

# Trends

in **Pharma  
Communication**  
POST PANDEMIC



Survey by

**redi#usion**healthcare

# About The Report

The Indian pharma industry has always depended on offline marketing activities to engage with their stakeholders & implement their selling strategies. During pandemic, in the absence of physical meet-ups, companies across industries adopted digital tools to function & reach out to their stakeholders.

Though the pharma industry was a late adapter of digital technologies, the pandemic has accelerated its digital transformation. Pharma brands have realized the importance of digitalization and are now a lot more conversant with it. But the point to ponder is, how will they reach out to pharma stakeholders for better brand awareness & engagement.

Even with consumers, dynamics are changing and everyone is adapting to a new normal, but the question is how much will they continue to do what they were doing pre covid & adapt to new changes in buying behavior.

A survey was conducted amongst physicians, consumers, pharma managers & medical representative to understand what has changed for them now and how much digitalization has impacted the doctor's consultation pattern & patient's behavior.



# Pandemic has changed the consumer behaviour & habits

Due to closing of restaurants during the pandemic, consumers got in the habit of eating homemade food. Many stopped/reduced smoking and mostly everyone tried alternative medicine for increasing immunity & boosting holistic health.

The standstill life in covid made everyone realize the importance of “slowing down & taking it easy.”



- **30%** respondent's health perspective changed to leading healthier & stress free life, eating home made food.
- **50%** change eating habits & resort to homemade food.
- **30%** opted to buy medicines through online portal, Doctors confirmed this changed buying behaviour of patients.
- More than **60%** opted for teleconsultation/online consultation during pandemic times but now prefer in-clinic consultation.

# Immediate steps were taken to boost immunity & care for their health

Consequently, patients started avoiding doctor visits, unless necessary they don't go for diagnostic test & try to manage themselves.

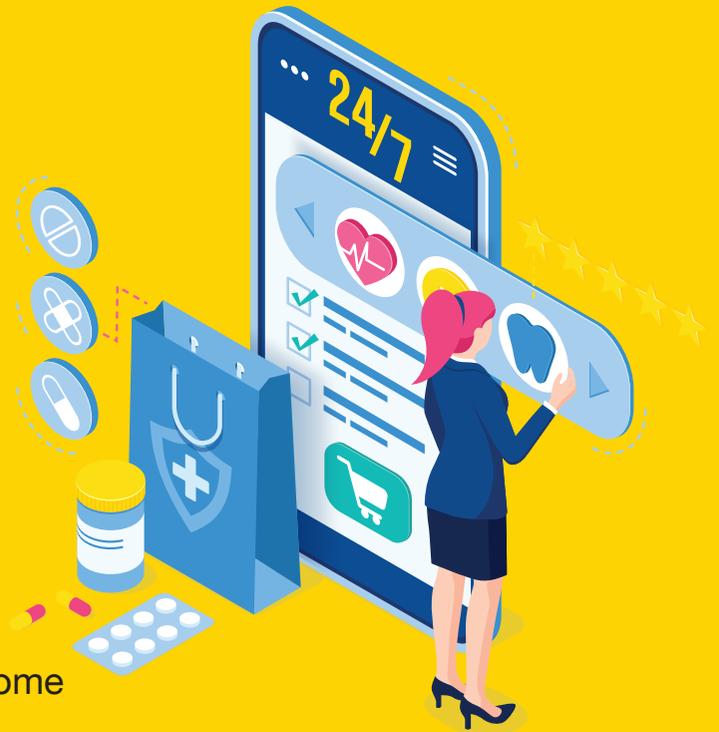
Earlier, patients visited doctors at least every 3 months for their chronic conditions like BP, high cholesterol, Diabetes, but now due to various reasons the visit has reduced.

Considering the anxiety & shortage of hospital beds during Covid, many respondents considered keeping self monitoring blood glucose monitor (SMBG), BP monitoring machine & oximeter at home as a precautionary measure.



- **55%** used home remedies & alternative medicines like Ayurveda & homeopathy to increase immunity.
- **33%** respondents took Zinc, multivitamins & vitamin C regularly.
- Understanding the importance of health, many startups came up with health related apps.
  - More than **10%** respondent have downloaded health related app in the last 2 years.
  - Apps like **Healthify Me, Nike running, Cult fit, Samsung health** were some of the apps downloaded by respondents
- More than **40%** respondents invested in medical devices to check vitals for themselves or their family.

# Increasing trend was seen towards buying medicines online

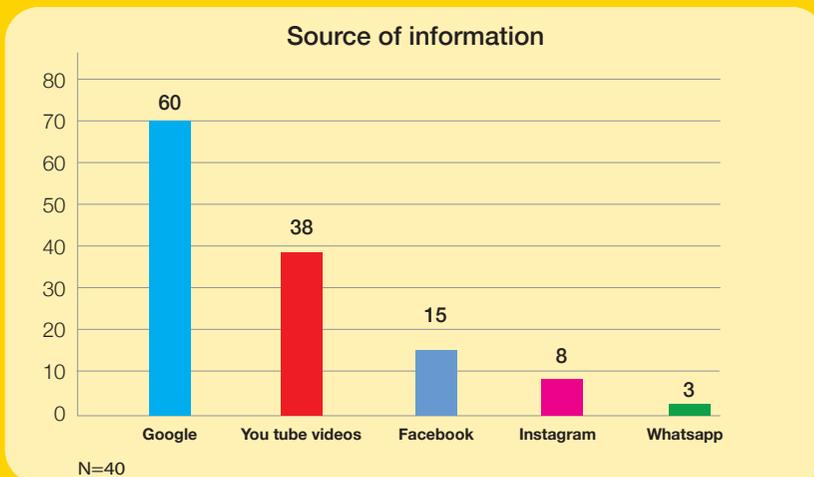


💊 **40%** patients got their medicines home delivered by regular/nearby chemist

💊 **30%** bought their medicine from online pharmacy.

E Pharmacy	% respondent
Pharmaeasy.com	20
Apollopharmacy.com	18
1mg.com	18
Netmeds.com	13
Wellnessonline.com	03

💊 Social media became a reliable source for information on devices, as was various other online portals to buy medicines.



# Online/teleconsultation was preferred during pandemic, however, patients & doctors now want mix physical & digital consultation.

Key stakeholders like patients & doctors showed interest in adaptation of digital platforms for consultation & maintaining a good health.

Though initially teleconsultation was well accepted, doctors are now interested in hybrid model - which is like first visit clinic and then follow it up with teleconsultation.

- More than **60%** of patients consulted doctor through teleconsultation/online to avoid visiting clinics during pandemic.



- However, for chronic conditions the behaviours were different:

**28%** visited doctor's clinic for consultation.

**23%** preferred teleconsulting.

**30%** resorted to lifestyle modification to manage their conditions.

**25%** preferred home remedies & turned to alternative medicines.

**7%** downloaded health apps to manage chronic conditions.

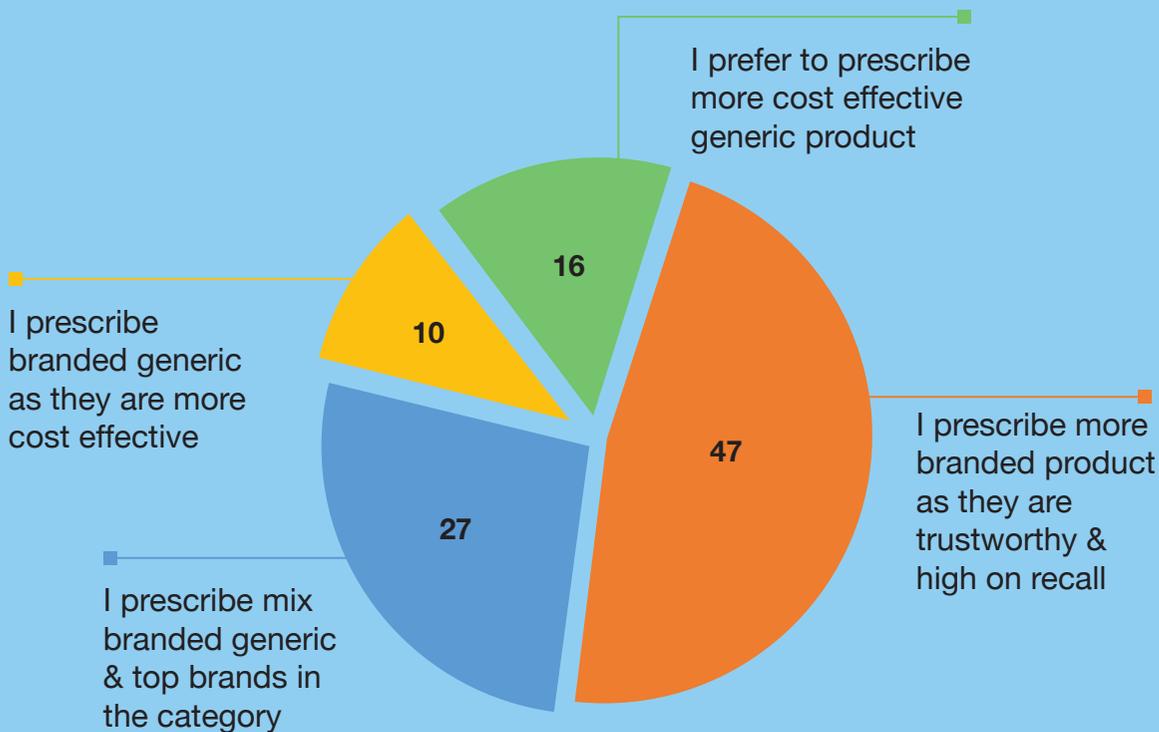
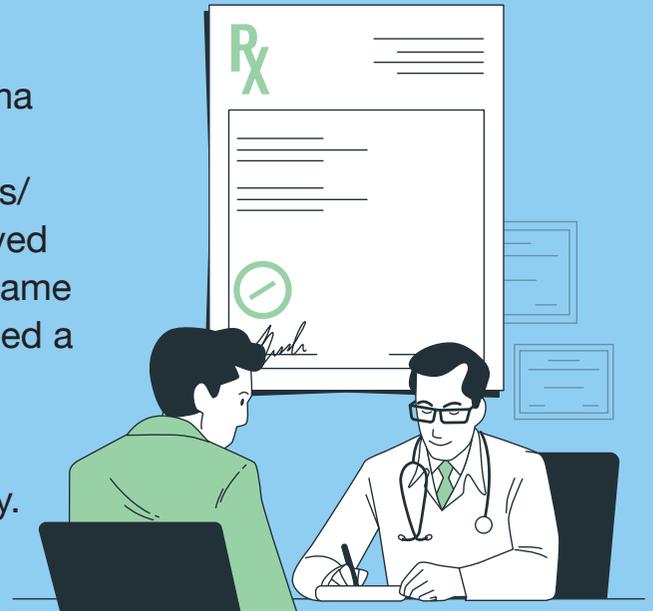
**50%** patients now want to go back to the old way of meeting their doctors.

**80%** doctors preferred meeting patients in the clinic.

# The prescription habits leaned towards branded product

With COVID, it became difficult for pharma brands to reach out to doctors. The field force was grounded. Events/ conferences/ congresses were either cancelled or moved online. Brand reminder activities nearly came to a halt. In such a scenario, brands gained a lot due to their earlier brand equity.

When asked, doctors prescribed brands mainly because of quality, trust & efficacy. And they didn't need to meet MRs to remember the brand name.

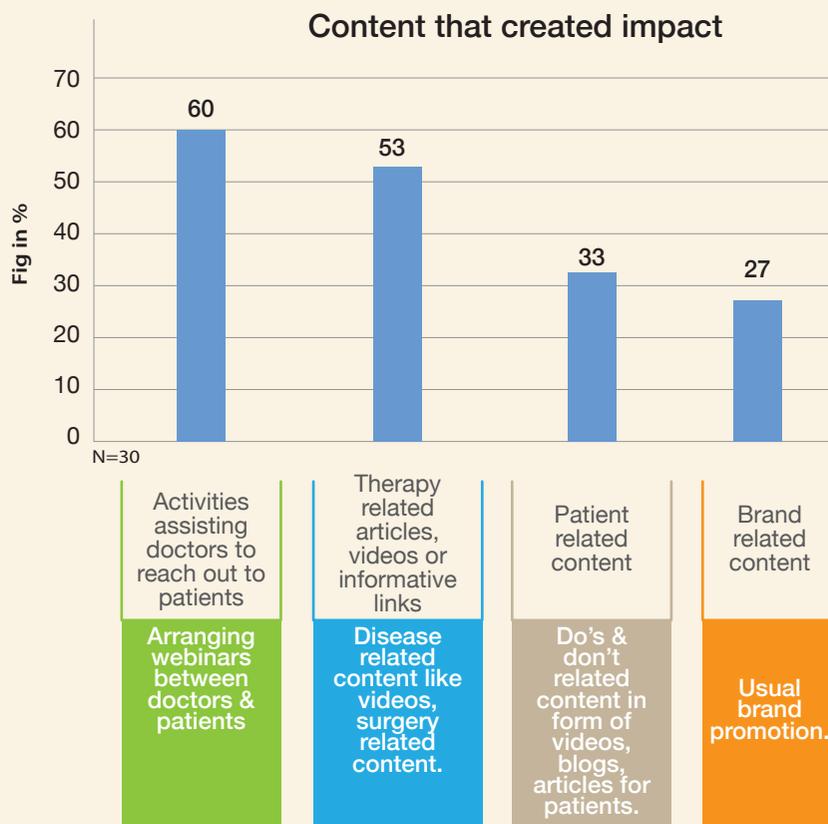


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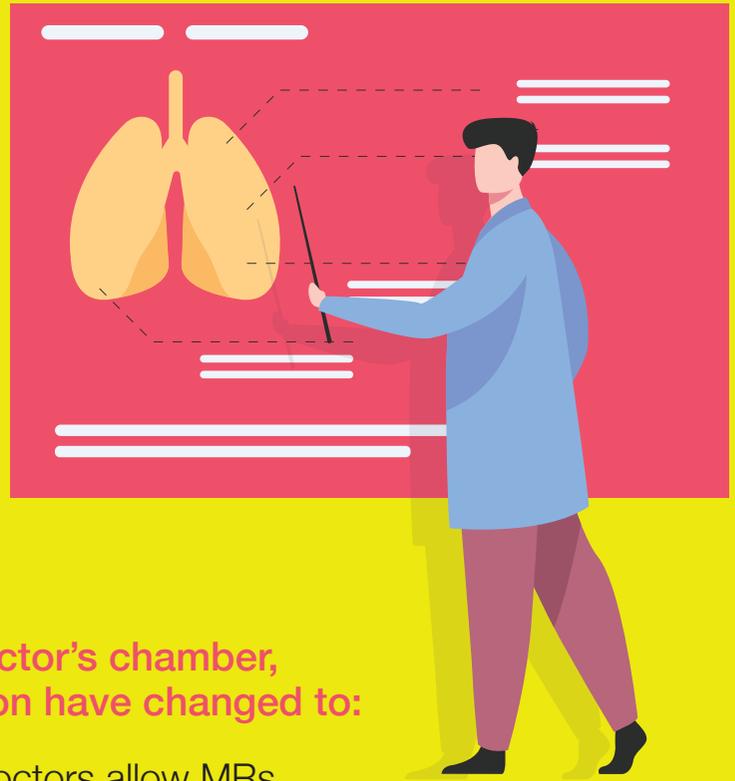
# Digital media was successfully used to engage with doctors

The most favored communication medium that worked for pharma managers to reach doctors were:

- Whatsapp & telephonic calls
- Corporate communication platforms/ Zoom call/Microsoft team.
- Communication through networking sites like FB, Linkedin, Practo, Docplexus.
- Communication through blogs, microblogs.



# Pharma companies are innovatively adapting to reaching doctors post pandemic



## ■ Due to restricted entry in the doctor's chamber, the in-clinic detailed conversation have changed to:

- Hallway conversations where doctors allow MRs to detail the product.
- MRs detailing from outside the consulting room.
- Tabs changed to big size VA which are visible from a distant.
- Drastic decrease in usage of LBLs & samples which use to act as quick brand reminders

## ■ Sales force gain access to doctors using tools like whatsapp & i-message and used Zoom meetings for remote detailing.

## ■ Pharma marketers found solace in digital. They looked for professional platforms to reach out to doctors in a regulatory- complaint manner.

# Doctors now want pharma companies to adopt a hybrid model- PHYGITAL

In coming years, digital/online media would play an important role in connecting with stakeholders, be it pharma companies reaching doctors or doctors reaching patients.

Pharma managers feel digital communication will play a big role in communicating with doctors & therefore companies are now bucking up & making themselves digital savvy



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Mix of print & digital. With 30% physical & 70% digital- PHYGITAL”

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“

“It has become more digital”

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“Need for virtual connect has become mandatory”

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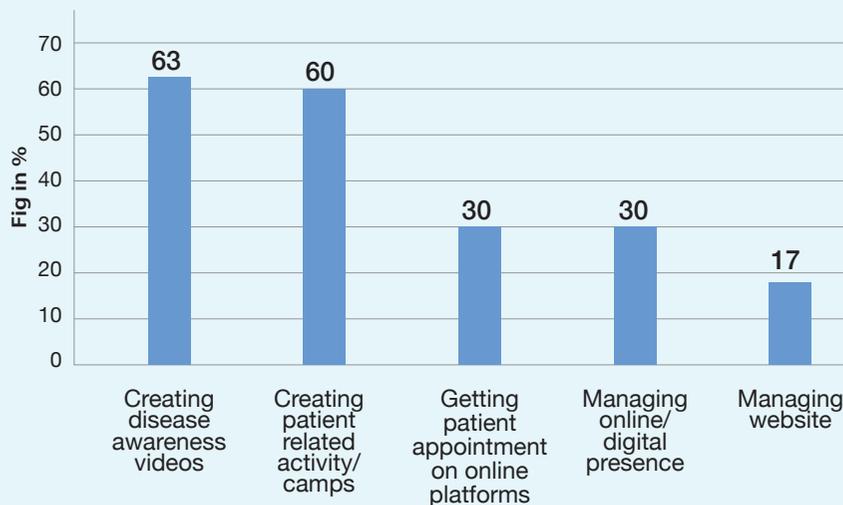
“ In clinic discussions will be more at the specialty level, where digital medium will play a big role to communicate key messages”

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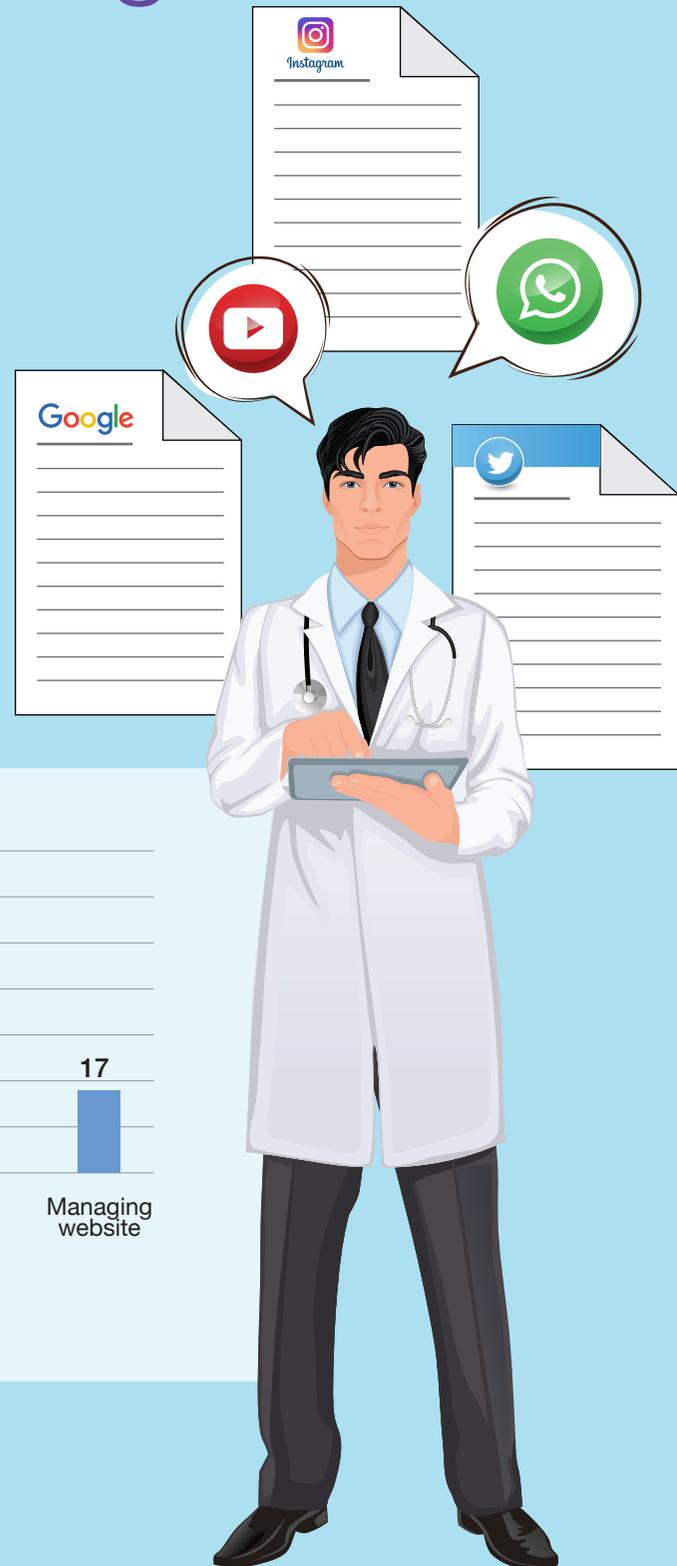
Nearly **40%** doctors prefer **hybrid model** with a mix of once a month in-clinic visit & reminders through digital media like phone, videos, social media, etc.

# Personal branding seems to be imperative for doctors'

- **83%** doctors now feel “Personal Branding” is very important in today’s scenario
- Help needed from pharma companies would be in terms of



N=30



# It's time to recover & recuperate

The Pandemic has affected and changed our perspectives & habits related to health in more ways than one:



## Hybrid model for patient visits

50% doctors felt first in clinic visit should be followed up with telephonic consultation.

## Personal branding for doctors

Adapting to newer ways to reach patients.



## Increase digital media usage for communication

Mode of communication with doctors have changed with usage of various digital platforms- FB, Insta, Blogs & microblogs, Youtube videos

## Holistic approach towards managing health

Doctors felt patients will be more cautious with their health.



## Preference towards online pharmacies

Doctors felt patients will continue buying medicine through online portals.

# What does it mean for marketers?

- With patients being more concerned about their health & taking efforts in managing it themselves by buying devices, downloading health apps, buying medicine online, marketers need to rethink their communication. The mode of reaching patients will be more through digital than conventional means.
- Digital engagement is here to stay & the trend is catching up, marketers will have to be more innovative & use creative ways to engage doctors & help them connect to patients.
- And with life slowly returning to normalcy, the onus is on pharma companies to connect with patients & consumers for creating disease & preventive health awareness for enabling longer & healthier life.
- Going forward, the ability of companies to digitize fast, optimize the use of data analytics and improve customer experience will be the biggest differentiator in the industry



-----*Thank you*-----

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