processes. Users have quickly learned that using AI is not like hitting the "easy button." It is more nuanced than that.

For example, if one converses with a Generative AI chatbot on an unfamiliar topic, the results will likely be impressive, but when one engages with it on a subject about which one has expertise, it will likely result in disappointment. This distinction underscores Generative AI may be superior as an editor rather than as an expert author. Furthermore, especially concerning healthcare, AI in its current form

lacks the concept of ethics and morality[7,8], underscoring the necessity for human oversight in generative AI workflows. This is in addition to concerns regarding inaccuracies and intellectual property.

Where AI Fits: Applications to Omnichannel Marketing

CONTENT CREATION

Omnichannel campaigns put pressure on marketing organizations to publish content at scale across multiple channels. Meeting customer expectations means this content must be available in different forms (i.e., long form, short form, graphic, video, etc.) and in multiple instances to support segmentation and personalization. Content creation in healthcare has traditionally been a lengthy process due to its specialized nature and the regulatory process.

AI applications can be applied throughout the content supply chain. For example, for content creation, AI can be used to break original long form content into modular units, generate instances of these modules to meet different length requirements, create personalized instances, and generate dialogic content for chatbots and video scripts.

AI can also be used to accelerate the regulatory review process. AI engines can compile claims data and automate referencing, pressure test content against claims, and simulate regulatory reviews to enable teams to address issues prior to review. Teams can simulate regulatory review with variable levels of confidence, enabling them to continue to probe regulatory tolerances, where appropriate.

When combined with modular content, the regulatory process can be dramatically accelerated, which is more important than ever given customer expectations for relevant and timely engagement with brands.

⚙️ TRIGGERS AND NEXT BEST ACTION

Customer behavior is ever evolving and given the complexity of omnichannel interactions and multiple sources of customer behavior, it can be difficult to identify key interactions and respond in real time. Up until today, omnichannel campaigns have relied upon an expert systems approach to triggers and next best actions. AI can have significant advantages over this because AI is excellent at quickly identifying patterns. It can be used to identify meaningful customer behavior patterns that might elude human analysts, for example, those that play out over multiple channels or that are asynchronous. While we will still rely on customer experience experts to establish omnichannel goals and triggers, we can leverage AI to identify emergent patterns and suggest the next best actions.

📊 ACTING ON PERFORMANCE DATA

Another challenge for omnichannel marketers is optimizing programs over time. This is because performance data tends to be fragmented and often lacks common key performance indicators across channels. Confronted with multiple performance sources, marketers often struggle to come to actionable conclusions. While the goal of developing a comprehensive customer-centric measurement capability is common, achieving this has been elusive for many organizations due to the disparate data sources and reporting stakeholders. AI can play a role in analyzing disparate data sets, identifying patterns and generating holistic reports[9].

🤖 PATIENT-FACING CHATBOTS

The success of conversational AI in customer service is already proven[9,10]. While using these systems in healthcare requires additional modifications to ensure responses are compliant, we're already beginning to see chatbot applications in therapeutic categories with large patient populations and high need, such as diabetes and oncology. As these become routinized, they will become practical for rare disease and personalized medicine applications. And in the future, once the FDA provides guidance on their use, it holds the potential to be integrated into digital medicine products.

▶️ SYNTHETIC VIDEO

Video avatars combined with dynamically-generated dialogue can simulate video engagement with KOLs, simulate HCP-representative engagements for training, provide customer support and extend access to peer-to-peer engagements. These methods can leverage human-like generic avatars or be generated based on videography of actual KOL or other expert speakers, with their explicit permission. It will be critical for publishers to appropriately communicate the synthetic nature of the video to customers.

Conclusion

The integration of AI into omnichannel marketing strategies has the potential to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of campaigns. While there are challenges and limitations to the current state of AI technology, early adopters have found success in utilizing AI to streamline creative and production processes, dynamically create content, and personalize customer experiences while working within their existing operational models. The full potential of AI is realized when it is guided by human expertise in strategy and implementation. As with any emerging technology, there will be a learning curve and a need for adaptation, but the potential benefits make it a worthwhile investment for organizations looking to stay ahead in the rapidly evolving landscape of omnichannel marketing.

EVERSANA INTOUCH is "Pharmatizing" AI, delivering revolutionary AI-powered marketing solutions with purpose, ease, and efficiency to every aspect of healthcare commercialization. Looking to explore integrating AI applications into your omnichannel campaigns? Contact us to schedule a workshop.

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