



The Two Most Valuable Tools in the Pharma Sales and Marketing Kit

A User's Guide to Segmentation & High Value Targeting

Distinct Frameworks Guiding Different Commercial Actions

As pharma companies become increasingly insight-led and analytics-enabled, the industry has seen exponential growth in the number of available HCP signals (claims, EHR, affiliations, digital engagement, field interactions, and research insights). To translate these signals into action, sales and marketing teams typically use two frameworks: **HCP segmentation** and **High Value targeting (HVT)**. While frequently discussed together, they are designed to answer different questions; are built using different inputs; and are operationalized in different ways. Understanding the distinction ensures that the right analytic approach is applied in the right decision context, and the downstream execution is fit-to-purpose.

Segmentation

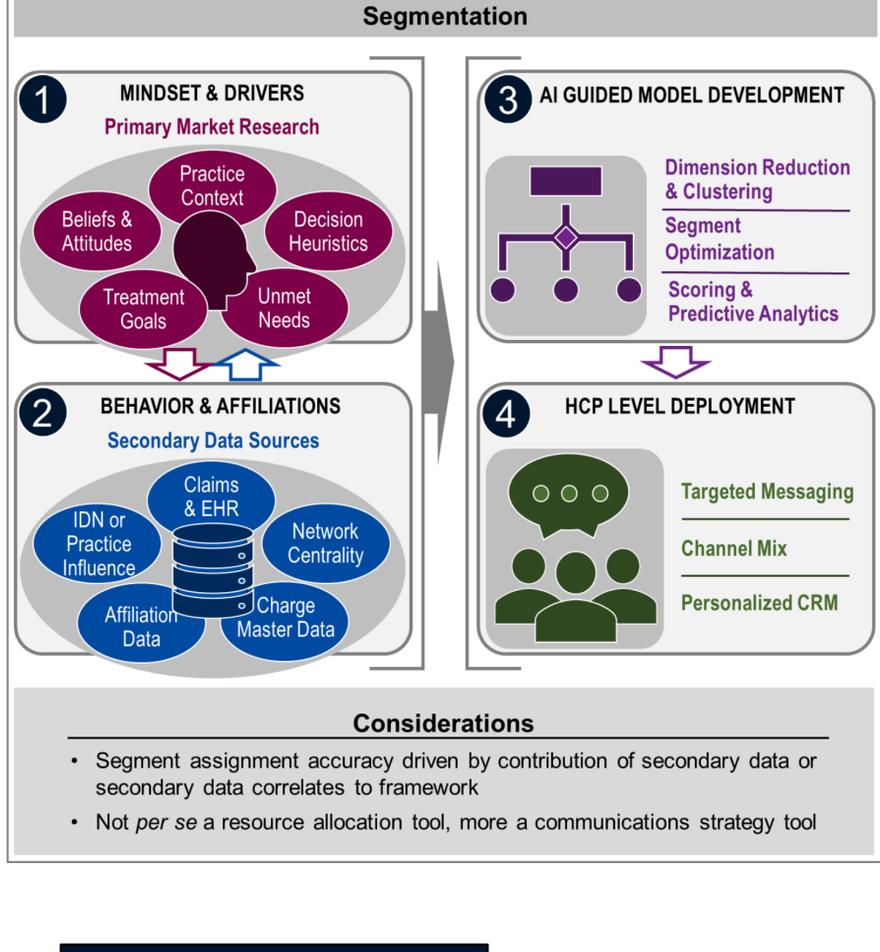
The Premise

HCP segmentation is a strategic framework that groups a broad, heterogeneous HCP universe into a limited number of meaningfully distinct segments based on shared behaviors, like treatment preferences, and behavioral *drivers* – for instance, beliefs and attitudes, decision heuristics, treatment goals, unmet needs, and practice context. The goal is to find actionable archetypes with implications for product positioning, message strategy, media outreach, and customer experience design.

The Process

Segmentation is always built using primary market research insights that shape or inform the structure. A common approach anchors the framework in secondary data but uses attitudinal inputs to guide or refine the statistical cuts, thus maximizing the psychographic coherence and relevance of the segments. Because attitudinal or psychographic data are often relevant components, scaling segmentation *beyond the research sample* to the customer universe requires building a segment assignment tool using scoring principles and predictive models that link segment membership to observable secondary data variables.

By consequence, the closer the link between primary and secondary data characteristics, the more accurate the scoring process and the more effective the deployment. Pharma marketing is a mass customization model, heavily reliant on targeted CRM and nuanced messaging *at the provider level* for successful implementation. Unfortunately, the relationship between primary and secondary data variables is sometimes disappointingly tenuous, making execution more challenging. This problem has given segmentation a dubious reputation in some quarters.



High Value Targeting

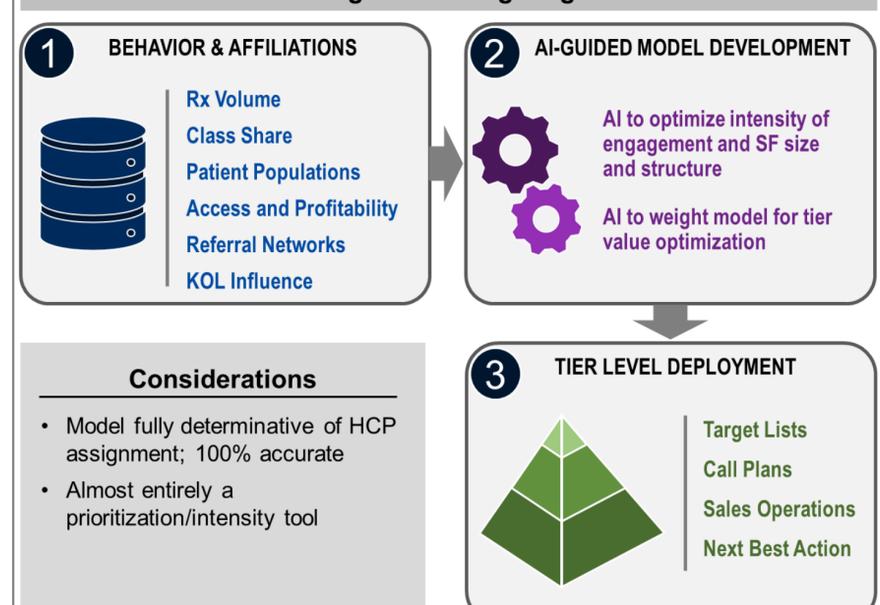
The Premise

HVT is used to identify the specific providers who represent the greatest near- to mid-term opportunity for a brand or portfolio. Thus, while it also looks to create customer groupings, those groups are developed based on prescribing behaviors and characteristics that appear to justify different levels of marketing attention. Unlike segmentation, which informs *how* to engage (what to say and how to deliver the message), HVT informs *whom* to engage and *how intensively*. The resulting framework, expressed as priority tiers, drives field deployment, call plans, MSL engagement, and next-best-action rules. Tier-1 targets may span multiple segments. It is primarily a resource allocation tool, not a messaging tool.

The Process

HVT was once a process of “deciling” based heavily on propensity to write (TRxs) and prescribing levels in a target class. The approaches and building blocks of HVT frameworks have become more complex with the availability of new data inputs and AI tools to integrate them into a more powerful predictive model that assigns appropriate weight to potentially relevant variables, including attributes not readily amenable to deciling.

Because HVT frameworks are built from secondary data, every customer can be assigned to a tier with a high degree of accuracy based on their own data profile. The challenge, however, is to develop an HVT algorithm that predicts not only the behaviors of identified tiers but also their *net leverage*, optimizing the sales volume that can be achieved through multiple forms of leverage. Newer AI-driven techniques will assist in that process.



Optimizing the Frameworks through Strategic Integration

Segmentation and HVT are most effective when designed as complementary layers of the same go-to-market system. Segmentation provides the engagement strategy; HVT directs executional focus and intensity. Overlaying segmentation onto an HVT framework ensures that high value targets receive messages and experiences that are relevant to their mindset and practice reality, while also ensuring that non-top-tier HCPs are still addressed appropriately through scalable channels. Successful commercial strategies do not choose between segmentation and HVT; they integrate both in an integrated operating model.

About The Author



Vaibhav Varkhedkar, MS, MBA
 VP, NAXION
 215.496.6824
varkhedkar@naxionthinking.com

As the VP spearheading NAXION's integrated data science service portfolio, Vaibhav brings an exceptionally diverse set of skills and perspectives to strategic engagements that support drug commercialization, lifecycle management, and biotech commercial analytics. His 30 years of experience in the pharma and biotech industry – including nearly a decade in R&D followed by commercial analytics and strategy consulting – have spanned senior roles at IQVIA, Symphony, and Atria. His work has been pivotal in guiding demand forecasting, primary research, and the development of commercial strategies for oncology and rare diseases. Certified in data science by MIT, he applies advanced AI methodologies to extract meaningful insights from complex data, driving strategic impact for clients.

About NAXION

NAXION is a nimble, broadly resourced boutique that relies on advanced research methods, data integration, and sector-focused experience to guide strategic business decisions that shape the destiny of brands. Our century-long history of innovation has helped to propel the insights discipline and continues to inspire contributions to the development and effective application of AI to research and data science techniques. For information on what's new at NAXION and how we might help you with your marketing challenges, please visit <https://www.naxionthinking.com/>.