

# Big Pharma companies have poor online presence in local markets

Article

**The news:** The world's 25 largest pharmaceutical companies all have global corporate websites, but many are lacking country-specific sites and their use of social media outside of Facebook is subpar, per the [2023 Worldcom Digital Health Monitor](#) report.

- This is the third global pharma report from Worldcom Public Relations Group, which ran similar studies in 2018 and 2020. Changes in methodology prevent direct comparisons with earlier findings.
- 25 companies were selected based on their global reputation, size, and geographic presence in 25 countries, from Australia and China to the US and Vietnam.

**Cut to the chase:** Companies were ranked across 11 digital channels, including apps, blogs, corporate and local company websites, and social media sites.

- The top five companies in 2023 are **Sanofi, Novartis, Roche, Bayer** (pharmaceuticals division), and **Pfizer**.
- The bottom five companies are **Organon, UCB, Eisai, Gilead Sciences, and Lonza**.

### Topline findings:

- **Websites:** All 25 companies have a global corporate website, but they don't have a local online presence in every country. The average number of local sites per company is 20 out of the 25 countries examined.
- **Blogs:** All but two companies have a global blog, but local blogs are hard to find. Sanofi had the most local blogs while Lonza had none.
- **Apps:** All companies have international apps, while fewer have country-specific apps. Pfizer, **Janssen**, Novartis, **Novo Nordisk, AbbVie**, and **Takeda Pharmaceuticals** have at least 11 local apps available.

### Social media channels:

- **Facebook:** All companies but two (**Astellas** and **Merck**) have international FB accounts. But the lack of many local FB accounts led Worldcom to say that the channel is only being used to 10% of its potential.
- **Twitter:** All companies but **Astellas** have international Twitter accounts.
- **LinkedIn:** Every company has a global account but country-specific pages and local language content isn't common.
- **YouTube:** Local YouTube accounts are available in just a few countries and the same is true for other channels with a visual focus, like Instagram and Pinterest.

- **TikTok:** “TikTok isn’t used at all,” per the report, which adds that pharma companies may be missing opportunities to engage younger generations.

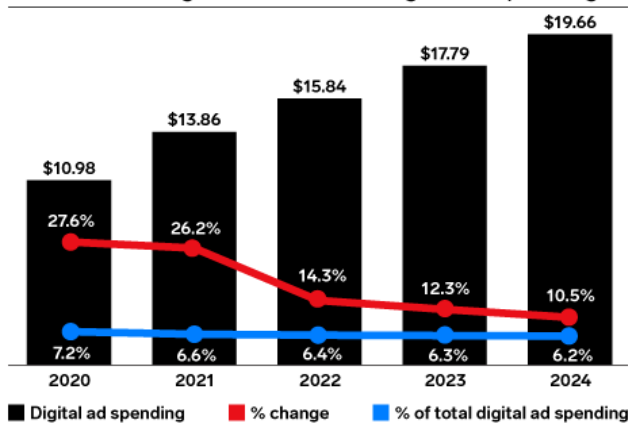
**Our take:** We’re taking these findings with a grain of salt.

Big Pharma companies aren’t very different from other multinationals, in that their **global presence online is essential**. Building trust is key for these sites, blogs, and apps.

But country-specific websites and social media efforts require local staff and constant attention to keep local audiences engaged. **And local sites must adhere to local regulations** around consumer and patient data privacy, among other issues.

**As for social media usage, Big Pharma has been burned before.** Last fall, Eli Lilly was the [target of a fake Twitter account](#) that sent its stock price tumbling. Since Elon Musk’s takeover as CEO, brands and advertisers across all industries are [weighing the pros and cons](#) of keeping a presence there. TikTok presents similar challenges, as [bans are spreading worldwide](#).

**US Healthcare and Pharma Industry Digital Ad Spending, 2020-2024**  
billions, % change, and % of total digital ad spending



Note: includes advertising that appears on desktop and laptop computers as well as mobile phones, tablets, and other internet-connected devices, and includes all the various formats of advertising on those platforms  
Source: eMarketer, July 12, 2022  
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