

A photograph of a hospital room with a blue and purple color overlay. An elderly woman is lying in a hospital bed, smiling. A female nurse in blue scrubs is standing by the bed, holding a tablet. A male doctor in a white lab coat is standing to the right, looking at the tablet. An IV stand with a drip chamber is visible on the left. The background shows a hospital bed with various medical equipment mounted on the wall.

# Revolutionizing Patient Care

## The Power of Omnichannel Strategies in Healthcare

# Insights

- With digital-first being the new norm, payers must ensure responsiveness across channels to stay ahead of the curve.
- Adopting an omnichannel strategy is the key for payers and their partners to optimize costs, reduce the burden on healthcare professionals, and gain higher customer satisfaction.
- Gathering high-quality data to improve interoperability enables smooth transitions between touchpoints for an integrated phygital user journey.

Consumer interaction differs from how it used to be a few years ago. Today, consumers anticipate interactive, personalized, and seamless experiences while seeking real-time and quick problem resolution. The healthcare industry is no exception to this! The problem is multifaceted for one of the central pillars of the long healthcare value chain – the payers.

Payers are integral to the healthcare system—connecting patients, providers, pharmacies, and diagnostics. This calls for an integrated approach to participants, functionalities, information exchanges, and user journeys powered by digital channels. Healthcare consumers are already experiencing the reality of digital marketing, direct-to-consumer (D2C) channels, digital onboarding, and data sharing. Today, the \$1.1 trillion healthcare industry<sup>[1]</sup> has transitioned to a hybrid, digital-first model. This enhances the need for omnichannel approaches to ensure connected consumer engagements across the value chain.



# Decoding patient motivations

Understanding what drives patients in a landscape defined by diverse communication channels is essential for tailoring experiences that resonate with their unique preferences. Personalization is an ongoing trend, as patients increasingly seek individualized interactions that reflect their health conditions and choices. Transparency builds trust with patients valuing clear and honest communication about coverage, costs, and healthcare options. Hence, it's crucial to understand patients' motivations across the various stages of interaction.

Their reason to approach can be:

## Exploratory

This is during the pre-buying stage when there is no immediate pressure or urgency. For instance, patients might use these channels to gather information on varied healthcare offerings, services, and policy coverage details, such as how individuals can use our omnichannel triage solution to diagnose health conditions and understand more about the right providers and coverage details.

## Urgent

Typically occurring in care delivery scenarios, in these situations, time is of the essence, and consumers require rapid and efficient solutions. With the same triage solution, individuals requiring necessary medical attention can connect to a healthcare professional who conducts a remote assessment, asks pertinent questions, and provides real-time guidance. This virtual triage expedites the evaluation of the symptoms and facilitates prompt decisions on the next course of action.

## Necessary

This is for task-centric needs that are often time-sensitive. Consumers may need to complete tasks such as paying policy premiums or checking if specific procedures are covered by their policy. Think of a situation where a policyholder, faced with an imminent medical procedure, swiftly navigates the payer's digital channels to ascertain coverage details and make necessary payments, ensuring a seamless and timely healthcare experience.



# Mapping healthcare services to patient journeys

Once the approach is identified, the next logical step is to classify the primary interaction channels. Although it is necessary to be present across media, it is more important to take a strategic approach to determine the direct channels for each context. Through this method, the touchpoints are not simply responsive but responsive to the needs of the consumers. For this, adopting the right mix of digital channels is essential.

However, digital transformation is a continuous process that can facilitate opportunities in healthcare[2] when the required infrastructure and training are available. For instance, many consumers prefer the “human touch” and want to speak to customer support executives to resolve complex problems. Companies that understand this paradox excel in applying integrated omnichannel experience across industries.

Thus, efficient mapping followed by qualitative research is critical for successful implementation. There's a strong need for a comprehensive data solution (like CitiusTech's omni-channel solution for remote clinical investigation) that consolidates and standardizes multi-source data so payers can access transparent, real-time data across touchpoints. This enables the extraction of valuable insights about patient healthcare episodes while identifying the touchpoints consumers encounter at various stages.



# Stitching together seamless digital interactions

Consider a scenario where an individual grappling with a chronic condition diligently tracks their health metrics using a specialized mobile app. Despite the wealth of digital data, the attending physician lacks access to this critical patient information when the individual visits for an appointment. The patient's efforts in maintaining a comprehensive health record through digital means are rendered futile as the disconnect between their digital tracking and the physical consultation impedes the healthcare provider's ability to offer personalized and informed care. This example highlights the challenges posed by disjointed healthcare experiences, emphasizing the necessity for a more integrated and connected approach to ensure the seamless delivery of quality care.

In today's data-rich landscape, payers need to enhance interoperability and eliminate silos across the ecosystem to gather meaningful insights. Siloed data leads to unpleasant experiences, often because the information is unavailable on user-preferred channels or because stakeholders need access to relevant data as multiple channels are disconnected.



Another significant challenge hindering the adoption of omnichannel healthcare is the belief that health insurance products need to be higher-involved. And that there are fewer demands for such products to warrant investments in omnichannel capabilities. But the reality post-pandemic states otherwise! A McKinsey survey<sup>[3]</sup> revealed that although consumers still use traditional methods to contact their healthcare payers, 77% preferred digital channels for paying their insurance bills – highlighting a strong opportunity for omnichannel advantage.



# Embrace the omnichannel experience deep within the processes

Including insights from the entire phygital healthcare ecosystem is crucial to enable a unified healthcare experience. For instance, the payer-patient engagement, a pivotal component of this ecosystem, unfolds across diverse channels and touchpoints. Imagine a patient initiating their journey by filling out a form on their mobile device, seamlessly transitioning to a laptop for continued interaction, and, only when uncertainties arise, reaching out to a call center for assistance.

However, 65-70% of customers[4] make at least one channel switch from digital channels to traditional customer support and vice versa. Another study[5] revealed that 26% of customers used five or more unique channels, 21% used four channels, 25% used three, and 28% used two unique channels. In an ideal omnichannel setup, the form is accessible to the support executive, providing the context needed to assist the patient effectively. This ensures a cohesive experience across different contexts. Consumers can switch between channels without disruption, and information is readily available to all stakeholders in the healthcare value chain.



To achieve true omnichannel success, organizations must fully embrace it within the organization, its processes, and its technology architecture. This approach has far-reaching impacts like:



### **Optimized costs**

By increasing the usage of self-service channels, organizations can streamline their operations, reduce overhead, and better allocate their resources. Prioritizing investments based on understanding the patient's channel preferences ensures that resources are well-spent. McKinsey reports[3] state that implementing an omnichannel strategy enabled a German payer to transition approximately 50 percent of its member services to digital platforms, leading to a 30 to 50 percent reduction in the cost of service delivery.



### **Reduction of stress on the healthcare system**

Providing patients with timely access to the information they need increases the likelihood of promptly addressing their concerns. Enabling patients to gain relevant information through pre-informed requests, such as understanding policy coverage before raising claims, eases the burden of customer support staff. This also leads to quick and accurate resolutions.



### **Higher customer satisfaction**

Efficiently resolving customer situations by promptly addressing their needs leads to higher customer satisfaction, provides peace of mind, and reduces anxiety. Businesses[7] demonstrating steadfast dedication to the omnichannel customer experience retain 89% of their customer base.

# Omnichannel to reign connected healthcare

Omnichannel succeeds when consumers can access superior self-service channels driven by unified and seamless interactions. Viewing patient journeys from an end-to-end perspective[8] rather than focusing solely on individual touchpoints is necessary to ensure this. In addition, efforts should be made to break down siloed functions and other internal barriers and adopt collaborative workflows to ensure smooth transitions between all touchpoints. This empowers consumers and stakeholders to access the correct information, enabling efficient healthcare services.

Anticipating a valuation of USD 18.52 billion[7] by 2030, the healthcare marketing and communications market is rapidly evolving into a connected ecosystem in which omnichannel is no longer an option but a necessity to stay relevant amongst modern consumers.

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