



India Co-creates: A Status Update 2011-12

[Younomy](#)'s India Co-creates is a series of reports that analyze how companies of India's key business sectors are using social media to co-create business value with customers and other external stakeholders. This report also comes with our suggestions.

Ayurveda Industry:

Connecting with the Next Gen, Key to Future Growth

Seeking health information is found to be the third most popular online activity, globally, as revealed by Pew Internet Project survey. And social media, needless to say, forms a major part of online activity these days. What are the ways patients use social media? A recent PWC report (Social Media "Likes" Health Care: From Marketing to Social Business) points out that patients use social media networking sites to post or comment about their health experiences or updates, post reviews of medications or treatments or doctors or health insurers, share health related videos or images, trace and share health symptoms or behaviours, join or support a health related cause, and so on.

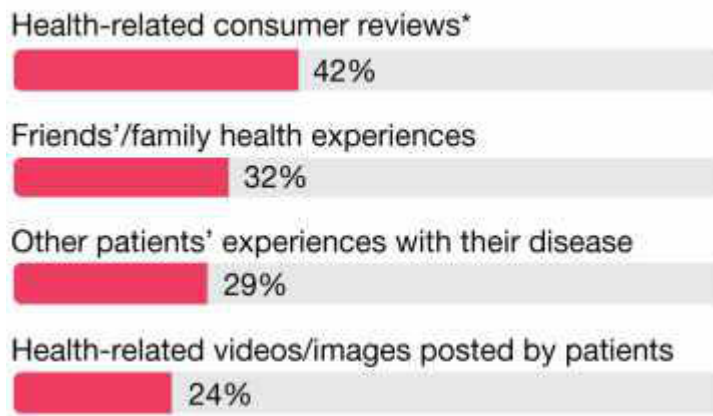
Eight in ten internet users look online for health information, making it the **third most popular online activity** among all those included in the Pew Internet Project's surveys.

Activity	Millennials Ages 18-34	Gen X Ages 35-46	Younger Boomers Ages 57-65	Older Boomers Ages 57-65	Silent Generation Ages 66-74	GI Generation Ages 75+	All Online Adults Ages 18+
Go Online	95%	86%	81%	76%	58%	30%	79%
E-mail	96%	94%	91%	93%	90%	88%	94%
Use search engine	92%	87%	86%	87%	82%	72%	87%
Look for health information	78%	84%	80%	83%	73%	69%	80%
Get news	76%	79%	76%	76%	67%	54%	75%
Buy a product	68%	66%	64%	69%	59%	57%	66%

Company	Facebook	Joined
AIIMS, New Delhi	9500	January, 2011
Apollo	66,000	October, 2010
CMC	3,600	February, 2011
Fortis	17,000	February, 2011
Madras Medical Mission	455	May, 2009
Max Hospitals	166	June, 2010
Tata Memorial Hospital	144	December, 2011
Sri Ramachandra Hospitals	2559	N/A

Note: July, 2012 (Source: Younomy)

In the context of a growing number of connected patients, there is a big scope for drug companies and health care providers, to be in social media to run campaigns and build communities of patients or patient-support groups.



In India, even major corporate hospitals, excepting Apollo, Fortis and probably one or two more brands, are largely inactive in social media, and hence it is not surprising to see Ayurvedic sector not adopting social media in a big way.

(PWC Report 2012)

However, the Ayurvedic industry, which faces the huge challenge of getting the highly informative next generation patients to its fold (young population constitutes about 70% of the healthcare market in India), it should tap the potential of social media to:

- 1) actively publish health information from Ayurvedic perspective, and build patient/customer support groups
- 2) interact closely with patients and consumers, and engage them through idea contests and product formulation challenges to make its products and services more convenient for the customers
- 3) make use of social technologies - like product configurators - to empower its patients configure their own food supplements, treatment regimens - if not drugs - that suit their unique health and lifestyle needs.

Challenges Overview

When non-communicable diseases - also known as lifestyle diseases - are on the rise, and more and more people are averse to taking synthetic pills, traditional, and non-invasive medicinal systems like Ayurveda have a good chance to become mainstream. However, some of the key challenges of Ayurveda include: lack of confidence of new generation patients in Ayurveda, lack of modern drug formats, lack of evidence-based practise and standardization, need for personalization of drugs, and raw material shortage.

Current Social Media Usage

Currently all leading brands like Himalaya and Dabur and upcoming brands like Dhathri have their presence in Facebook.

Company	Facebook	Joined
Charak	430	December, 2011
Dabur (Vatika)	110,737	January 2011
Dhathri	15,400	June, 2010
Shri Baidyanath	271	February, 2011
Himalaya	8500	October, 2011
Vicco	80	February, 2011
Zandu	267	January, 2011

(Ayurveda Product Companies. Source: Younomy.com. Data as on July, 2012)

Company	Facebook Likes	Joined
Ananda in the Himalayas	788	June, 2009
Ayurvedgram	2410	February, 2008
Ayurvedic Health Centre	50	July, 2011
CGH Earth	264	June, 2010
Birla Kerala Vaidyasala	3950	
Cholayil Sanjeevanam	1441	June, 2011
Krishnendu Ayurveda	1426	April, 2010
Indus Valley Ayurvedic Resort	418	November, 2010
Shreyas Yoga Retreat	200	November, 2009
Soukya Holistic Health Centre	60	N/A
July, 2012 (Source: Younomy.com)		

(Ayurveda Wellness Companies. Source: Younomy.com. Data as on July, 2012)

Most Ayurveda brands that are active in social media - read, Facebook - publish herbal, home remedy health tips regularly for minor illnesses and general maintenance of health. The publishing of such health tips generate good responses from the fans. They try to engage with customers, and potential customers.



In addition to publishing useful content, companies like Himalaya, and Dabur run idea contests, but mostly to create a buzz around products. For instance, one of Himalaya's idea contests - India's most like-able lips - asks its fans to take and upload photos of their smiling faces. The most voted photos were to win a prize. Himalayas sells natural moisturizing lip butters, and the like-able lips contest was designed to create more awareness about this product.

Considering the need for the industry to reach its strengths, revisit the packaging of its offerings, we provide the following suggestions that are given under two titles: small steps, instantly implement-able action items, and big jumps, which require thorough planning and investment.

Small Steps

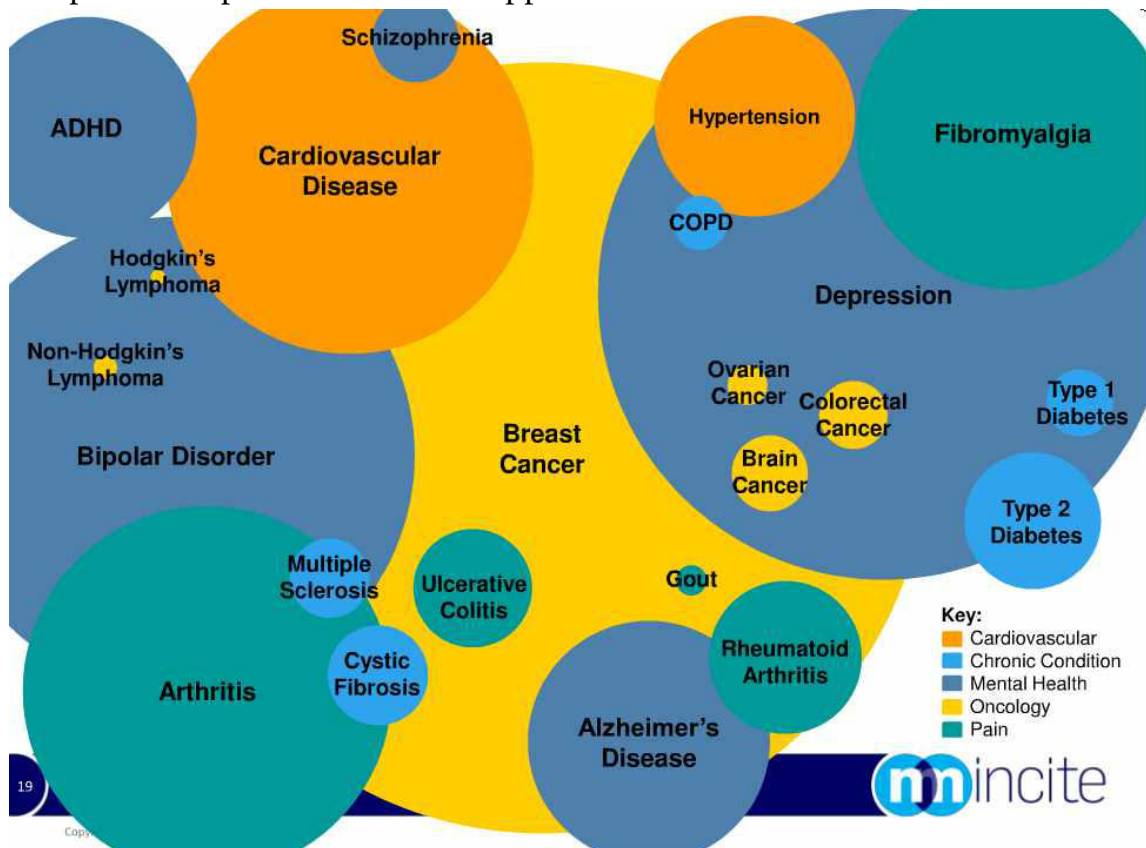
Provide links to your social media networking site URL prominently in the home page of your website, and in other print, television marketing materials.

Have a well documented internal social media policy or guidelines that would give your team members clear instructions on what to post, where to source the information from for responding to comments or medical queries, and what not to post. Have your HR team to train your social media team.

Make sure you have a internal expert team that is readily available to provide timely response to medical/health queries. [Checkout this template](#) (one page PDF) that you can use to organize your responses.

Big Jumps

Set up and run patient/customer support communities:



Over 80% of the people who are diagnosed with a disease look out for health

information, and according to, NMIcrite, a global consulting firm, among all online communities of all interests, the biggest groups are patient-support groups - especially for illnesses like depression, breast cancer and so on.

These are some of the opportunities why Ayurvedic healthcare companies that want to promote the curative aspects of their medicine and treatment should build online communities.

Try expert sourcing:

Drug Formats: The traditional drug formats like *rashaayans* - liquid drugs - are not suitable for the patients who lead a fast-paced modern life. The new generation patients travel widely and find the Ayurvedic drug formats and treatment regimens cumbersome. They are used to modern drug formats like pills. Ayurvedic organizations can try expert-sourcing, getting ideas from experts by initiating idea contests, for instance, to come up with new drug formats. Companies can partner with third party online community of "solvers" like Innocentive.com that specialize in conducting idea contests and developer challenges for all types of industries.

Personalisation of drugs:

Many popular Ayurvedic drugs contain ghee as one of the key ingredients, but patients who suffer from high cholesterol are averse to taking those drugs that may increase their cholesterol content. There is hence a need for personalizing Ayurvedic drugs and food supplements.



Companies can make use of social configuration technologies to help patients and consumers design their own health products. They can publish information about the content - such as nutritional facts and medicinal properties of ingredients of a particular drug or food supplement. An

example is Youbars, which enables its customers to design their own protein bars. Youbar lets its customers to choose the ingredients and the bar size, view the nutrition facts of the ingredients, and so on. Customers can select the base (almond, cashew, dates, peanut, etc), protein powders, nuts and seeds, dried fruits and berries, sweeteners, seasonings.

Promotion of Herbal Gardens:

The Indian Ayurvedic industry can promote herbal gardens especially among urban households. This suggestion is for corporate social responsibility, if not corporate sourcing strategy. The raw material for Ayurveda industry are mainly medicinal plants. But today a large portion of medicinal plants and herbs are harvested from forests without a plan for their revitalization. Only a handful of big drug manufacturers are making conscious efforts to cultivating herbs in house to meet the growing demand.

Publishing information on herbal gardens, and trying to form a network of herbal gardeners are a good area for a company to build its brand in the way of a corporate social responsibility.

Author:



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