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RESEARCH-ARTICLE

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Published: 18 July 2025

[Citation in BibTeX format](#)

GAITDI 2025: International Conference
on Implementing Generative AI
into Telecommunication and Digital
Innovation
July 18 - 20, 2025
Beijing, China

Analysis of Marketing Strategies for Mental Health Apps in the Context of Industrial Digital Transformation

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Abstract

Under the background of industrial digital transformation, mass mental health problems are highlighted, and mental health APP is developing rapidly under the empowerment of science and technology, surge of user demand and support of government policies. However, existing APPs are facing challenges such as product homogenization, low user payment rate and data privacy security. To make up for this shortcoming, the article expects to reconstruct the future blueprint of mental health APPs with the help of the 4P marketing theory and through multi-dimensional synergy.

CCS Concepts

• Applied computing; • Life and medical sciences; • Health care information systems;

Keywords

Digital Transformation, Mental Health Apps, Marketing Strategies

ACM Reference Format:

Xinyu Song and Huijun Xiao. 2025. Analysis of Marketing Strategies for Mental Health Apps in the Context of Industrial Digital Transformation. In *International Conference on Implementing Generative AI into Telecommunication and Digital Innovation (GAITDI 2025)*, July 18–20, 2025, Beijing, China. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 4 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3771792.3771800>

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

In the post-epidemic era, socio-economic recovery was largely underway, and fast-paced life has accelerated the growth rate of the incidence of mass mental disorders, resulting in a greater demand for mental health services. The wave of industrial digital transformation has driven the introduction of technologies such as AI, big data and blockchain, facilitating the creation and development of mental health APPs, and promoting the transformation of mental health services towards mobility and intelligence. Due to the long training cycle and time and space constraints of traditional

counsellors, and the shift of users' behavior from offline to online counselling, it is crucial to explore the marketing strategy of mental health APPs in the digital era.

The research significance of the article consists of two parts: firstly, from a theoretical point of view, exploring the theoretical mechanism of the integration of digital transformation and mental health services can make up for the shortcomings of the existing research which is limited to a single technology or user; secondly, from a practical point of view, it can provide implementable marketing strategies for enterprises to develop mental health APPs, so that users are more willing to use and pay for them.

1.2 Literature Review

In the context of industrial digital transformation, scholars at home and abroad have carried out multi-dimensional explorations around the marketing strategy of mental health apps. For example. Wang proposed that the virtual market needs to integrate consumption and cost strategies to match user needs [1, 2], took "Lilac Doctor" as an example and pointed out that the "content + community" model can build a chain of trust. Lai focuses on data-driven precision marketing and emotional design [3]. Foreign studies have focused on technology integration and ethical norms, such as Samantha advocating the elimination of social bias through case marketing and searcopene optimization [3]. Zielasek proposing the need to combine the "blended care" model to open up online and offline services [4, 5]. The concept of community ecology extends to the linkage between apps and multiple institutions.

However, there are still significant gaps in current research at home and abroad, such as low user payment rates, policy synergies, and unresolved issues of data security and privacy protection. In the future, it is necessary to integrate interdisciplinary perspectives and address the difficulties and challenges through the joint role of multiple aspects.

2 The Impact of Digital Transformation on Mental Health Apps

2.1 Digital Technology Empowerment

Innovate marketing through digital technology. The first is to establish a data-driven decision-making mechanism to build an accurate user profile by analyzing user behavior data; the second is to form an intelligent closed loop to provide personalized services to users through AI, big data and other technologies; the third is to establish

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ACM ISBN 979-8-4007-1492-4/2025/07

<https://doi.org/10.1145/3771792.3771800>

an ecological synergy mechanism to share data with other devices such as smart bracelets, so that health management can be covered by multiple scenarios. The above technological breakthroughs can not only optimize user experience and improve decision-making efficiency, but also promote intelligent, precise and personalized marketing for enterprises and improve the competitiveness of their products.

2.2 User Needs Enhancement

By transforming the solution of user needs to digitalization. The first is to establish anonymous consultation methods, so that users are more assured in their use, more willing to express their inner thoughts, and to improve the effectiveness of consulting services; the second is to create a segmented market, and to provide more precise services according to the needs of different groups, thus improving user stickiness and loyalty; the third is to establish a full chain of services, to expand the original single function, and to satisfy the diversified needs of users.

2.3 Policy and Regulatory Support

Government policies have supported and regulated the development of the mental health industry. The first is to improve compliance requirements, such as HIPAA and GDPR and other regulations to impose strict constraints on user data privacy; the second is the policy support, the 'Healthy China 2030' and other policies in China to promote the popularity of digital mental health services. Overseas, the U.S. FDA has included digital therapies in commercial insurance payments; the U.K. NHS has established a graded certification system; and Japanese legislation compels companies to access AI psychological assessment systems.

3 Current Landscape and Challenges of Mental Health Apps

3.1 Development Status

First, the market size and development prospects. According to the data surveyed by Beziers Consulting, the global Behavioral and Mental Health APP market size was \$7,377 million in 2024 and is expected to continue to expand at a CAGR of 17.4% from 2024-2029, which shows the huge market size and promising future.

Secondly, product classification and user profiling. On the one hand, according to the different services provided by mental health APPs, the functions of APPs can be divided into four categories: psychological counselling, mood recording, meditation and sleep, and confiding and decompressing. On the other hand, a few data surveys show that Chinese users aged 18-35 and female groups account for 70% of mental health APPs. Data from the enterprise version of Tianyecha shows that as of March 2025, most of the existing psychological counselling-related enterprises in the country that are in business and in existence are concentrated in first- and second-tier cities, and the coverage rate of counties is relatively low. The user group of mental health APP is mostly concentrated in the middle-aged and female groups and mostly concentrated in the first and second-tier cities.

Third, the competition pattern. The competition pattern of mental health apps is highly concentrated and dominated by head enterprises. According to Fortune Business Insights, the top five mental health apps occupy more than half of the market share. However, emerging enterprises have also gained a certain market share through innovative business models or the introduction of AI technology and other differentiated competition.

3.2 Difficult Challenges

First, the homogenization of products is serious. For example, Peng & Zuo pointed out that most of the current domestic psychological apps stay in the basic test function and some of the tests lack scientific basis, and only a few support comprehensive intervention methods such as cognitive behavioral therapy, which can easily induce users to fall into the trap of "pseudo-psychology"[7].

The second is the low willingness of users to pay. The Mental Health Blue Book 2023 shows that the mental health problems of the population are prominent, but the awareness rate of mental health is low. And at present, the acceptance of knowledge-based payment is limited in China, so the user willingness to pay for mental health APP is low.

Third, data security and privacy protection. Despite the strict requirements of HIPAA and GDPR to protect data security, most companies disregard user privacy and security by virtue of regulatory loopholes. For example, data from the American Psychological Association in 2022 shows that only 37% of APPs clearly inform users of the purpose of data information collection.

4 Marketing Strategies for Mental Health Apps.

4.1 Product

First, optimizing user experience. On the one hand, enterprises can provide personalized and precise services and functions according to the psychological conditions and service demands of different groups by delineating market segments and improving user satisfaction. On the other hand, on top of the original basic functions, innovative functions and interface design. For example, an intuitive and simple interface can ensure that users can easily operate and use the service; community incentives, game design and other mechanisms can enhance the interaction between users and increase user stickiness.

Second, data security and privacy protection. On the one hand, enterprises should comply with policies and regulations, adopt advanced encryption technology and clearly inform users of the purpose of data collection, conduct regular security tests, find loopholes and solve them in a timely manner, to protect users' data security. On the other hand, the government should also continue to improve the laws and regulations on data security and privacy protection, so that enterprises can't exploit legal loopholes.

Third, sustainable development path. On the one hand, APP can build a 'three-tier response' mechanism, that is, AI self-help, AI assessment and initial screening to match the consultant and direct offline referral of the whole process of service, so as to facilitate the accurate resolution of user problems. On the other hand, APP can introduce federal learning technology to improve the credibility of the APP intervention program through cross-platform data sharing

Table 1: Description of Enerjoy’s 6 products

The name of the app	Segment groups	Core features	Scale & Revenue
ShutEye	People with sleep disorders (North America/Japan)	White noise, sleep tracking, meditation sessions	The cumulative turnover exceeded 60 million US dollars, ranking first in the United States
JustFit	Women aged 35+ (no fitness foundation)	Equipment-free home workouts, beginner-friendly classes	Monthly turnover of millions of dollars, TOP10 in the health category
Me+	Housewife/Parent of Student	Task management + emotion tracking + habit formation	User rating 4.8, 200,000+ ratings
Light: Lazy Yoga	Older women	Low-intensity yoga, joint protection training	Precisely cut into the silver health market segment
Eato	Diet to control the population	Calorie tracking + healthy recipe recommendations	Over 40% compound annual growth rate
MindZone	Anxiety users	Bedtime meditation + stress release guidance	Fill the gaps in mental health tools

and cooperation with medical institutions under the premise of ensuring that user privacy will not be compromised.

4.2 Price

One is the categorized subscription strategy. On the one hand, it can refer to Headspace embedded in enterprise EAP to provide personalized services through enterprise subscription and lower the threshold of user payment. On the other hand, a tiered subscription payment method can be adopted, where basic functions are not charged, but advanced functions such as online consultation and course counselling are charged.

Second, dynamic pricing and cost control. On the one hand, enterprises can differentiate pricing according to user demand and consumption ability or adjust pricing strategies in a timely manner according to market demand and competition. On the other hand, enterprises can cooperate with similar competitors, APP basic big framework can choose the most cost-effective and share the cost, reduce development costs.

Third, the combination of psychological pricing and promotion. On the one hand, enterprises can attract users through psychological pricing techniques, such as product or service prices ending in 9 to reduce the user’s perceived price. On the other hand, enterprises can combine certain promotional activities, such as the first month of 50% off, points redemption and other ways to improve the APP added value.

4.3 Place

Firstly, the online channel has full coverage. On the one hand, the search engine of the app shop can be optimized, and relevant mental health apps can pop up when high-frequency keywords such as ‘psychological counselling’ and ‘anxiety’ are entered. On the other hand, enterprises can build a social media matrix for promotion, conduct content marketing on social platforms, and cooperate with KOC and KOL bloggers for promotion.

Second, offline scene promotion. On the one hand, enterprises can cooperate with colleges, companies or medical institutions to carry out activities such as ‘Mental Health Month’ to promote APP

and provide models for clinical treatment and research. On the other hand, the APP can cross-border co-branding with other brands to launch new functions or peripherals to meet users’ personalized needs.

4.4 Promotion

One is content marketing and emotional marketing. On the one hand, companies can publish mental health-related content on social media and cooperate with bloggers to attract potential users. On the other hand, companies can combine localized content with brand stories and real-life user experiences to convey brand values and resonate with users.

Second, discounts and sharing incentives. On the one hand, when the APP is just released or when new users register, the threshold of users can be lowered through time-limited discounts and trial experiences. On the other hand, enterprises can refer to the way of Pinduoduo’s ‘cut a knife’, and offer discounts on services through the way of user sharing, which not only attracts new users, but also improves users’ willingness to pay.

5 Example analyses

Founded in 2019 and headquartered in Singapore with a core team based in Beijing, Enerjoy (Enerjoy) focuses on the development of overseas health pendant apps, focusing on high-value markets such as Europe, the United States, Japan, and other high-value markets, and is known for its market segmentation strategy. The conservative annual water flow in 2024 exceeds \$50 million, and the monthly water flow of several products reaches the level of millions of dollars. The company has six products covering sleep, women’s fitness and mental health, as shown in Table 1. The company’s growth strategy focuses on volume acquisition, combining large-scale ad testing and subscription offer design on one hand, and optimizing user experience through dynamic product iteration on the other. The key to success lies in deep ploughing into market segments, precise user empathy design and methodology reuse, which has become a benchmark case for non-game apps going overseas.

6 conclusion

The digital transformation of industry is driving the change of marketing strategy of mental health APP through the triple factors of scientific and technological empowerment, user demand upgrade and government policy support. The article research through the 4P strategy of marketing and puts forward the suggestions that enterprises need to focus on user demand, innovate business model, online and offline multi-channel publicity and diversified promotional activities in order to improve market competitiveness. In the future, mental health APP can truly become the digital guardian of human mental health only through the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge and multi-party synergistic governance to meet user needs.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Guangdong Provincial Department of Education for its financial

support through the College Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program (Grant Number: S202413844011).

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