

Preface

According to the IMS Institute for Health, the global pharmaceutical market is currently worth almost USD 1 trillion a year – a figure that is expected to increase to USD 1.2 trillion by 2017. North America is responsible for the largest portion, generating more than 40 % of these revenues. The world's ten largest drug companies control over one third of this market, six of which are based in the United States, while the other four are located in Europe. The pharmaceutical industry is, hence, of immense importance as a global sector. Currently, pharmaceutical companies spend one third of their total sales revenues on marketing their drugs; by comparison, they spend only half of that sum on research and development. With regard to their promotional efforts, academic research has so far focused on direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising, which is solely permitted in the U.S. and New Zealand. Significantly less research has been conducted in the area of non-prescription drug advertising – also known as over-the-counter (OTC) advertising. While these pharmaceutical ads are clearly persuasive in nature, such advertisements can also provide useful information that empowers consumers to arrive at qualified decisions regarding their health and well-being. Apart from a very small number of investigations, neither consumer evaluations of OTC drug ads, nor the topic of consumer empowerment gained from such messages, have been explored. The primary goal of the investigation at hand is to shed light on the contribution of pharmaceutical promotions to individual self-empowerment and to understand whether manifestations of cultural dimensions affect the evaluation of such commercial messages. This study examines how standardized promotional messages for a fictitious OTC pain medication are perceived by consumers in four countries (Austria, Germany, the U.S. and Brazil), and the degree to which advertisements incorporating varying appeal types (informative, emotional, mixed and corporate social responsibility) contribute to consumers' sense of self-empowerment. The relations amongst the different variables are conceptualized as a model, which will be put to the test. Study limitations are addressed and implications for further research are provided. Numerous people have been part of this journey and I would take the opportunity to express my gratitude to them. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor

Sandra Diehl, who did not only encourage me to pursue a PhD in the first place, but also provided me with advice, guidance and constructive criticism along the way. Already during my Master's degree, Sandra kindled my interest in pharmaceutical advertising and her mentoring encouraged me to take my research to the next level. To her, I owe being introduced to Barbara Mueller, who I would like to mention at this point as well: I am grateful to her for supporting my research (especially in the United States) and her kind, encouraging words. I would also like to mention Ralf Terlutter at this point, who patiently answered my statistical questions.

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I highly appreciate the confidence and trust everyone has put in me. Your continuous reassurance, love, and endless support were what made me strive for more and helped me get to the place I wanted to be. Now the journey is over, I have conquered the mountain called PhD. It is time to start looking again, to find the next peak to climb. I cannot wait for whatever is out there.

Isabell Koinig

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Koinig, I.

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