



The Long Road Ahead For DTC Advertising

Stagnant Levels Of Doctor Contact Rates Continue And May Take A Turn For The Worse Following Vioxx Withdrawal, Says The Latest Update From Ipsos PharmTrends®

October 26, 2004, New York, NY— The level of consumer response to direct-to-consumer advertising has been steadily declining since 2002 and is expected to continue eroding in the wake of the abrupt recall of blockbuster drug Vioxx, according to new findings from Ipsos PharmTrends®, a syndicated tracking study of consumer behavior by Ipsos, the global survey-based marketing research firm.

In its most recent tracking survey, findings from Ipsos PharmTrends continue to show a softening proportion of consumers who took action following exposure to a prescription drug ad. Two in 10 consumers (19%) said that direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising prompted them to call or visit their doctor to discuss the prescription drug seen advertised. This proprietary tool for evaluating the success of drug advertising has shown a gradual decline since hitting a peak, in the February 2002 survey, when 25% of consumers said they contacted their doctors to discuss a drug they had seen advertised.

"The situation with Vioxx may cause consumers to be more skeptical about the safety of prescription drugs particularly those seen ads," said Fariba Zamaniyan, Vice President of Ipsos Health and spokesperson for PharmTrends. "As a result, we anticipate declining levels of call to action following ad exposure to continue because of this perception. Pharmaceutical manufacturers should respond quickly and address safety concerns and information demands of the general public in order to sustain consumer confidence in prescription drug safety as well as advertising their benefits."

Over the past seven years, DTC advertising for prescription drug promotion has been embraced as an accepted source for information among consumers when it comes to disease education and awareness of potential treatment options or solutions for their healthcare. Today, nearly 6 out of 10 Americans state that they recall seeing an advertisement for a prescription drug in the past 12 months. Consistent with the steady growth of advertising expenditures, consumer recall of prescription drug ads has increased from 50% in the August 2002 survey to 58% in the August 2004 update.

Although recall remains high, pharmaceutical marketers continue to be faced with the challenge of increasing action, now further complicated following drug recalls and rising safety concerns. One in 10 consumers report they asked their doctor for the prescription drug seen advertised.

"It's simply getting tougher to persuade more consumers to ask for your branded prescription drug following ad exposure," Zamaniyan said. "Advertising for prescription drugs has reached maturity. What was new or novel seven years ago has worn off as prescription drug ads seen on TV, in print or the Internet have become more mainstream. The marketplace has become much more crowded with more than 60 brands being advertised for treatment across a spectrum of ailments. Therefore, it is much more difficult to get noticed and to be unique or relevant within a \$3 billion market."

Prescription drug advertising is a credible source of information with nearly 1 out of 4 consumers agreeing that prescription drug advertising educates them about alternative therapies for their conditions.

"Now more than ever before, the emphasis should be on the improvement of copy quality for prescription drug ads. We've reached maturity and to achieve effective advertising companies need to rely on creative copy to break through the clutter on the airwaves yet, clearly communicate the safety and risks associated with the drug's use. Consumer confidence and persuasion depends on it particularly when a tangible product available on a store shelf is not available. It's the message that will carry the day and, ultimately, product sales, if executed effectively. "

"Companies need to win-back consumer confidence in light of the Vioxx recall by communicating clearly the relevance, differentiation and benefits of each branded drug advertised," said Zamaniyan.



Sufferers Continue to Respond to Ads at a Higher Rate

The primary audience for prescription drug manufacturers—sufferers of the conditions for which the drugs are intended—respond to DTC advertising at a greater rate than the average consumer. This is particularly the case for sufferers of symptomatic conditions where identifiable symptoms are experienced.

“Historically, we’ve seen that consumers who experience symptoms detailed in the drug ads they see are more likely to seek more information so that they can treat or prevent their tangible discomfort or concerns,” said Zamaniyan.

Whereas the average response rate is 19%, one third (33%) of chronic pain sufferers reported that they called or visited their doctor to discuss a prescription drug seen advertised. Additional conditions where call to action levels were higher than average include anxiety (29%), asthma (27%), depression (28%), arthritis (24%), recurrent constipation (29%), recurrent diarrhea (29%), eczema/dermatitis (27%), insomnia (32%), irritable bowel syndrome (29%), erectile dysfunction (26%), hormone replacement therapy (26%), migraine headaches (28%), and overactive bladder (27%). Asymptomatic conditions, such as elevated cholesterol, realize call to action levels that are similar to the average (19%).

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Ipsos PharmTrends Methodology

Ipsos PharmTrends® syndicated tracking service captures both prescription fulfillment and over-the-counter purchase data through a longitudinal and continuous consumer panel of 16,000 households that is representative of the U.S. census composition. Each month, panelists report their prescription and over-the-counter purchases for the treatment of a full spectrum of conditions (general and specific). The monthly tracking began in 1997.

To learn more about Ipsos PharmTrends® please visit our [Homepage](#).

InstaVue Survey Methodology

During the month of August 2004, Ipsos PharmTrends® interviewed a representative sample of over 25,000 adults 18+ years of age nationwide using InstaVue, an omnibus mail survey. The study was conducted and paid for by Ipsos PharmTrends.

About Ipsos

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Ipsos Health provides custom and syndicated research to prescription and non-prescription drug manufacturers as well as biotech and healthcare providers.

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