

Get Healthy with Apps

What consumers like about healthcare apps

Health, fitness and vitality are core values of society – today more than ever. Eating fresh vegetables and fruit five times a day, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, drinking at least two liters of water per day and sufficient rest are only some of the more commonly heard recipes for a better health. The consumer believes in all this, even if the execution often falls short in busy everyday lives. Now there's help on the horizon: smartphones and tablet computers. With these new giants of consumer electronics the healthcare topic has arrived on the mobile devices of the modern consumer. The choice of health apps is growing every day. You can find dietary assistants like *Calorie Counter – MyFitnessPal*, nutrition advice programs like *Fooducate - Eat Healthy Diet* or reminder apps to improve water drinking routines as well as apps that give *Vitamin coaching*. Besides a broad range of fitness consulting you find relaxation manuals like *Relax Completely* and various specific apps like period trackers, pregnancy calendars, sleep cycle recordings up to quick finders for healing plants.

So, what do consumers think about these mobile healthcare services? What motivates them to use these apps? And what do they think about branded apps with a clear relation to a producer?

In a comprehensive study, GIM identified the keydrivers to healthcare apps. One is that apps help the consumer to implement the heartfelt obligation to protect one's health in a playful and enjoyable way: "Running with an app is just more fun – you see what progress you make and the app is like a personal trainer that tells you to keep up a routine. And of course I also share good running results with my friends." The game character of the app reminds the user of his or her good intentions and it motivates by making the efforts visible and allowing to compare oneself with others. The fact that the tools can often be adjusted to individual needs and personalized in funny and entertaining ways enhances the appeal too. Another aspect of app-based *health games* which makes them appealing for consumers is that their visualizations and tools help to simplify the complex body processes. Their technology allows them to provide direct feedback on what a person does or did and shows this in tangible and easy to understand graphics or depictions. Thus, complex mechanisms are translated into manageable portions and health topics become fun rather than an obligation. In addition, healthcare apps can easily be integrated into daily life which is a big practical advantage. The smartphone is carried at all times anyway and so is the app – no other item is necessary. As the study showed, both aspects ensure the regular usage of an app

and thus facilitate the compliance with annoying Do's and Don'ts that health maintenance unfortunately requires significantly! We also learned in this study that healthcare apps which are produced by well-known players in the healthcare and fitness market are especially popular (for example the fitness app *miCoach* from Adidas or the *Bayer magazine* app, that provides information on a variety of health related topics as well as ideas for the future and visions for a better life). Those apps seem to have two big advantages in the context of sensitive healthcare topics: they are perceived as being of high quality, while at the same time ensuring high data security. The range of available branded apps in the healthcare market is currently still relatively limited. Nevertheless, branded apps have a big potential of reaching consumers on a very personal level and thus shaping the image of a brand or influencing product relationship in a positive way. Healthcare marketers should think more about how they can effectively use branded apps in the context of their own brand and product portfolios.



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