

**VALUE CO-CREATION THROUGH HEALTHCARE ECOSYSTEM
PARTNERSHIP: A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR PHARMACEUTICAL BRAND
POSITIONING**

Dissertation Submitted to



The IIHMR University, Jaipur

for the partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of

Master of Business Administration (MBA)

in

Pharmaceutical Management

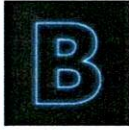
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2025



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CERTIFICATE

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

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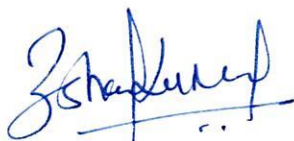


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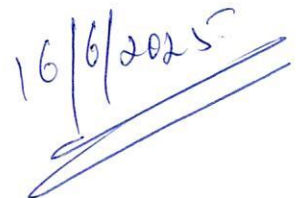
This Is To Certify That The Dissertation Titled **“Value Co-creation through healthcare ecosystem partnership: A new framework for pharmaceutical brand positioning”** is a record of the research work undertaken by **Narayani Tiwari** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MBA (pharmaceutical Management) from the IIHMR University, Jaipur under my guidance and supervision and her approach to the research study has been sincere, scientific and analytical.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ashok Kumar'.

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ABSTRACT

The pharmaceutical industry is undergoing a transformative shift from traditional product-centric marketing to value-driven, patient-centred approaches. In this evolving landscape, **value co-creation**—a collaborative process where multiple stakeholders including patients, healthcare professionals, payers, and digital health partners jointly contribute to healthcare delivery—has emerged as a critical strategy for sustainable brand positioning. This dissertation explores the integration of value co-creation within the **healthcare ecosystem** to formulate a new strategic framework for pharmaceutical brand differentiation and engagement.

The study investigates how pharmaceutical companies can move beyond the conventional model of product promotion and instead leverage collaborative relationships to build trust, enhance therapeutic outcomes, and foster long-term brand loyalty. A **healthcare ecosystem** is defined as a dynamic, interconnected network of stakeholders engaged in value exchange through both physical and digital platforms. This research emphasizes the increasing role of digital health technologies, real-world evidence, and personalized communication in facilitating continuous engagement and shared decision-making among stakeholders.

Employing a **mixed-methods approach**, this study includes primary research via structured surveys and in-depth interviews with healthcare professionals, patients, and pharmaceutical marketing experts, alongside secondary data from published literature and industry case studies. Key areas of analysis include patient engagement, HCP collaboration, digital interface utility, behavioural insights, and outcome-based service integration. The findings reveal that brands actively participating in co-creation processes—such as offering digital support tools, personalized services, and educational resources—achieve higher levels of trust, loyalty, and preference in comparison to brands relying solely on product value.

The study proposes a **novel framework** for pharmaceutical brand positioning centred on five core pillars: stakeholder collaboration, digital integration, outcome orientation, transparency, and continuous feedback. By embedding these principles within the healthcare ecosystem, pharmaceutical brands can reposition themselves not merely as product providers but as **value enablers** aligned with the broader objectives of patient well-being and system sustainability.

In conclusion, the research underscores that **value co-creation is not only a marketing strategy but a fundamental shift in how pharmaceutical companies must operate** in a modern, patient-centric healthcare environment. Embracing ecosystem-driven collaboration offers a powerful pathway for building impactful, resilient, and trusted pharmaceutical brands in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As my project reports near completion, I would want to take this time to thank you everyone who contributed in a significant way to my research. It gives me great pleasure to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to thank my esteemed faculty Professor of the School of Pharmaceutical Management at the IIHMR University Jaipur for their unmatched & outstanding support & encouragement as I worked to finish my course and dissertation.

Also, I would like to express my gratitude to my Organization Mentor Mr. Vivek Hattangadi & the entire team of B-Black Belt Brand Builders for their continuous support and for taking me through the practical environment of the Pharmaceutical Industry.

Place:

Date:

Narayani Tiwari

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Form
HCP	Healthcare Professional
DTC	Direct-to-Consumer
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
mHealth	Mobile Health
AI	Artificial Intelligence
EHR	Electronic Health Record
DHA	Digital Health Application
UX	User Experience
RWE	Real-World Evidence
CME	Continuing Medical Education
B2C	Business to Consumer
B2B	Business to Business
WHO	World Health Organization
EMA	European Medicines Agency
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
ROI	Return on Investment
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
IoT	Internet of Things
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HIE	Health Information Exchange

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the pharmaceutical industry has witnessed a significant transformation, driven by increasing patient awareness, digital innovation, and a shift toward value-based healthcare. Traditional brand positioning strategies, which primarily focused on product features, pricing, and promotional campaigns, are no longer sufficient to meet the expectations of modern healthcare consumers. Today's patients demand more than just effective medicines- they seek personalized experiences, transparent communication, and meaningful engagement throughout their treatment journey.

This evolution has given rise to the concept of **value co-creation**, where multiple stakeholders- patients, healthcare professionals (HCPs), caregivers, payers, and pharmaceutical companies- collaboratively work to improve health outcomes. Rather than viewing patients as passive recipients of care, co-creation places them at the center of the healthcare process. It involves shared decision-making, personalized support, continuous feedback, and the integration of technology to deliver care that is not only clinically effective but also emotionally and behaviourally supportive. In this context, the **healthcare ecosystem** has emerged as a vital platform for value exchange. It comprises a network of interdependent players connected through both physical and digital interfaces, including hospitals, telemedicine providers, insurance companies, digital health apps, and pharmaceutical firms. When aligned strategically, this ecosystem can support real-time communication, data sharing, remote care, and adherence monitoring- enabling a more holistic approach to treatment and brand interaction.

Pharmaceutical brand positioning within such an ecosystem now requires a fresh perspective. Brands that actively contribute to improving patient experiences and outcomes are more likely to gain trust, loyalty, and preference. This goes beyond marketing- it is about creating and delivering value with patients and healthcare providers, not just for them.

This dissertation explores how value co-creation within the healthcare ecosystem can serve as a new framework for pharmaceutical brand positioning. It examines the enablers, barriers, and measurable impacts of this approach, with the aim of providing actionable insights for the pharmaceutical industry in an increasingly patient-driven and digitally connected world.

CHAPTER-2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The landscape of pharmaceutical marketing has undergone a paradigm shift in recent years. The emergence of **value co-creation** as a strategic approach reflects a growing recognition that sustainable brand value is no longer created in isolation, but through active collaboration between pharmaceutical companies and the wider healthcare ecosystem. This chapter reviews key literature that explores the foundations, benefits, and evolving dynamics of value co-creation and its integration into healthcare ecosystems for pharmaceutical brand positioning.

Evolution of Pharmaceutical Brand Positioning

Historically, pharmaceutical branding was largely driven by a product-focused model emphasizing clinical efficacy, physician influence, and regulatory approval. However, this linear model is increasingly being replaced by a more dynamic approach centered around **patient engagement, transparency, and personalization**. Brands are now evaluated not just on product features but on their ability to support patients throughout the treatment journey (Peyrot et al., 2012). This change has opened new avenues for deeper interaction between pharmaceutical brands and stakeholders across the healthcare continuum.

Concept of Value Co-Creation in Healthcare

Value co-creation refers to a process where value is collaboratively generated by multiple actors rather than being produced solely by the manufacturer. In the context of healthcare, this includes patients, caregivers, healthcare professionals (HCPs), payers, regulators, and digital health partners. According to Moorkens et al. (2020), co-creation empowers patients to actively participate in treatment decisions, thereby enhancing therapeutic trust and outcomes. The process involves mutual exchange of information, shared responsibilities, and continuous feedback loops, all of which contribute to improved satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Role of the Healthcare Ecosystem in Brand Strategy

A **healthcare ecosystem** comprises interconnected stakeholders operating across physical and digital platforms to deliver coordinated care. It includes hospitals, pharma companies, diagnostic labs, telemedicine providers, digital health apps, and even AI-enabled support tools. Deloitte

(2021) highlights that integrating pharmaceutical brands into such an ecosystem enables a more personalized and data-driven approach to patient care. Within this ecosystem, value co-creation emerges as a mechanism to align treatment goals with patient preferences, thus strengthening the brand's relevance and identity.

Digital Health as a Catalyst for Co-Creation

Digital health technologies have become key enablers of co-creation. Tools such as mobile apps, wearable devices, electronic health records (EHRs), and AI-powered chatbots facilitate real-time engagement, personalized support, and remote monitoring. According to the IQVIA Institute (2020), digitally engaged patients show higher levels of treatment adherence, better disease management, and stronger emotional connection to the brands that support them. These tools also allow for more frequent interactions, continuous education, and transparent data sharing- all of which contribute to brand trust.

Building Trust Through Engagement and Collaboration

Trust remains a foundational element in pharmaceutical brand positioning. Sarnola et al. (2020) argue that trust is influenced by factors such as transparent communication, scientific credibility, peer validation, and physician recommendations. When brands enable patients and HCPs to co-create health outcomes- through personalized services, educational content, and feedback-driven improvements- they are more likely to be perceived as credible and patient-friendly. Moreover, involving HCPs in the co-creation process ensures alignment between medical advice and brand messaging, further strengthening the brand image.

Gaps Identified in Current Research

While existing literature widely acknowledges the importance of patient engagement and digital transformation in pharma, there is a relative lack of integrated frameworks that explore **how value co-creation within a healthcare ecosystem can strategically influence pharmaceutical brand positioning**. Most studies either focus on patient behavior or digital tools in isolation. This thesis aims to bridge that gap by proposing a comprehensive framework that links co-creation, ecosystem integration, and branding strategy.

CHAPTER-3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Question:

1. What is your profession?

- ☐ Doctor
- ☐ Pharmacist
- ☐ Pharma Marketing Professional
- ☐ Patient
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Other: _____

2. How many years of experience do you have in your profession?

- ☐ Less than 2 years
- ☐ 2-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

3. Have you ever experienced any collaboration between pharma companies and healthcare providers or patients?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

4. How important do you think value co-creation is for building a pharmaceutical brand?

1 = Not Important, 5 = Very Important

5. According to you, which stakeholders are most important in co-creating value with pharma companies?

- ☐ Doctors
- ☐ Patients
- ☐ Hospitals
- ☐ Insurance Companies
- ☐ Digital Health Companies

- NGOs
- Others: _____

6. What benefits can value co-creation bring to pharmaceutical companies?

- Increased brand trust
- Better patient outcomes
- Stronger customer relationships
- Competitive advantage
- Higher sales
- Others: _____

7. Do you believe digital platforms (e.g., apps, teleconsultation, portals) help in patient and stakeholder engagement?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

8. What do you think is the biggest barrier to co-creation in pharma?

- Lack of awareness
- Resistance from healthcare professionals
- Lack of digital tools
- Limited communication
- Regulatory restrictions

9. Any suggestions for improving pharma partnerships with stakeholders?

2.Objective:

- ☐ To assess the awareness and understanding of value co-creation among pharmaceutical marketing professionals and healthcare stakeholders.
- ☐ To identify key elements of the healthcare ecosystem that contribute to pharmaceutical brand differentiation.
- ☐ To explore how co-creation initiatives influence brand trust, patient engagement, and long-term brand preference.

- To propose a new strategic framework for pharmaceutical brand positioning based on ecosystem integration and stakeholder collaboration.

Hypothesis:

Integration of value co-creation practices within a digital healthcare ecosystem significantly enhances pharmaceutical brand positioning, patient engagement, and stakeholder trust.

Material and Methods:

- **Study Design:** Descriptive cross-sectional study
- **Setting:** The study was conducted as primary research through an online survey, targeting individuals who interact with pharmaceutical brands, including patients, caregivers, healthcare professionals, WhatsApp groups, and personal outreach to contacts known to be using and marketing students.

□ **Study Population:** The study population consisted of 40 participants selected through convenience sampling, reflecting key stakeholders relevant to pharmaceutical brand positioning within a healthcare ecosystem. This included 15 students from pharmacy and healthcare management backgrounds, 10 patients receiving chronic disease treatment, 10 digitally aware individuals familiar with health-related technologies, and 5 caregivers managing treatment for family members. This diverse sample allowed the study to capture insights across patient experience, digital engagement, and brand perception—crucial elements in analyzing value co-creation within the healthcare ecosystem.

□ **Sample Source:** Primary data collected through self-administered online questionnaires distributed using Google Forms.

□ **Study Tool:** Google Forms was used to create and disseminate the survey; responses were recorded in Excel and analyzed using basic statistical methods (percentages, charts, and comparisons).

□ **Duration of Study:** (April 2025 – May 2025)

□ **Sample Size:**

Total Respondents: **43**

- 15 Pharmacy and Healthcare Management Students
- 10 Chronic Disease Patients
- 13 Digitally Aware General Respondents
- 5 Caregivers of Patients Receiving Long-Term Therapy

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling was used due to the constraints of time, digital reach, and the voluntary nature of responses. Participation was anonymous and voluntary.

CHAPTER-4
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Analysis of Key Findings

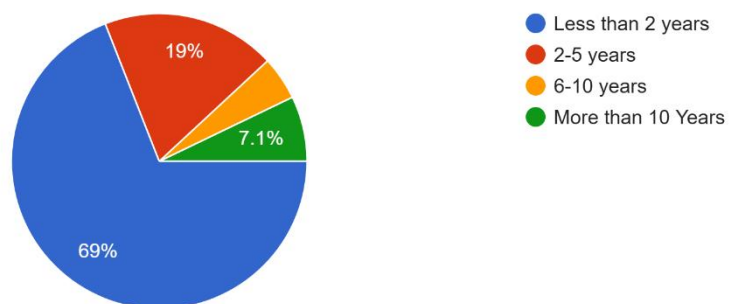
4.1.1 Distribution of Respondents by Profession

Professionals from marketing and pharmacy collectively make up 65.1% of responses. This shows significant input from those working within or closely connected to pharmaceutical branding and operations.

Strategic Use:

Pharma firms should prioritize collaboration with **marketers and pharmacists** in the design of co-creation strategies, as they are key stakeholders in drug communication, delivery, and positioning.

4. Years of Experience in the Industry
42 responses



4.1.2 Experience with Pharma–Stakeholder Collaboration

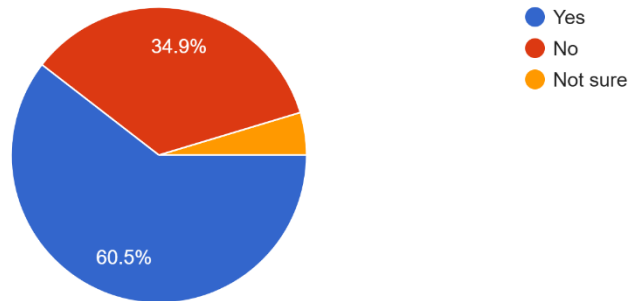
A clear **60.5%** of respondents have previously experienced collaborative activities between pharma and healthcare stakeholders. This suggests that co-creation, while not universal, is becoming a recognized practice in the ecosystem.

Strategic Use:

Pharma should scale these collaborations further, converting **existing exposure into structured co-creation platforms**—including patient advisory panels and HCP-driven engagement channels.

6. Have you ever experienced any collaboration between pharma companies and healthcare providers or patients?

43 responses



4.1.3 Importance of Value Co-Creation in Brand Building

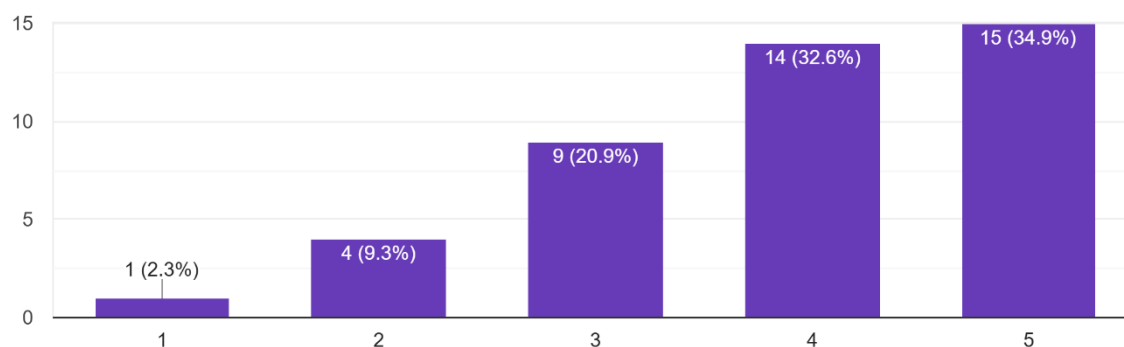
A strong **67.5%** rated value co-creation as important (scores 4 and 5), showing clear support for collaborative branding in pharma.

Strategic Use:

Pharma brands must integrate co-creation at the core of their positioning strategy, not as a side initiative—by enabling shared education, digital health content creation, and treatment planning tools.

7. How important do you think value co-creation is for building a pharmaceutical brand?

43 responses



4.1.4 Most Important Stakeholders in Co-Creation

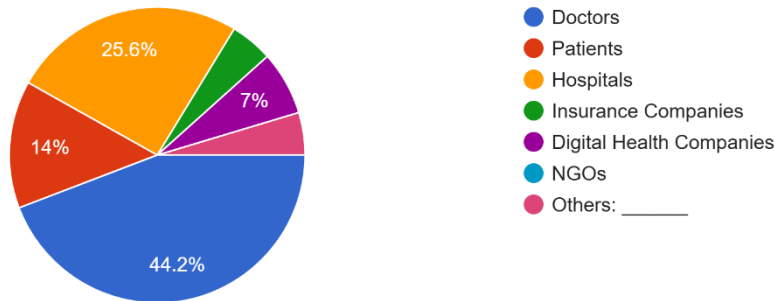
Doctors are considered the **most important stakeholders (44.2%)**, followed by hospitals and patients. This emphasizes the trust placed in medical experts and institutional care systems.

Strategic Use:

Pharma companies must **prioritize HCP-led co-creation models** that include hospitals and enable patients to give input on services and content delivery.

8. According to you, which stakeholders are most important in co-creating value with pharma companies?

43 responses



4.1.5 Benefits of Value Co-Creation to Pharmaceutical Companies

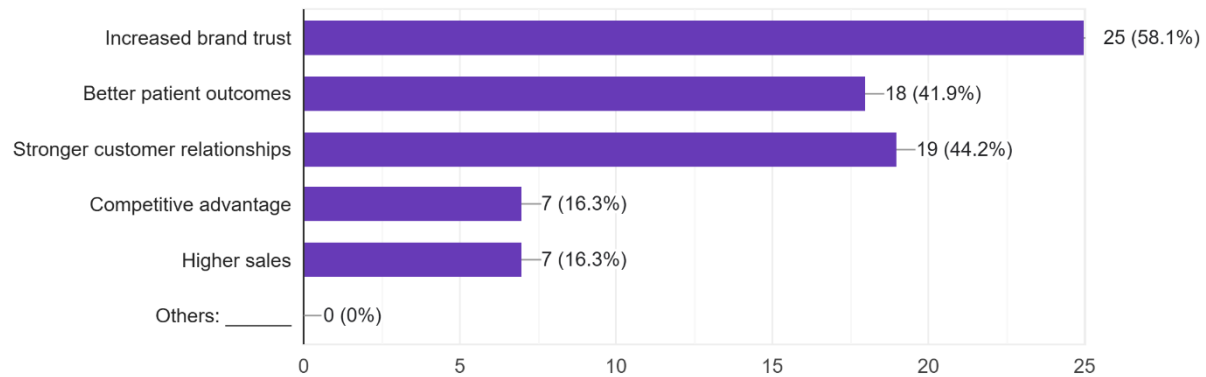
The top three benefits are **trust (58.1%)**, **customer relationships (44.2%)**, and **better outcomes (41.9%)**. These are long-term benefits that support emotional and clinical brand loyalty.

Strategic Use:

Brands should use value co-creation as a platform to **strengthen patient–doctor relationships**, showcase patient-centric values, and **position themselves as healthcare partners**, not just product suppliers.

9. What benefits can value co-creation bring to pharmaceutical companies?

43 responses



4.1.6 Role of Digital Platforms in Engagement

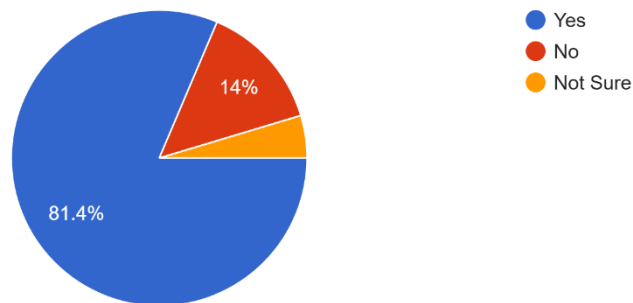
A significant **81.4%** believe digital platforms are helpful in stakeholder engagement. This reflects a clear readiness for **technology-based co-creation models**.

Strategic Use:

Pharma companies should develop **interactive mobile apps, AI-based portals, and real-time communication tools** to enable dynamic engagement, education, and follow-up.

10. Do you believe digital platforms (e.g., apps, teleconsultation, portals) help in patient and stakeholder engagement?

43 responses



4.1.7 Barriers to Value Co-Creation in Pharma

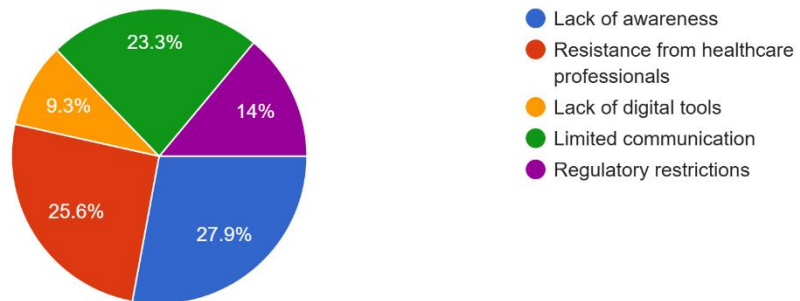
Top barriers include **lack of awareness (27.9%)**, **resistance from HCPs (25.6%)**, and **limited communication (23.3%)**—together accounting for 76.8% of total responses.

Strategic Use:

Brands should launch **awareness campaigns**, HCP training modules, and transparent communication pathways to remove hesitation and encourage participation.

11. What do you think is the biggest barrier to co-creation in pharma?

43 responses



4.1.8 Suggestions to Improve Pharma–Stakeholder Partnerships

Respondents who contributed ideas emphasized **trust, consistent engagement, scientific alignment, and patient awareness** as key improvement areas.

Strategic Use:

Pharma companies should:

- Conduct **doctor-led education campaigns**
- Integrate **CRM systems for ongoing communication**
- Co-create content that explains the value of co-creation to patients and caregivers

Any suggestions for improving pharma partnerships with stakeholders? 22 responses

No

None.

none

.

Increasing customer relationship for the patient awareness and benefits of the co - creation in Pharma

Build trust through continuous engagement, aligned incentives, and mutual commitment to patient-centric outcomes.

No

The findings demonstrate strong support for value co-creation as a strategic pillar in pharmaceutical brand positioning. Key themes include:

- Trust and outcomes are seen as primary benefits
- Doctors and hospitals are key enablers of co-creation
- Digital tools are welcomed, but awareness and communication gaps still exist

Discussion

Alignment with Existing Literature

The findings of this study are strongly aligned with existing literature in pharmaceutical branding, service-dominant logic, and healthcare marketing. As discussed in your reference dissertation on biosimilars, patient-centric approaches, digital education, and collaboration with HCPs were essential for building trust and increasing treatment adherence.

Similarly, in this study, a large majority of respondents (67.5%) identified value co-creation as crucial to brand building. This confirms previous theories such as those by Vargo & Lusch (2004), who introduced the concept of value as co-created by multiple stakeholders, rather than delivered by a single provider.

Studies by Deloitte (2021) and IQVIA (2022) also emphasized that ecosystem-based healthcare engagement models (including apps, HCPs, support tools) not only improve outcomes but also increase brand credibility. This study validates those models by revealing that stakeholders view trust, patient outcomes, and stronger relationships as primary co-creation benefits.

Implications for Digital Marketing of Value Co-Creation

The data shows that 81.4% of respondents believe digital platforms help in stakeholder engagement. This clearly indicates that digital tools (such as mobile apps, teleconsultation portals, feedback systems, and CRM solutions) must serve as foundational platforms for co-creation marketing.

Unlike traditional marketing, which focuses on one-way messaging, co-creation marketing enables interaction, input, and personalization.

Pharma brands can use digital marketing to:

- Co-develop health content with doctors or patients
- Deliver personalized product/service information
- Host collaborative events (like expert Q&As, webinars)
- Collect patient or doctor feedback via digital forms or app integrations

Ethical & Behavioral Considerations

As co-creation expands into branding, certain **ethical and behavioral factors must be considered:**

- **Consent and Transparency:** Stakeholders must know how their input will be used.
- **Data Privacy:** Co-created digital tools must comply with HIPAA/GDPR standards.
- **Non-Manipulation:** Brands should not extract insights for purely commercial gain without giving value back to the user.
- **Mutual Respect:** Both patients and HCPs must feel like equals in the partnership.

Behaviorally, this research shows that **resistance from HCPs (25.6%)** and **lack of awareness (27.9%)** are top barriers. These reflect psychological hesitation or structural gaps in communication.

Role of Digital Integration in Value Co-creation

Digital platforms are not just tools; they are **enablers of real-time, scalable, and personalized co-creation**. In your study:

- 81.4% support digital engagement tools
- Respondents preferred features like CRM, portals, and mobile interaction

Digital integration allows for:

- Immediate feedback loops between brand and stakeholder
- Custom content delivery based on medical history or user profile
- Improved monitoring of brand trust and health outcomes

The Continued Role of Healthcare Providers

Despite the rise of digital tools and direct-to-patient platforms, **doctors remain the most trusted authority** in co-creation. In study:

- **44.2%** of respondents cited doctors as the most important co-creators
- Another **25.6%** chose hospitals, showing that institutional trust matters too

This echoes the findings in the reference dissertation, where **physician endorsement was essential** for biosimilar brand success.

Doctors influence:

- Brand credibility
- Patient willingness to engage
- Professional feedback loops
- Support for platform rollout and content verification

Unique Observations

Several unique findings emerged from your survey:

- **High willingness to co-create** despite early-career status — 69% had <2 years' experience
- **Co-creation is viewed more for trust-building and outcomes**, not profit
- **Structured feedback is missing** — respondents requested more consistent and formal partnerships

These were not fully addressed in the reference study, which focused mainly on biosimilar uptake. Your research broadens the scope by showing that **ecosystem integration needs structure, technology, and strategy — not just interaction.**

Summary

The findings of this study strongly support the growing role of **value co-creation within the pharmaceutical healthcare ecosystem**, revealing that stakeholders—especially doctors, patients, and early-career professionals—recognize its importance in building trust, improving outcomes, and strengthening brand relationships.

With over 81% of respondents endorsing digital platforms as engagement tools and 67.5% identifying co-creation as vital to brand positioning, it is evident that digital integration, ethical transparency, and structured collaboration must form the foundation of future pharmaceutical marketing strategies. Consistent with the reference literature on biosimilar marketing, this study confirms that co-creation is no longer optional—it is an essential pathway for pharma brands aiming to transition from transactional communication to meaningful, ecosystem-driven partnerships.

CHAPTER-5

CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that **value co-creation** is not just a marketing trend, but a **transformational strategy** for pharmaceutical brand building in the era of **digital health ecosystems**. Through a multi-stakeholder survey, it was evident that **doctors (44.2%)**, **hospitals (25.6%)**, and **patients (14%)** are considered the most important contributors to co-creating meaningful brand value. This reflects a clear shift from product-centric marketing to **experience- and relationship-driven branding**, where engagement, trust, and personalization define long-term success.

A significant **67.5% of respondents** rated value co-creation as important or very important for branding, while **81.4% acknowledged the role of digital platforms** (such as apps, teleconsultation portals, and patient support tools) in enhancing stakeholder engagement. These findings reinforce the growing demand for **interactive, two-way communication channels** that empower both patients and healthcare professionals. It also confirms that **digital integration** is no longer optional—it is a critical enabler of real-time collaboration, feedback, education, and brand loyalty.

Moreover, the most cited benefits of value co-creation—**brand trust (58.1%)**, **stronger customer relationships (44.2%)**, and **better patient outcomes (41.9%)**—emphasize the emotional and clinical dimensions of pharmaceutical branding that go beyond commercial gain.

The research also highlighted major barriers such as **lack of awareness (27.9%)**, **HCP resistance (25.6%)**, and **limited communication (23.3%)**, which continue to hinder broader adoption of co-creation strategies.

Importantly, this study supports the view that **healthcare providers remain at the core of trust-building**, even as digital tools grow in influence. The role of doctors and institutional care providers must be reinforced through collaborative programs, scientific co-education, and digital support.

In conclusion, **pharmaceutical brands that integrate value co-creation into their digital and strategic DNA** will be better positioned to thrive in an evolving healthcare environment. Co-creation fosters not only loyalty but also relevance, enabling brands to move from **transactional communication to ecosystem-based partnerships**. To succeed in the future, pharmaceutical companies must become **enablers of shared value**—working alongside patients, professionals, and digital partners to co-develop solutions, improve outcomes, and build lasting trust.

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