

Chapter 59

Direct-to-Consumer Prescription Medication Advertisements and Use of Different Types of Media

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ABSTRACT

The authors are not aware of any research for Internet social media direct-to-consumer prescription medication advertisements (DTCA) related to consumer behavior. The authors study (n=635) the association of traditional and digital media DTCA including Internet social media with the intentions to seek and behavior of obtaining additional information about a prescription medication after seeing a DTCA. This research found that advertisements seen on traditional/cable television were associated with decreased behavior. Advertisements seen on Internet television were associated with increased behavior. Seeking additional information of reading print content on the Internet was associated with increased behavior. No social media advertisements were associated with either intentions or behavior. Companies designing Internet and social media advertising platforms, pharmaceutical brand managers, and pharmaceutical marketers should consider these findings when tailoring their DTCA campaigns.

INTRODUCTION

Direct to consumer prescription medication advertisements (DTCA) are legal and commonly advertised in the United States and New Zealand while other countries have different approaches about DTCA (Poser, 2010). In 2013, Nielsen estimated that 3.8 billion US dollars were spent on DTCA. Television and

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magazine DTCA were each over a billion dollars. Newspapers, Internet, radio, and outdoor had DTCA in the million-dollar ranges (Mack, 2014). DTCA is not spread evenly among all prescription medications. DTCA exposure from broadcast, print, and online is more likely to be associated with seeking online information by clicking on a promotional website (online pharmacies [e.g., drugstore.com], brand websites [e.g., lipitor.com], and producer websites [e.g., pfizer.com]) than by clicking on an informational website (dot-gov [e.g., fda.gov], dot-edu (e.g. medicine.yale.edu), general health information websites [e.g., webmd.com]) (Chesnes & Jin, 2019).

DTCA have a social media presence. The 10 largest pharmaceutical companies all had a dedicated social media website and utilized corporate Facebook pages and Twitter feeds for DTCA (Liang & Mackey, 2011). Social media DTCA typically consist of help-seeking advertisements using either text, video, or combined text and video (Tyrawski & DeAndrea, 2015).

The presence of a critical mass of social acquaintances is positively associated with user engagement on social media (Gangi & Wasko, 2016). Social media networks can enhance the value of interactions to users by incorporating different features (e.g., chat capability, content editing, peer endorsements) into their social media platform (Dou, Niculescu, & Wu, 2013). The social media network feature of richness of processing a wide range of information is positively associated with continuing to share information on social media (Shang, Wu, & Li, 2017). Social media usage is positively associated with downloading healthcare apps (Mitra & Padman, 2014). It is likely that social media DTCA would influence consumer intention and consumer behavior for obtaining information about a prescription medication.

Disintermediation refers to a realignment of partners in a supply chain that increases value for the consumer (Linton, 2018). In e-commerce, this often occurs by elimination of one or more companies from the distribution channel resulting in a more direct path to the consumer (Gallaughier, 2002). Social media DTCA is a hybrid form of disintermediation as it eliminates the physician from initially sharing information about a prescription medication with the consumer patient. However, in order for a patient to obtain a medication, the patient must discuss the prescription medication and obtain a prescription from the physician. There is research on the impact of the Internet and DTCA (Fogel & Novick, 2009; Fogel & Teichman, 2014; Liu, Doucette, Farris, & Nayakankuppam, 2005). We are not aware of any research on the impact of the specific Internet subcategory of social media and DTCA. This paper contributes to the literature by analyzing DTCA on social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The paper objective is to determine variables associated with seeking and obtaining additional information about a prescription medication after exposure to DTCA. This paper focuses on two research questions of, 1) What variables are associated with intentions to seek additional information about a prescription medication after exposure to DTCA, and 2) What variables are associated with behavior of obtaining additional information about a prescription medication after exposure to DTCA? Companies and information systems professionals can potentially benefit by identifying successful DTCA approaches and correcting or eliminating unsuccessful DTCA approaches. Brand managers and marketers can potentially benefit from using this information to tailor their DTCA campaigns and to direct their DTCA budget.

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