Targeting Women

Direct to Consumer Advertising in Women’s Magazines

Hilary Whitsett
Direct to Consumer Advertising (DTCA)

- Prescription drugs
- Aimed at consumers
- Only allowed in the United States and New Zealand
- Loose FDA regulation
- Billions of dollars spent on ads
How does DTCA directed toward women of different age groups vary in content and frequency?
This study shows an increase in ad frequency and DTCA variety as the average age of readership increases.

Age is also related to both the text and image content of the ads.
Literature Review

- Benefits of DTCA
- Detriments of DTCA
- Women
- Age
Benefits of DTCA

- Increase awareness
- Widespread communication
- De-stigmatization
- Empowers consumer
- Increase communication with doctor

(Sokol et al. 2010, Mastin et al. 2007, Sufrin and Ross 2008)
Literature Review

- **Detriments of DTCA**
  - Only advertise expensive drugs
  - Limited, misleading information
  - Promote lifestyle, not facts
  - Health focus on drugs
  - Over prescribing
  - Strain on doctor-patient relationship
  - Creation of new customers

Women

- Focus on women
- Use of stereotypes
- Disease constructed around gender
- Guilt and cultural expectations
- Medicalization of normal experiences

Age

- Perception of information
- Older groups use more medical care
  - Vulnerability to adverse effects
- Moms and wives targeted
- Depression less stigmatized in younger women

Social Construction Theory

- Process of constructing of reality
- Social context
- Social interaction
- No inherent meaning
- Construction and reconstruction
- Truth relative to each person
Methodology

- Content analysis
- Four women’s lifestyle magazines chosen
  - Represent different age groups
- 21 issues analyzed for each magazine
  - 7 from 2010, 2011, 2012
- Coded for type of drug, appeals, image content
  - Bell et al. 2000, coding for appeals
Methodology

- **Appeals**
  - **Effectiveness**
    - Effective, reliable, powerful, prevents
  - **Social-Psychological Enhancements**
    - Normal, active, happiness, confidence
  - **Ease of Use**
    - Easy, fast, gentle, simple to use
  - **Safety**
    - Safe, non-addictive, works naturally, no drowsiness
Methodology

- **Image content**
  - People present in ad
    - Women, men, children
  - Race and age
  - Activity of the women
  - Emotional state

- **Key Words**
  - Proven, safety, ask your doctor, diet, exercise
Findings

- Drug and ad frequency
  - Ad frequency increases with age
  - Variety of drugs advertised increases with age
  - Antidepressants most frequently advertised
### Table 1: Frequency of Conditions Represented in DTCA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Seventeen</th>
<th>Cosmo</th>
<th>O Magazine</th>
<th>Good Housekeeping</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
<td>15 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty Concerns</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12 (16%)</td>
<td>7 (5%)</td>
<td>19 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osteoporosis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12 (8%)</td>
<td>12 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Cholesterol</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
<td>13 (9%)</td>
<td>17 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibromyalgia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9 (12%)</td>
<td>11 (7%)</td>
<td>20 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>15 (19%)</td>
<td>24 (16%)</td>
<td>44 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overactive Bladder</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (8%)</td>
<td>7 (5%)</td>
<td>13 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>6 (4%)</td>
<td>8 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraception</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10 (50%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acne</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheumatoid Arthritis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>13 (9%)</td>
<td>15 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14 (9%)</td>
<td>14 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal Dryness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 (10%)</td>
<td>6 (4%)</td>
<td>14 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (2%)</td>
<td>4 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atrial Fibrillation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
<td>5 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14 (18%)</td>
<td>24 (16%)</td>
<td>38 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
<td>77 (100%)</td>
<td>151 (100%)</td>
<td>258 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

- Appeals
  - Effectiveness appeals more frequent in higher age groups
  - Social-Psychological appeals more frequent in lower age groups
Table 2. Average Ad Frequency and Average Appeal Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Average # of Ads per Issue</th>
<th>Avg. Effectiveness Appeals per Ad</th>
<th>Avg. Socio-Psychological Enhancement Appeals per Ad</th>
<th>Proportion of Effectiveness to Socio-Psychological Enhancement Appeals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Housekeeping</td>
<td>7.190</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>6.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oprah Magazine</td>
<td>3.667</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>0.211</td>
<td>7.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmo</td>
<td>0.952</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventeen</td>
<td>0.476</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

- Image Content
  - Presence of men highest in oldest age group
  - Presence of children highest in oldest age group
Table 3: People Present in the Advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Seventeen</th>
<th>Cosmo</th>
<th>O Magazine</th>
<th>Good Housekeeping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women Present</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
<td>56 (73%)</td>
<td>105 (68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men Present</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>26 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Present</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>17 (11%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis

- Ad Frequencies
  - Affect on construction of health
    - Relevant diseases
    - Underrepresentation of prevalent diseases
  - Reinforces gender roles
Analysis

- Appeal Frequencies
  - Younger groups
    - Emphasis on social enhancements
  - Older groups
    - Emphasis on effectiveness
Analysis

- Image content
  - Reinforces gender roles
    - Medication for children
  - Most ads show no activity
Conclusion

- Relationship between age and frequency/content of DTCA
- Social implications
  - DTCA could skew health construction
  - Reinforce gender roles
Questions?