



Different Approaches to Television Advertising in DTC

A closer look at broadcast DTC ads reveals that marketers are taking very different approaches to presenting details on risks and benefits, as well as how much time they spend directing consumers to alternate sources where they can find more information.

By Scott Ehrlich

DTC Perspectives recently completed an analysis of the broadcast advertising of the 40 top-spending brands in DTC. In this study, we analyzed the approach to delivering the benefits and side effects, the amount of time dedicated to each of these, and the amount of time devoted to promoting the telephone number and Web site address. Our analysis yielded a wide variety of results detailing differing approaches for different drug types.

It's important to note at the start that this analysis of television ads was done by DTC Perspectives between May and late June (with only the Viagra ad being reviewed in July). Some of the percentages in tables will not add up to 100 percent due to times in commercials when neither benefits nor risks are being discussed.

Following is a summary of our findings.

In the bladder control category, we reviewed and analyzed 60-second spots from three different drugs: Detrol LA, Enbrel, and Vesicare. Each drug had the same method of providing contact information, devoting equal time to the contact phone number and the Web site. Each also used an announcer to dispense risk information. The bladder control spots, as a whole, spent among the highest percentage of their commercial time disseminating positive messages, averaging 26.6 seconds per spot.

However, spots differed vastly in the balance between positive and negative messages. The balance between positive and negatives in the commercial varied widely. Vesicare featured an almost even split, with 22 seconds of positive messages against 21 seconds of risk information. This contrasted widely with Detrol LA and Enbrel; while both featured 17 seconds of risk information, Enbrel contained 30 seconds of positive information in their spot while Detrol LA had even more, with a whopping 34 seconds. Detrol LA also used a traditional commercial featuring a visual demo and consumer testimonial. The other two drugs both used the less traditional execution techniques of animation and featured no visual demos.

Five products in the cholesterol category

Cholesterol drugs were the largest category sampled, featuring five vastly different 60-second spots from Caduet, Crestor, Lipitor, Vytorin and Zetia. The balance on these ads differed widely, with the time of positive messages ranging from just 11 seconds for Crestor to 31 seconds for Lipitor. Crestor, the only spot in this category that featured more time on product negatives than positives, also had the least time spent on negative messages, presenting them for just 17 seconds. Conversely, Lipitor not only spent the most time on positive messages, but also the most time on

Television spots for Caduet, Crestor and Lipitor were among the few that used an on-screen personality to deliver the risk information.

negatives in this category, with 20 seconds. The other three drugs all fell into that wide range of positive messages and narrow range of negatives.

The preferred method of contact information also differed widely. While Caduet, Lipitor and Zetia all displayed the telephone number and Web address for an equal amount of time, Crestor and Vytorin used very diverse methods. Crestor spent a lengthy 13 seconds displaying its Web address but a whopping 29 seconds showing its telephone number, the most of any product ad reviewed in this research. Vytorin, conversely, showed its phone number for just 5 seconds, while its Web site address was displayed for twice as long, 10 seconds.

Caduet, Crestor and Lipitor were among the few spots that had their on-screen personality read the risk information, with each using consumer testimonials to promote their products. Zetia also used this technique, although it was the only cholesterol drug to combine it with a visual demo. Vytorin's spot was one of the few to use multiple vignettes to discuss its product. Lipitor was one of the few spots to use a "celebrity" to advertise the product, the inventor of the artificial heart, Dr. Robert Jarvik.

The three 60-second erectile dysfunction spots, Cialis, Levitra and Viagra, averaged the most risk information among any category, with an average of 24.3 seconds per spot. Viagra had the least negative time among the ED spots, with 20 seconds, while Cialis had the most, 25 seconds. Viagra also had the least time on positive spots, not just in this category but on any sampled spot, with just 7 seconds. This was far less than Cialis's 26 seconds and Levitra's 31 seconds of positive information.

Cialis and Viagra each had an equal amount of time spent displaying their Web address and telephone number, although at 2 and 5 seconds, respectively, neither was shown for very long. Levitra tried a different approach, showing its Web address for 14 seconds and telephone number for 19 seconds. While every ED spot used an announcer to discuss risk information, the commercial execution was different among all three. Cialis used the traditional consumer testimonial, Levitra used a variety of vignettes, and Viagra, in one of the most unique commercials, used a variety of actors singing about the product ("Viva Viagra").

Actors in DTC ads

Three insomnia drugs were analyzed, with Ambien CR and Lunesta having standard 60-second spots while Rozerem had a 75-second spot, the longest sampled. Each spot featured an almost completely fair balance between positive and negative product traits.

The display of contact information varied greatly. Ambien CR had equal time devoted to its telephone number and Web address while Lunesta and Rozerem took opposite approaches from each other. Lunesta featured 12 seconds displaying its Web site and just 3 on its telephone number, while Rozerem spent 15 seconds displaying its Web address and 20 on its phone number. While each spot used an announcer to read risk information, Ambien CR and Rozerem each used actors to market their product, while Lunesta used several vignettes. Ambien CR was the only one of these products to use a visual display while Rozerem was the only one to use a "celebrity," featuring "Abraham Lincoln" in its campaign.

A few other categories were studied. Each of these categories featured two different drugs: allergies, asthma, eye allergies, osteoporosis, prostate cancer and restless leg syndrome. Eye allergies, composed of Pataday and Restasis, featured the highest percentage of positive messages. Each of these spots was 30 seconds and featured positive information for at least one-half the commercial spot. The Restless Leg Syndrome category, composed of Mirapex and Requip, featured the lowest percentage of positive messages. Mirapex featured just 18 seconds of positive messages in its 60-second spot, while Requip featured just 16 seconds.

On the negative side, the allergy category, composed of Nasonex and Zyrtec, featured the lowest percentage of time devoted to risk information among these categories. Nasonex spent just 5 seconds of its 30-second spot on risk information while Zyrtec also featured 5 seconds of risk information but in a 45-second spot.

Category	Positives	Negatives	Website	Phone #
Allergies	41.6%	13.9%	14.4%	14.4%
Asthma	48.3%	29.2%	8.3%	5.0%
Bladder Control	44.3%	26.5%	12.3%	11.7%
Cholesterol	40.7%	30.7%	19.7%	23.3%
Erectile Dysfunction	35.6%	40.6%	11.7%	14.4%
Eye Allergies	51.7%	31.7%	28.3%	33.3%
Insomnia	30.4%	29.9%	16.7%	13.9%
Osteoporosis	50.0%	36.7%	11.7%	10.0%
Prostate	31.9%	38.3%	15.8%	13.3%
Restless Leg Syndrome	28.3%	30.8%	17.5%	15.0%

The eye allergy category spent the largest percentage of its commercial time displaying contact information. This was driven nearly entirely by Restasis, which spent 14 seconds of its 30-second spot displaying both its telephone number and Web address. The asthma category, composed of Advair and Singulair, spent the least amount of time displaying contact information. Singulair spent only 3 seconds during its 30-second spot displaying both its telephone number and Web address. Advair, on the other hand, displayed its Web address for 4 seconds during a 45-second spot and did not display a telephone number at all, the only sampled ad to eschew a telephone number.

Requip was the only ad reviewed from these categories to use an actor rather than an announcer to read the risk information. Most of the ads from these categories used consumer testimonials to market their products. The exceptions to this were Mirapex, Pataday and Singulair, which used animation to market their products, and Fosamax, which used a series of vignettes. Advair, Avodart and Pataday were the only drugs among these categories to use a visual demo in their ads. Boniva was the only one to use a recognized celebrity, Sally Field, in the broadcast ad. ■

Brand	Category	Total	POS	NEG	Web	Phone	Risks	Execution	Visual Demo	Celeb
Actonel	Breast Cancer	60	19	17	3	3	announcer	actors	no	no
Advair	Asthma	60	22	21	4	0	announcer	consumer	yes	no
Ambien	Insomnia	60	25	23	6	6	announcer	actors	yes	no
Aricept	Alzheimer's	60	25	25	8	8	actor	consumer	no	no
Avodart	Prostate	60	17	18	7	4	announcer	actors	yes	no
Boniva	Osteoporosis	60	33	17	4	4	announcer	consumer	no	yes
Caduet	Cholesterol	60	22	18	15	15	actor	consumer	no	no
Cialis	Erectile Dysfunction	60	26	28	2	2	announcer	consumer	no	no
Crestor	Cholesterol	60	11	17	13	29	actor	consumer	no	no
Cymbalta	Depression	60	11	31	16	11	announcer	vignettes	no	no
Detrol	Bladder Control	60	34	17	6	6	announcer	consumer	yes	no
Enblex	Bladder Control	60	30	17	7	7	announcer	animated	no	no
Exubera	Diabetes	60	17	30	15	15	announcer	consumer	no	no
Flomax	Prostate	45	16	21	9	9	announcer	vignettes	no	no
Fosamax	Osteoporosis	60	27	27	10	8	announcer	vignettes	no	no
Gardasil	Cervical Cancer	60	20	24	5	5	actor	vignettes	no	no
Humira	Arthritis	60	7	25	11	23	actor	vignettes	no	no
Imitrex	Migraines	60	17	22	17	8	announcer	consumer	no	no
Levitra	Erectile Dysfunction	60	31	25	14	19	announcer	vignettes	no	no
Lipitor	Cholesterol	60	31	20	9	9	actor	consumer	no	yes
Lunesta	Insomnia	60	17	18	12	3	announcer	vignettes	no	no
Mirapex	Restless Leg Syndrome	60	18	16	17	14	announcer	animated	no	no
Nasonex	Allergies	30	13	5	4	4	announcer	consumer	no	no
Neulasta	Chemotherapy	60	41	17	22	22	announcer	vignettes	yes	no
Nexium	GERD	60	16	8	6	10	actor	consumer	yes	no
Pataday	Eye Allergies	30	16	7	3	6	announcer	animated	yes	no
Plavix	Stroke	75	37	16	8	11	announcer	consumer	yes	no
Requip	Restless Leg Syndrome	60	16	21	4	4	actor	consumer	no	no
Restasis	Eye Allergies	30	15	12	14	14	announcer	consumer	no	no
Rozerem	Insomnia	75	16	16	15	20	announcer	actors	no	yes
Singulair	Asthma	30	18	7	3	3	announcer	animated	no	no
Spiriva	Bronchitis	60	17	22	3	3	announcer	vignettes	no	no
Valtrex	Herpes	60	19	21	6	6	announcer	consumer	no	no
Vesicare	Bladder Control	60	22	21	16	16	announcer	animated	no	no
Viagra	Erectile Dysfunction	60	7	20	5	5	announcer	actors	no	no
Vytorin	Cholesterol	60	28	20	10	5	announcer	vignettes	no	no
Yax	PMDD	60	15	24	17	11	actor	consumer	no	no
Zetia	Cholesterol	60	30	17	12	12	announcer	consumer	yes	no
Zyrtec	Allergies	45	18	5	7	7	announcer	consumer	no	no

Total: total time of spot, in seconds
 POS: total time discussing positive aspects of product
 NEG: total time discussing negative aspects of product
 Web: total time spent displaying web address
 Phone: total time spent displaying phone number

Risks: who delivered the risk information in the spot
 Execution: what was the execution style of the spot
 Visual Demo: was there a visual demo of how the product worked in the spot
 Celeb: was a named celebrity featured in the spot