Chapter 6
Pharma in the Web:
Evaluation and Benchmarking of Pharmaceutical Companies’ Websites in Greece

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ABSTRACT

In the context of intensified business competition and globalization of markets, the strategic use of the Internet in e-commerce can provide a business advantage. The research scope was the evaluation and benchmarking of pharmaceutical companies’ Websites in Greece, in order to draw conclusions about the level of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) use and specifically the ways they become active in e-business. For the evaluation of the Websites, the authors used scientifically acceptable criteria suited to the business sector of our research. From the survey, it was unveiled that pharmaceutical companies operating in Greece have a rather limited Web presence. Specifically, out of the 112 pharmaceutical companies, only 60 have developed their own Website with the multinationals to be more active. In addition, the majority of the pharmaceutical companies’ Websites provide business information but limited additional information and interactive features to potential users. In conclusion, the pharmaceutical industry in Greece must undergo critical steps to further obtain an anthropocentric approach that the global pharmaceuticals sector has already begun to adopt.

INTRODUCTION

The necessity of using the Internet nowadays is obvious even for people who have no direct or indirect relationship with computing. The wealth of information provided, the immediacy update, the offered services and tools, make up the concept that we call total internet impress. Many even talk about technological exclusion and illiteracy for those cannot adapt and incorporate this new reality in the way of life and work (Dimitriadis, Baltas, 2005).

In this ever-changing and competitive environment trying to adapt all companies large and small if they want to survive, let alone grow. Inevitably, the Internet has changed a lot in recent years and the landscape of the global pharmaceuticals sector. More and more pharmaceutical companies are

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making use of the possibilities offered by these new technologies and have an active and strong Internet presence, designed to meet their business goals, but also public information.

BACKGROUND

The Market of Pharmaceuticals in Greece

In Greece, pharmaceutical expenditure per capita accounted for 677$ PPP while 462$ PPP as the per capita average of EU-OECD countries during 2007. In 2000, pharmaceutical spending per capita in Greece was 275$ PPP and the average in EU-OECD was 292$ PPP. Between 2000 and 2007, the pharmaceutical spending in Greece augmented by 146% whereas the corresponding average increase in the EU-OECD countries was only 58%. Figure 1 presents the details of pharmaceutical expenditure for 2000-2010:

The supply of pharmaceuticals in Greece is determined by the pharmaceutical companies in the sector (production and marketing) and chain of storage, distribution-handling and disposal to the public (IOBE, 2005). On the supply side, growth in sales of pharmaceutical products has halved within five years as from 22% in 2001 fell to 10.2% in 2005 (Koussoulakou, 2006).

Pharmaceutical sales in 2005, according to data from the Hellenic Association of Pharmaceutical Companies (SFEE, 2003), were 89% of brand medicines and 11% off-patent, while the first-selling therapeutic class were medicines for cardiovascular diseases (24% of total sales) followed by those for the central nervous system (15.7%) and digestive tract and metabolism (13%).

For the presentation of the financial picture of the pharmaceutical companies in the industry, a sample 112 companies was selected, representing more than 90% of the Greek pharmaceutical market in terms of total sales (Horngren, Sundem, Elliot, Philbrick, 2009). Key statistics of the Greek pharmaceutical market is shown in Table 1(SFEE, 2012):

The ranking of the first 25 companies in the industry based on the turnover of 2005 is presented in Table 4 (IOBE, 2007):

Figure 1. Pharmaceutical spending per capita US $ PPP in Greece and in EU-OECD countries between 2000-2010
Source: OECD Health Data 2012
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