

## Recent Trends in Marketing Biotechnology

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### Abstract

Successful development of a biotechnology product is as important as finding the right ways to market it to target audience, interested companies or firms that may invest in its sale. These may be pharmaceutical companies, research labs, educational institutes, technical laboratories, individual researchers etc. Even the potential best-seller may turn out to be a complete failure in the market if the worth of the product, its advantages, and best features are not properly conveyed to the public. Successful launching of a product needs well-thought marketing plans. These plans should keep in minds how to advertise it to relevant groups of buyers/ customers, how to develop a brand name that would attract the audience and how to keep track of other biotechnological companies in competition to excel above their product standard, prices etc. Use of social networks to spread awareness regarding a company and its services has gained much importance in recent years. Related companies are now also making use of marketing kits and marketing agencies to help design a tactful strategy for successful introduction of the product into the market.

**Keywords:** Marketing plans, Biotechnological companies, Marketing kits, Marketing agencies, Social networks

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## Introduction

Today the term biotechnology has not been easy one to define. Some have referred to it as a field dealing with biologically synthesized products while other consider it as an approach using living systems to derive novel products. Nonetheless, whether it be first FDA approved food item, Flavor Savor tomato marketed in 1994 or the earliest biotechnology-based drug , synthetic human insulin, developed in 1978 (Martinez, 2010), biotechnology products have faced hurdles in their acceptance in general market as well as in the hearts of the public (Stone, 2012)The reason for this can be traced down to be multifactorial, few of which maybe inefficient marketing strategies to convey to the consumers/ public/ buyers the importance of the product, its effectiveness, or advantages over contemporary products or the failure in research on part of biotechnology- related industries to meet the prevailing needs/ demands of the market (Kinch, 2014).

Biotechnology companies that base their success on a single product need utmost focusing on appropriate launching and advertising schemes (Yan, 2010). Even the most significant products will be of low value if all its benefitting features are not properly conveyed to the market of the consumers or if the product is not advertised enough or not backed up with enough support to satisfy the buyers of its efficacy. Here principle of marketing can be useful in drawing a cost-effective and creative promotion scheme for a particular biotechnology company or its related product (Meckenna, 2001). But before a product can be invested in and marketed it must be sought through research and analysis of public demands whether that particular product is something that the general population or the class of buyers (such as a pharmaceutical company, agricultural company, etc.) might be looking for. Good positioning of the product at the time of its manufacture i.e. knowing what value it would hold in the market and at what time is as important as good advertisement after the product is allowed to be marketed (Howseman, 2006). A worthy marketer therefore needs to have a proper plan for when to launch the product, in what design and profile and the idea of the market size that the product might be able to cash. A thoroughgoing competitive analysis needs to be done to have an idea of what hurdles the product might face in its sales (Pitt, 2007).

## The ABCs of Marketing

**A-Advertising:** it is obvious that people will not get excited about things they don't understand or they don't feel the need to use (Taylor, 2009). What a product or a company offers must be properly advertised keeping in mind the objective of the target market and the customers that it intends to attract. Advertising schemes should be well thought-out and budgeted so as to not let the money spent on advertisement exceed the profit value of the item (Duncan, 2005). For example, if a biotechnology company manufactures a product with the aim of finding a good market value in pharmaceutical industry then its advertisements schemes should highlight all the features, characters and advantages of that particular product that would aid the pharmaceutical industry. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, use social media approaches lead ahead other options in advertisement (Lovejoy, 2012). They have, undoubtedly, become the single most important marketing tool (Lawrence, 2000). The following table enlists few leading biotechnology-based websites along with their ranks (as updated in 2017) on (<https://www.similarweb.com/top-websites/category/business-and-industry/biotechnology-and-pharmaceuticals>)

**Table 1: Extracted from Top Websites Biotechnology and Pharmaceuticals, Similar Web (2017)**

Rank #	Website
1	thermofisher.com
2	anser.ne.jp
3	clinlife.com
4	todisk.com
5	marijuana.com
6	roche.com
7	xrie.biz
8	pfizer.com
9	scdkey.com
10	youkai-pedia.com

**B- Branding:** Particularly with respect to branding for marketing in biotechnology, the term would imply the use of a distinct logo, colors, or maybe a tagline that would deliver what exactly a company offers or in other words reinforces its identity (Hayes, 2006). Invitrogen was the first company that brought branding to life sciences when it was considered to be a foreign concept in this field. Now, it is considered beneficial for a company to hire marketing consultants or professional designers at an early stage that can help elucidate the idea behind the company when its brand name is presented to the customers (Pitt, 2007).

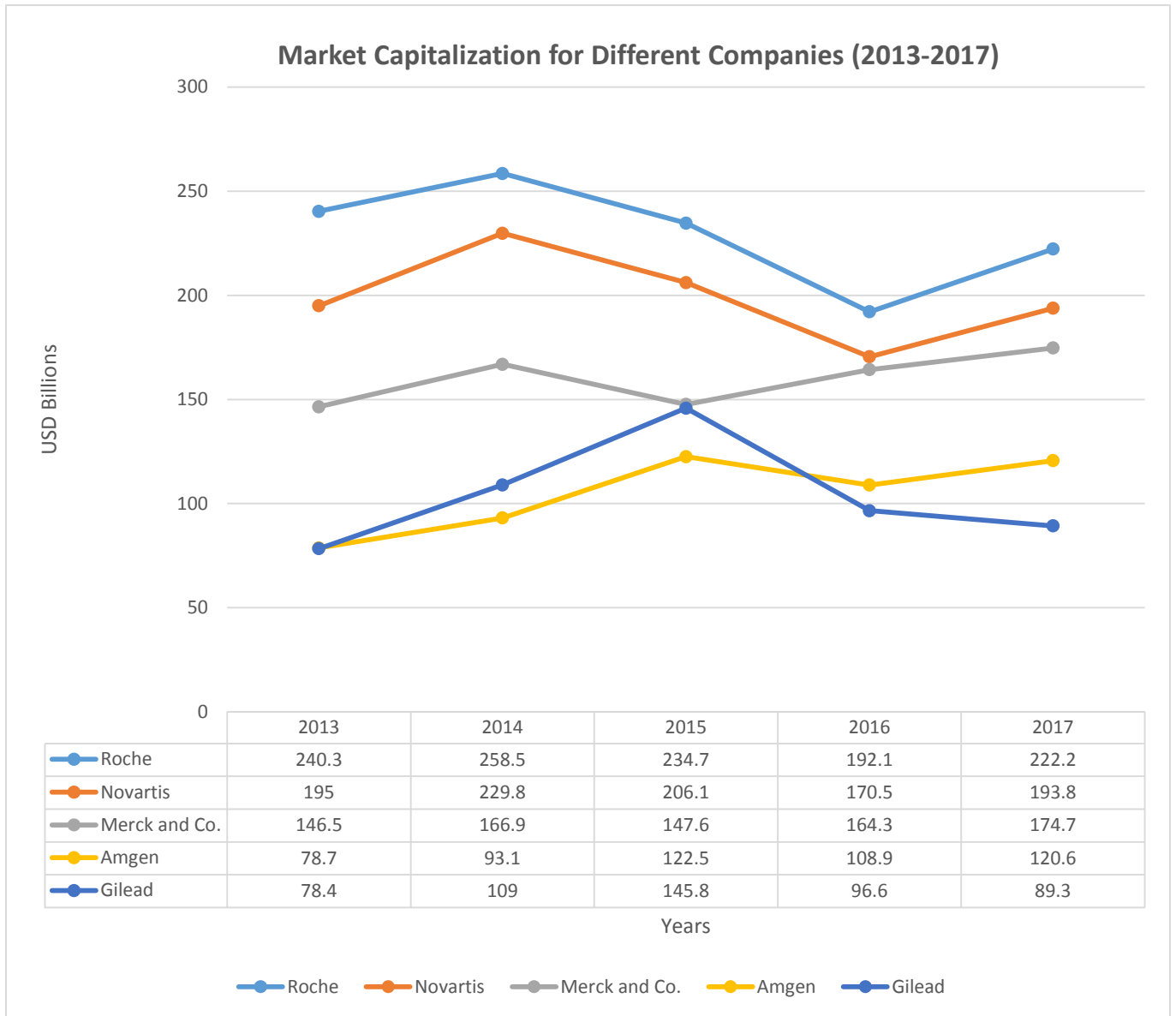
How well a company presents its brand name would ultimately decide its relationship with the markets it aims to benefit from whether it be pharmaceutical companies, labs, study institutes, or general public (Lamertz, 2005). In other words, how well a brand name, its logo or tagline constructs its company's identity would aid marketing. According to Phillip Kotler, a tagline is supposed to be an easily memorable phrase that backs up the image created by brand name and logo. Different companies portray their brand logo with name and sometimes a tagline on websites (Taylor, 2004). In one of the studies regarding how sincerely a brand personality is portrayed through websites, a set of researchers were given specific adjectives (words to describe that particular company's brand position as depicted through sites) and their results were merged to select how often the same adjective was used to describe the company (Opoku, 2007). The following table gives the frequency response matrix:

**Table 2: Extracted from Journal Of Commercial Biotechnology: how frequently the researchers used the same objective to describe a biotechnology brands marketing (Papania, 2008)**

	competence	excitement	ruggedness	sincerity	sophistication
<b>Amgen</b>	4157	910	460	1072	66
<b>Biogenidec</b>	477	165	67	314	16
<b>Chiron</b>	755	378	59	278	19
<b>Genentech</b>	7149	1534	36	2740	118
<b>Genzyme</b>	1926	377	74	518	60
<b>Gilead</b>	1111	393	83	135	21
<b>Medimmune</b>	981	193	29	103	5
<b>Merckserona</b>	254	124	28	106	13

The vocabulary, however, limits this study (Inman, 2004). The words are chosen as such to reduce bias and overlaps. However different observers can reckon them in different ways. As one dictionary gives many synonyms for one word, it shows the conflict of using a single word to cover many different features. For example, excitement can be interpreted as risk, innovation, or rarity in terms of how “exciting” a brand is (Sinkovics, 2005). Therefore, if this technique is being used by managers to observe the worth and personality of different firms, then it is highly advised to use a set of words that appropriately reflect the nature of the organizational atmosphere. This method can be used to evaluate the firm’s communicated brand but cannot provide insight into how it is perceived by the members of the network (Wong, 2005). These terms can show how differentiated brand personalities different companies carry. However, the portrayed personalities on websites may clearly differ from what the firm is in reality (Xu, 2006).

**C-Competitive analysis:** The main goal of successful marketing strategy is to attract as many buyers/ consumers possible and in this rapidly advancing scientific era where almost every user is well aware of what the market has to offer, it is common for them to run a proper comparison of different companies, agencies etc. before they trust one to be the right choice (thon, 2001). Companies therefore need keen evaluation of other companies that stand in competition to compare their standard of product, their prices etc. (Hair, 2006). Companies can often be compared in terms of marketing capitalization to see which company has flourished or declined over the years. The market cap refers to the total value of the company’s outstanding shares. It is calculated by multiplying the total shares with their share price (Larewnce, 2014). The following graph summarizes the market capitalization of few leading biotechnology companies in years 2013-2017 .



**Fig 1: Extract from "The World's Biggest Public Companies". *Forbes* (2015).**

## Use of Social Sites for the purpose of Marketing

Use of social media/ sites for marketing can be both a good and a bad strategy. As we know that anything on the social platform travels like a ripple so negative feedbacks and comments of disgruntle users could reach a massive proportion of population within minutes tainting the impression of a company in blink of an eye (Trusov, 2009). However, many companies have realized how important it is to use these tools to engage relevant sector of public in their activities and spread awareness online about their products and services. Among many companies that have thrived using social websites like Facebook, twitter, Instagram pages, some major names include that of Boehringer Ingelheim, Novartis, Merck and Co., Amgen etc. (Delerue, 2015).

Boehringer Ingelheim, since its formation in 1885 has focused on one mantra “Value through innovation”. They have put in many efforts in researching, manufacturing and marketing pharmaceuticals. They have had a strong backing up the corporate chain and have been labeled as leaders in the use of social sites to engage a large number of interested people and keep them updated about their products, campaigns and activities (Morris, 2003). They introduced the idea of using relevant has tags on twitter such as #ChatAFib and #GOPDchat to help different users that are miles apart to interact on a single platform about interested topics. In a survey conducted by the Twitter itself, this was proclaimed to be a good and cashing business practice. Besides the use of these mainstream social networks, Boehringer is currently running 27 boards on pint rest and more than 700 followers on Vine. With their broad overall social efforts, Boehringer Ingelheim has engaged audience on at least 8/10 major social networks. They focus on the tactics of using different events and relevant has tags to attract users, regulate their communication sector to engage key stakeholders and set up a panel of creative heads to come up with innovative ideas that may see appealing to population. For example, by being the first biotechnology company to use has tags on twitter they have proven that unexpected ideas often give good results (Aslam, 2016).

The next in line is the biotechnology/ life sciences company based in Switzerland, Novartis. They expertise in innovating ideas to meet health challenges especially in the field of pharmaceuticals, health challenges and generics (Abbot, 2011). Novartis has formed in emerging market in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This company social experts have been most active

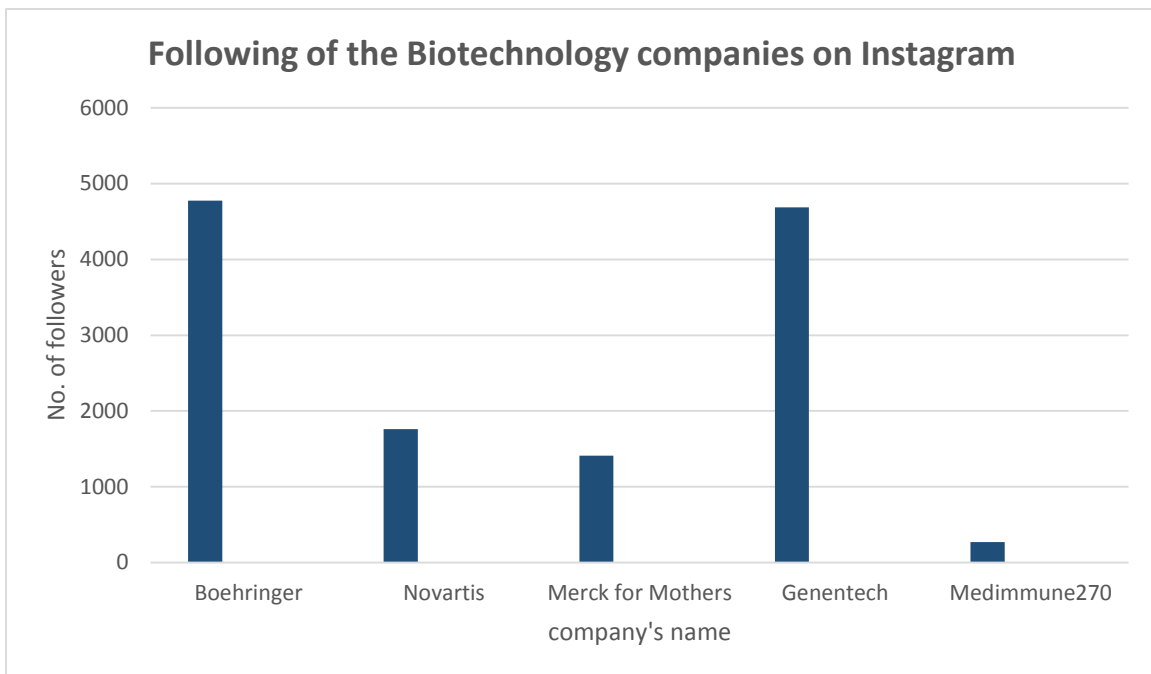
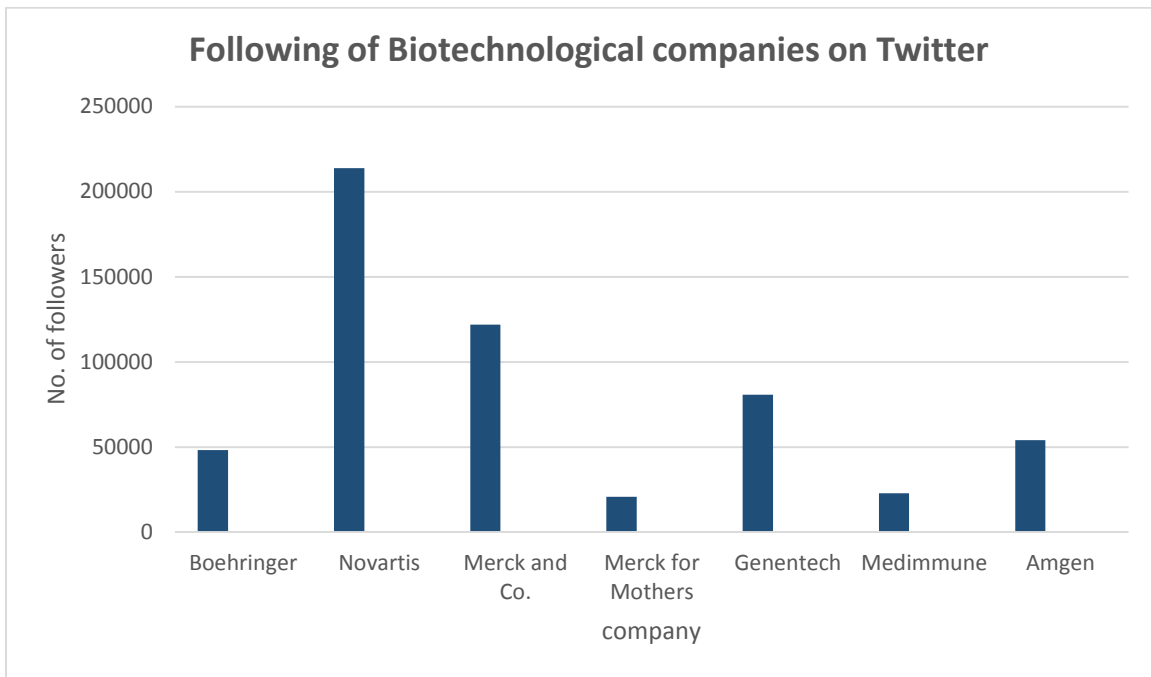
on Facebook and Twitter but in addition to these, they have also run a successful YouTube channel where they include videos sharing scientists views, customers experiences, and the executives of the company giving their insight on financial results, future prospects etc. On one of the most successful stream on Youtube, they included stories from different patients talking about 40 rare diseases that Novartis has been working on (Aslam, 2016).

Merck and Co. has worked to improve health and well-being around the world. For this purpose, they have introduced many innovative medicines, vaccines, different biological therapies and biotechnologically developed different animal health products. One of the best features of Merck and Co. is that they are connected and operate with highest standard of integrity to ensure that with every successive step they expand their excess and awareness of the product. This high level of collaboration can be clearly observed on their social media network (Kahn, 2005). The company joined Facebook and Twitter in 2011 and since then they have used the social platform to reshape and define their image. One of the mishap in development and marketing of the company through social sites have been that their community on these networks have somewhat remained constant and small. One reason maybe that so far they have only used safe tones of advertisements and marketing with no major publicity stunts. However, a contrasting study shows that sub-brand launched by Merck and Co. with emphasis on the health issues for women “Merck for Mothers” have gained much more followers on Twitter than the actual main pages (Rabkin, 2013). This shows that even if the major branch is lacking behind in engaging population, some forms of more interactive and interesting topics can help catch audience (Aslam, 2016).

Amgen has won its position as one of the leading Biotechnology Company globally. It aims at discovering ideas into medicines for patients that are facing serious illnesses related to kidney, bone diseases, different forms of cancer etc. The company uses subtlest biological mechanisms in search of cures and treatments to improve the life of patients. So far, it has offered services in 75 countries and has a rapidly developing social network across them. Amgen is seemingly doing an excellent job on twitter involving a large number of people, campaigns and organizations. However, so far their profile has lacked the use of info graphics and maybe due to this reason they lack behind other companies like Boehringer Ingelheim in winning audience on social sites. Amgen is using a different approach to utilizing social sites that is, instead of



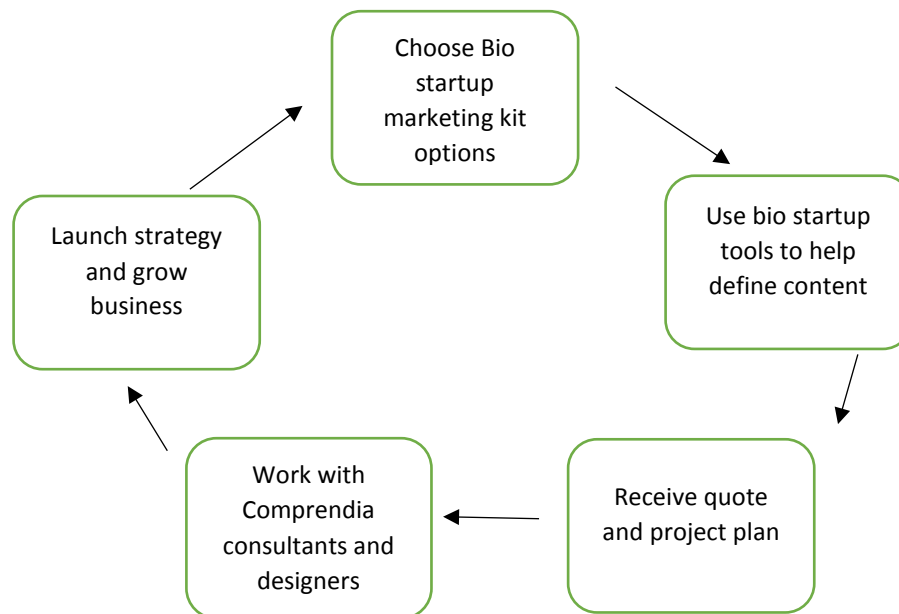
presenting themselves as competitors to other brands they focus their tweets on thanking companies they benefit from and organizations that they seek support from (Aslam, 2016).



**Fig 2: Extracted from 4 BioTech Companies That Are Doing Social Media Right and 1 that is isn't, Salman Aslam (2016) (<https://www.omnicoreagency.com/4-biotech-companies-that-are-doing-social-media-right/>).**

## Use of Marketing Kits

Enough biotechnology experience to start a company and rock solid business plan still needs a splash company launch to make your plan successful. This again emphasizes on the importance of a good marketing plan beforehand. You need to define the framework for marketing strategy and tactics and not just go ahead to advertise your products on social platforms or through other resources expecting a success (Bailey, 2014). Before launch, you need to have knowledge about what your clients wants, what is the target market of the product and what are the features that you need to emphasize on to make your product more attractive. Marketing kits offer customized material and options to help the company reach target audience and expand the business horizons (Davila, 2005). One such example of such biotechnology- related marketing kit that is based on the experience of developing business is that of Comprendia Biostart-up Kit. Their platform offers the ease of refining what a company delivers to the audience. They do so by looking into the business by asking relevant questions such as who are the target customers. What is the scope of competition? Of what use the product would be? What services does it offer? etc. They use this information to help design a logo, produce a style guide, suggest tactics to launch the product, give out strategic marketing plans, design brochures, cards, promotional items and much more (Gronroos, 2006).



**Fig 3: Adapted from BiostartUp Marketing Kits**  
(<http://comprendia.com/about/capabilities/biostartup/>)

## Use of Marketing Agencies

When a biotechnology company makes use of a marketing agency, they would like to go for the one that can precisely showcase the scientific advantages or talents the company offers, their features, technologies and aspects that puts them above other companies in the market (Costa, 2004). Clarity Quest, SurgeStream, FourDots, Big Leap are the names of some marketing agencies that have experience of working with different biotechnology businesses and sites (Baum, 2004).

In these mentioned names, Clarity Quest (<https://www.clarityqst.com/>) has stood out to be a marketing option chosen by any companies including Astarte Biologics, Cure, Intersect, Kurve Technology which are companies focused on developing medical devices and pharmaceuticals with the help of biotechnology (Paladeue, 2003). Clarity Quest was founded in 2001 and since then it has given out solid strategic marketing plans to different business personals and companies, aided in online marketing, and worked out successful public relation tactics for different companies. Ravi Krishnan, the founder of Mach7 technologies values the services of Clarity Questing marketing agency in words “Hiring Clarity Quest to revitalize our marketing strategy and then execute the programs was one of the best decisions our company ever made. Every dime we spend with them is worth it. Highly recommended” (<https://www.clarityqst.com/>).

## Conclusion

Every biotechnology product needs appropriate scheme of launching to reach the public/ buyers/ consumers, which should be well thought, timed and planned for best results. Companies that have kept the ABCs of marketing in mind and made use of the right tools such as social media platforms, marketing kits and agencies that help organise a scheme for product launch have flourished in their business. However, it should always be kept in mind that the expenses required for product/ brand advertisement through these means should not exceed company’s own expected profit.

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## Conflict of interest

There is no clash of material in our work with anyone. So possibility of conflict of interest is ruled out.

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