

# The Pharmaceutical, Healthcare, and Wellness Industry Landscape in Southeast Asia



# Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed incomparable high demands on the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry and its ability to adapt and respond has intensely demonstrated its capacity to bring about their research, solutions, and innovations to the global stage faster than expected. In Southeast Asia markets alone, it is not amiss to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has paralyzed many business sectors due to the numerous restrictions for people and citizens imposed by health organizations and different governments. While we have experienced businesses fluctuate in demand due to the lockdowns and quarantines, it is the pharmaceutical, healthcare, and wellness industry that is expected to skyrocket in growth. Companies in this industry across the Southeast Asian markets have been pushing to evolve their business strategies to stay afloat and maintain their business continuity amid the pandemic.

Thus, with robust market opportunities existing in Southeast Asia, it is the diverse countries in this region with different socio-political climates, that can serve as case studies to aid companies develop strategies and be able to optimize all the channels that can be used in order to contribute to the upturn of its media landscape performance in the midst of a pandemic. This includes the digital optimization for marketing strategies due to the restrictions and limitations on operational activities.



# Notable Trends

## COVID-19 Vaccine Becomes Top Priority

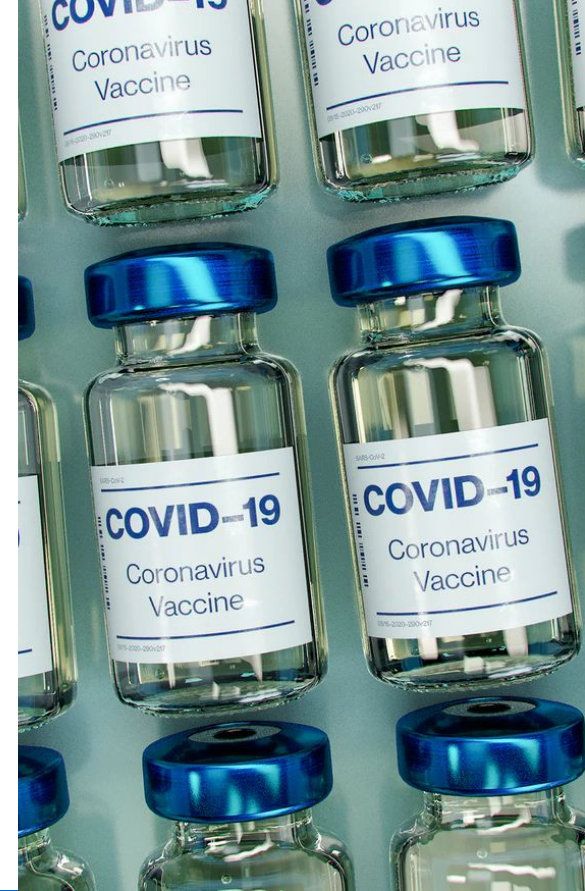
The role of communication is essential when preparing for a pandemic and any other public health disaster. Besides planning for effective communication within the pharmaceutical, healthcare, wellness, and government sectors, organizations and public health agencies are expected to be on top of excellent communication links into local markets and communities.





## COVID-19 Vaccine Becomes Top Priority

As many pharmaceutical companies have been competing to develop the COVID-19 vaccine, and putting top priority in communicating the right strategy, marketing, and branding in Southeast Asia, the messaging of governments, digital publics, and journalists heightened in bannerizing COVID-19 vaccines as top priority of the industry as we close 2020 and open the doors to 2021. Although vaccines, normally, take years to be tested for effectiveness and necessitates additional time for production, some companies had reached the clinical trial stage in developing the vaccine, and each of these were proliferated in both digital journalism and social media spaces during the covered period.



## COVID-19 Vaccine Becomes Top Priority

During the period of our study, what made rounds in the media are updates on vaccines jointly developed by Pfizer and BioNTech in the context that it is 90 percent effective in preventing COVID-19 infections in ongoing Phase 3 trials. At the same time, Johnson & Johnson was in the same phase, but it had temporarily paused its COVID-19 vaccine candidate clinical trials due to an unexplained illness in a study participant. How Southeast Asian markets are prioritizing who will get the vaccine first also made their way in various opportunities in the media and organic conversations online. [VN: 1, 2][SG: 1][MY: 1][PH: 1, 2].



# Notable Trends

## Pfizer's Vaccine Has Been a Trending Topic in Digital Publications and Conversations

The name of a New York City, US-based pharmaceutical company, Pfizer Inc, had been a trending topic in those publications of digital journalism and social media because of its vaccine, BNT162b2, in collaboration with BioNTech SE, consistently bannering its 90% successful in fighting the COVID-19 virus. The data revealed that it recorded the highest publications among pharmaceutical brands in Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Philippines [SG: 1][MY: 1, 2][VN: 1, 2][PH: 1, 2].





Pfizer was also mentioned as one of four companies that are in the midst of clinical trials of the last-stage COVID-19 vaccine in the US, and is being picked-up by local media outlets across different markets in the region. With Pfizer announcing these positive early results from its COVID-19 virus vaccine trial, it has hammered itself on top of a heightened interest frenzy fueling a world-wide race that has outspread at record-breaking speed. As Pfizer is being positioned as “best bet” in the majority of covered Southeast Asian countries, it is not surprising how interest in digital journalism and social media conversations are highly sustained.



## Notable Trends

### Large Corporations Forge On By Bannering Achievements Amid the Pandemic

While the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the industry, forcing organizations to change future business plans to cut business income across Southeast Asia, and vaccine-associated news and buzz dominating media performance, two large pharmaceutical companies in Indonesia have made their presence competitive by continuing to record and banner their achievements in the midst of a pandemic.





## Large Corporations Forge On By Bannering Achievements Amid the Pandemic

PT Industri Jamu and Pharmaceuticals Sido Muncul Tbk (SIDO) or Sido Muncul still recorded positive performance in the third quarter of 2020. The increase in revenue resulted in the company's net profit growth reaching 10.78% from IDR 578.44 billion to IDR 640.80 billion by the third quarter of 2019. Most of the company's revenue was contributed dominantly by sales of the herbal medicine and supplements segment of IDR 1.44 trillion, an increase of 1.4% from Rp 1.42 trillion in the same period last year [ID: 1].





## Large Corporations Forge On By Bannering Achievements Amid the Pandemic

On the other hand, Deka Group through PT Deka Medica won the 2020 Innovative Industry Award from the Ministry of Research and Technology/the Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency due to its commitment to develop Original Indonesian Modern Medicine (OMAI) [ID: [1](#)]. Meanwhile, in Vietnam, Domesco Medical Export JSC was honored as one of 50 best listed companies in Vietnam 2020 voted by Forbes Vietnam [VN: [1](#)].

# Notable Trends

## Collaboration Among Pharmaceutical Companies Becomes a Top Priority

The shift towards a more integrated regional pharma industry as a result of the pandemic-driven economies and priorities, the same has resulted in more global, regional, and domestic collaborations and partnerships. As researchers conduct clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccine candidates and the projections about mass production of vaccines to meet the world's population are also being considered, media leverage has seen pharmaceutical companies in the world pushing full speed to create a vaccine and a solution to put this pandemic to a halt.



## Collaboration Among Pharmaceutical Companies Becomes a Top Priority

Collaboration to acquisition is carried out to accelerate vaccine discovery and to diminish obstacles in terms of research development, distribution, as well as licensing process to produce the vaccines massively. In Indonesia, PT Kalbe Farma Tbk (Kalbe) and PT Amaro Global Pharma (Amarox) made a price adjustment for COVIFOR (Remdesivir) in Indonesia. This price adjustment is in line with Kalbe and Amaro's commitment to support the government in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic and considering more and more patients who can benefit from the COVIFOR drug for healing.



## Collaboration Among Pharmaceutical Companies Becomes a Top Priority

Recently, COVIFOR, which is imported by AmaroX from Hetero India, became one of products which is for the treatment of patients with COVID-19 disease. Recently, it's marketed and distributed by Kalbe Farma in Indonesia [ID: 1]. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, GlaxoSmithKline partnered with Vir Biotechnology to expand their trial of an experimental antibody to treat COVID-19 after initial use by a group of volunteers did not raise any safety concerns [PH: 1].





# Brand Analysis

## Digital Journalism Coverage

The expectations for the availability of COVID-19 vaccine have been sustained in an increasing level of interest after Pfizer Inc. announced its vaccine which jointly developed with BioNTech to be 90 percent effective in preventing COVID-19 infections in ongoing Phase 3 trials. As our data would present, Pfizer's commitment in developing COVID-19 vaccine had triggered the huge publications in digital journalism across six markets in Southeast Asia, as 4 out of the 6 markets landed Pfizer in the top rank based on publication volume, namely Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Philippines. [SG: 1][MY: 1][VN: 1, 2][PH: 1].





## Digital Journalism Coverage

Pfizer may not have topped Indonesia and Thailand, but it still made its way in the top five, making it a focal point in the brand's position in the region. [ID: 1][TH: 1]. In addition, topics on the Australian Government who signed two deals to buy 40 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines from Novavax and 10 million from Pfizer and BioNTech also contributed to the publication coverage.



## Digital Journalism Coverage

Even though the publications in digital journalism coverage were dominated by multinational pharmaceutical companies across six markets, there are outliers in the data drive-results in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, local players are put into the spotlight as publication coverage was bolstered dominantly by Indonesian-based pharmaceutical companies, Sido Muncul and Kalbe Farma as well as stated-owned enterprises, Bio Farma and Indonesia's National Agency of Drug and Food Control (BPOM).



## Digital Journalism Coverage

The data revealed that the local manufacturer of modern herbs and herbal medicines, Sido Muncul, recorded the highest coverage volume compared to other multinational companies. Being a publicly traded company, the company's financial performance had been an interesting topic to be written by journalists. During this period, it seems that the COVID-19 pandemic is not a barrier for Sido Muncul to record a positive performance in the third quarter of 2020. It managed to record sales of IDR 2.25 trillion until the third quarter of 2020 or an increase of 6.13% from the realization of the same period last year valued at IDR Rp 2.12 trillion. Most of the company's revenue was supported by sales of the herbal medicine and supplements segment of IDR 1.44 trillion, an increase of 1.4% from the same period last year of IDR 1.42 trillion.[ID: 1, 2, 3].



## Digital Journalism Coverage

A similar performance was also achieved by a local pharmaceutical company based in Vietnam. Douc Hau Giang was ranked top five among pharmaceutical companies in Vietnam. Duoc Hau Giang had proven itself a socially responsible company when its representatives accompanied 27 doctors to provide medical examinations and medicine to Hue people affected by floods. Besides CSR activities, Duoc Hau Giang is a pioneer in the research and development of stroke prevention products for the past nine years. Launched on 24th October, its NattoEnzym Red Rice helps users have more choices suitable for health and complete its Japanese- quality product portfolio. The company had a successful Quarter 3 when reporting its after-tax profit of more than VND 166 billion, up 41.7% over the same period. [VN:[1](#), [2](#)].



	Singapore		Malaysia		Vietnam		Philippines		Indonesia		Thailand	
	Brand	Vol	Brand	Vol	Brand	Vol	Brand	Vol	Brand	Vol	Brand	Vol
1	Pfizer	1,790	Pfizer (M) Sdn Bhd	383	Pfizer	1,182	Pfizer	469	Sido Muncul	14,664	Watsons	4
2	Johnson & Johnson	646	AstraZeneca Sdn Bhd	136	AstraZeneca	452	Johnson & Johnson	212	Bio Farma	1,659	Merck	4
3	Eli Lilly	387	Johnson & Johnson Sdn Bhd	80	Johnson & Johnson	283	AstraZeneca	201	Kalbe Farma	1,422	Pfizer	3
4	Gilead Sciences	288	Eli Lilly (M) Sdn Bhd	54	Domesco	107	Abbot	103	BPOM	1,103	Roche	3
5	Bayer	260	Sanofi Aventis (M) Sdn Bhd	49	Douc Hau Giang	101	GlaxoSmithKline	57	Pfizer	948	Sanofi	2

*Table 1: Digital Journalism Coverage for the Pharmaceutical, Healthcare, and Wellness Industries in South East Asia*

# Brand Analysis

## Social Media Buzz

Due to its commitment in developing COVID-19 vaccine, Pfizer still was among the top and upper tier spots mentioned on social media conversations across all key Southeast Asia markets - Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand. Its announcement on a vaccine which was 90 percent effective in preventing COVID-19 infections in ongoing Phase 3 trials had attracted people's attention and earned positive to mixed responses from the digital publics. [SG: 1][MY: 1][VN: 1, 2, 3][PH: 1, 2, 3][ID: 1][TH: 1, 2, 3].



## Social Media Buzz

Following Pfizer, the achievement gained by Indonesia's State-owned pharmaceutical holding company, PT Bio Farma, had been the top topic in social media in the country as a result of being carried over from its digital journalism performance. They were selected to work with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) as a potential manufacturer for a COVID-19 vaccine, and set conversation abuzz with peaked interest on ability to cater to demand and price. It indicated Bio Farma's credibility had been globally recognized [1] leading to the high conversations in social media across six markets.





## Social Media Buzz

In the meantime, Johnson & Johnson had also been among main conversation points in social media for four key countries in Southeast Asia - Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Philippines. It was reportedly pushing to suspend temporarily enrollment and dosing in all of its clinical trials after a patient experienced an adverse reaction during the phase[SG: 1, 2][MY: 1][VN: 1, 2, 3][PH: 1, 2].



	Singapore		Malaysia		Vietnam		Philippines		Indonesia		Thailand	
	Brand	Vol	Brand	Vol	Brand	Vol	Brand	Vol	Brand	Vol	Brand	Vol
1	Pfizer	3,192	Pfizer (M) Sdn Bhd	986	Pfizer	458	Pfizer	8,223	Bio Farma	5,414	Watsons	5,162
2	Johnson & Johnson	205	AstraZeneca Sdn Bhd	74	Bayer	41	Johnson & Johnson	398	Pfizer	2,942	Pfizer	3,510
3	Roche	174	Roche (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd	36	Abbott	25	Roche	230	Kalbe Farma	933	Roche	819
4	Bayer	165	Abbott Laboratories (M) Sdn Bhd (Pharmaceuticals)	26	Johnson & Johnson	18	Abbott	215	Kimia Farma	836	Merck	52
5	Gilead Sciences	145	Johnson & Johnson (M) Sdn Bhd	19	AstraZeneca	16	Sanofi-Aventis	194	Indofarma	503	Sanofi	12

*Table 2: Social Media Coverage for the Pharmaceutical, Healthcare, and Wellness Industries in South East Asia*

# Notable Markets

## Singapore

Singapore as the news would present it was ready to become the center or hub for the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine in the Southeast Asian region. Media pickups and social media conversations stirred mentions that almost all pharmaceutical companies in Singapore were focusing on developing the COVID-19 vaccine – from Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Eli Lilly, to Gilead Sciences. The incessant reporting of Pfizer and its partner, BioNTech, affirming that its vaccine had been 90% effective, was sustained across all media spaces in Singapore.



## Singapore

The news publications also revealed that Australian government had signed a deal to buy 10 million of vaccines developed by Pfizer and BioNTech [1,2]. Gilead Sciences also escalated the people's expectation on the vaccine after its antiviral drug, Remdesivir, became the first and only approved treatment for COVID-19 in the United States [1]. Consistent with news and digital public discussions, Johnson & Johnson remained to be discussed as it was forced to have temporarily paused its COVID-19 vaccine candidate clinical trials due to an unexplained illness in a study participant [1,2,3].





# Notable Markets

## Indonesia

The COVID-19 pandemic has definitely transformed the pharmaceutical industry in Indonesia, as the country is among those most affected in terms of the number of cases in the region. During the covered period of the study, Indonesia recorded the highest performance for the publication coverage from digital journalism and social media compared to other key countries in Southeast Asia.





## Indonesia

Sido Muncul has been the main contributor for digital publications coverage. Those digital articles wrote dominantly its positive performance in the third quarter of 2020 by recording its sales which escalated by 6.13% to IDR 2.25 trillion in the third quarter of 2020 compared to the realization of the same period last year valued at IDR. 2.12 trillion. Most of the company's revenue was supported by sales of the herbal medicine and supplements segment of IDR 1.44 trillion, an increase of 1.4% from the same period last year of IDR 1.42 trillion.[ID: 1, 2, 3]. The huge coverage was also triggered by Bio Farma having the most conversations compared to other pharmaceutical companies in Indonesia.

# The Wrap-Up

Southeast Asia is comprised of complicated and diverse markets with unique sets of challenges for MNCs and local players. Varied competitive dynamics across countries, including local competition is considerably unique from country to country. While the COVID-19 pandemic has placed almost insurmountable demands on vaccines, cure, and never-ending challenges in modern healthcare systems, the industry's response has demonstrated a collaborative effort to bring forth innovative solutions and approaches to the pandemic, providing information to the public since the lockdowns and quarantines which plagued various countries, as communication has been tricky because the scene constantly changes.



# The Wrap-Up

One learning that is pivotal as this industry dominates the media landscape is that the digital public does not respond well to messages giving a false impression of the current global and regional situation and this type of message will lead the public to distrust information from the experts in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors and organizations, including governments. To capture and leverage on the immense opportunities in both growth and emerging markets in Southeast Asia, pharmaceutical and healthcare companies would require not only the right strategies and clear communication lines, but also insights that are actionable, timely, and relevant to adapt to the fast-changing media landscape.



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“The encouraging news of Pfizer being 90 percent effective in preventing COVID-19 infections has definitely boosted confidence in the economic recovery of the Singapore market. The government’s strategy to not depend on any single source for COVID-19 vaccines has also led to discussion on social media to compare the vaccines developed by different pharmaceutical brands.”

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Jenna Wang, Senior  
Insights Manager,  
Singapore



Ho Paik San, Associate  
Insights Director, Malaysia

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“The pharmaceutical industry has enjoyed more exposure in the media in 2020 than it has ever had before in the past, especially as demands and the rush to develop an effective vaccine against COVID-19 became more pressing. As the government increases efforts to boost healthcare in the country, the pharmaceutical industry is expected to see robust growth in the coming months. Positive COVID-19 vaccine developments in the industry is also expected to provide a beacon of hope to improve business outlook for other industries.”

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“Despite controlling the spread of COVID-19 effectively, the virus concern persists amongst a majority of Vietnamese. Like the other countries, the large pharmaceutical companies' developing vaccine process remained the most prominent public concern. These developments' positive progress brings a promising future for the world economic recovery, which would also impact Vietnam's economy and trading activities.”

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Nhi Tran, Senior Insights  
Manager, Vietnam



Aces Montealegre,  
Insights Manager,  
Philippines

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"The Philippines and its ongoing COVID-19 challenges reflected in the media is a reflection not only of its socio-political climate, but also its priorities as a nation amid the pandemic. The pharmaceutical, healthcare, and wellness industry is gaining traction across media spaces precisely as Filipinos place top priority on their health and living conditions as we go through one of the longest quarantine periods among our Southeast Asian neighbors."

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“Indonesia, like most countries around the world during this pandemic has been focusing on the development of the COVID-19 vaccine and the government is optimistic that it can deliver a COVID-19 vaccine by the end of 2020. Surprisingly, the pandemic has also bolstered the demand for herbal medicines which are believed to maintain health and protect from the COVID-19 virus. Furthermore, the herbal medicines industry is projected to experience the rapid growth triggered by the pandemic. Finally, we could say that the pandemic has urged pharmaceutical companies in Indonesia to revolute their strategies in term of production and marketing significantly in order to keep surviving and recording good performance amid the pandemic.”

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Yudha Prawira, Insights  
Manager, Indonesia



Arthur Surassakaya  
Ormsup, Senior Insights  
Manager, Thailand

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“The first attack of COVID-19 in 2020 has led Thai people to economic and social damage. Despite this unfortunate circumstance, we still have hope as many leading pharmaceutical companies brought good news about their success on vaccines, especially the development and progress. Moreover, these leading firms in the pharmaceutical industry have kept on their CSR efforts during these trying times, and also continually developed their new core-valuable products and services for the betterment of living and well-being in Thailand.”

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“From the varied results in the Emerging Markets, the biggest challenge on a macro level of the pharmaceutical, healthcare and wellness industry is how to establish global reach with local relevance. There is a rising importance of understanding a local situation and creating an approach that gives differentiation across the Southeast Asian region. Industry players looking to expand their media presence established and footprint embedded in the emerging markets will need to focus on where they can have the biggest impact and added value. To secure big wins in the Emerging Markets in Southeast Asia, there is a need for actionable insights in creating more effective execution capabilities.”

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Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us  
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