

Health Communication and Integrated Corporate Social Responsibility

Isabell Koinig, Sandra Diehl, and Barbara Mueller

Abstract Health communication has experienced a revival in the twenty-first century, which has been labeled the “health communication renaissance”. At the same time, public concern regarding social causes is on the rise. In response, pharmaceutical marketers have begun to publicly proclaim their support for social and environmental causes. Due to declining public trust in their products as well as their commercial messages for these products, together with increasing legal restrictions, pharmaceutical marketers are being forced to rethink their business and promotional strategies. Consumers’ roles have changed as well; today’s “new consumers” are more skeptical and demanding, renowned for rewarding corporations for their sustainable and future-oriented projects, while punishing those who fail to engage in them. This chapter examines whether corporate social responsibility (CSR) appeals—defined as socially and/or environmentally-oriented efforts promoted as part of corporations’ advertising messages—present a fruitful strategy for the health communication field in general, and for pharmaceutical manufacturers in particular. To this end, two studies are presented here, which investigate how integrated promotional CSR messages are utilized and perceived in a cross-cultural setting. Results indicate that (1) to date, social and green appeals do not constitute a dominant message appeal category in the pharmaceutical industry, and, (2) while CSR appeals in pharmaceutical ads resonated with consumers in the U.S. and Brazil, they were looked upon less favorably by German respondents. This suggests that pharmaceutical marketers intending to incorporate CSR appeals in their commercial messages should tailor such messages to the respective country. In conclusion, limitations are addressed and suggestions for further research are provided.

I. Koinig (✉)
Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Klagenfurt, Austria
e-mail: Isabelle.Koinig@aau.at

S. Diehl
Department of Media and Communication, Klagenfurt University, Klagenfurt, Austria
e-mail: Sandra.Diehl@aau.at

B. Mueller
San Diego State University, San Diego, CA, USA
e-mail: muelle1@mail.sdsu.edu

1 Introduction

With health communication activities having grown exponentially in the twenty-first century, this era has been termed a “health communication renaissance” for good reason (Bernhardt, 2004). While health is a topic of increasing public concern, so too is the public’s desire for firms not only to do well, but also to do good. As a result, throughout the world, companies have begun to address social issues in their promotional messages. For CSR initiatives to be regarded as credible and firms to be acknowledged as ‘good’ corporate citizens, such programs must be crafted with care, and modeled in accordance with the firm’s field of expertise (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2005). A new consumer segment—socially conscious consumers—has mandated public disclosure of CSR activities. The two investigations presented in this chapter explore the degree to which CSR appeals are integrated in promotional messages in selected pharmaceutical markets, as well as how consumers evaluate these messages.

The chapter will begin by defining the terms most central to this topic. Thereafter, the growing relevance of corporate social engagement will be discussed in general, and in particular, with regards to the pharmaceutical industry. After outlining both the state of the art and the role integrated communication plays in this context, two investigations will be presented. In conclusion, results will be discussed and the potential for future research will be outlined.

2 Conceptual Foundations

To guarantee that the terms used throughout the chapter are grasped as intended by the authors, they will be briefly defined beforehand.

2.1 Health

Health is often referred to as a fundamental human right (WHO, 2013) and is defined by the WHO (1946/2006) as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being”, implying the lack of disease (Boruchovitch & Mednick, 2002). Another definition emphasizes the fact that health lays the foundation for individual achievement and success (Seedhouse, 2001) and, thus, it can be perceived as the “state of optimum capacity of an individual for the effective performance of the roles and tasks for which s/he has been socialized” (Parsons, 1951). These two definitions differ significantly. The WHO’s version is quite positive and idealistic: it presupposes the complete absence of infirmity (WHO, 2006), and takes a very utopian, if not unattainable stance (Lucas & Lloyd, 2005). Moreover, it is very limited in that it fails to incorporate dimensions of culture and environmental

influences (Ewles & Simnett, 2003). For this reason, Parsons' definition will be relied upon in this chapter.

2.2 Health Communication

Health environments have altered considerably over the past decades and, as a result, researchers have been urged to broaden their (theoretical) horizons (Drum Beat, 2005). On a very basic level, health communication refers to the practice of communicating information on health topics to a widely dispersed mass audience (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). It is predominantly utilized for educational or commercial purposes and encompasses a variety of activities, e.g., public health campaigns, health education materials as well as doctor-patient interactions (Schiavo, 2007). Berry (2006: p. 2) regards health communication as a “key aspect of all relationships, whether these occur in family, educational, work or social settings”. Communication between individuals as well as between individuals and organizations is central to creating, gathering and sharing health information (Kreps, Bonaguro, & Query, 1998) on an individual (micro) or public (macro) level (Gough, 2006). Regardless of whether it is employed by (commercial) manufacturers or (non-commercial) public service providers, health communication messages have “come to be understood as public [and commercial] health action which is directed towards improving people’s control over all modifiable determinants of health” (Nutbeam, 2000: p. 261). Communication activities draw individuals’ attention to environmental and social influences that impact their health, and also address individuals’ behaviors and capacities (Green & Tones, 2010). By raising the public’s level of awareness of medical conditions, the mass media can help consumers to reduce uncertainty about health issues, enable them to gather useful information, and potentially resolve their health issues (Wright, Sparks, & O’Hair, 2008). While individuals might fear receiving biased, false or incomplete information, mass mediated health messages are, nevertheless, useful points of reference, stimulating respondents to reflect upon their symptoms and seek information from a wide variety of commercial and non-commercial sources. Via this process, the mass media have the potential to significantly alter people’s health behaviors (Wright et al., 2008), leveling the playing field by placing lay people on an equal footing with experts and professionals (Parrott, 2003). The media, thus, have the ability to raise “the profile of health issues on the public agenda” (Green & Tones, 2010: p. 362).

2.3 CSR

Both corporations and policy makers are increasingly concerned with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). For firms, CSR has become a viable strategy and

presents “a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (European Commission, 2008). Initiatives cover all “practices that improve the workplace and benefit society in ways that go above and beyond what companies are legally required to do” (Vogel, 2006). As such, CSR allows companies to connect with their various stakeholders by informing them about (desired) benefits, while at the same time justifying the legitimacy of their business practices (Tench, Bowd, & Jones, 2007).

2.4 Integrated CSR

Over the years, CSR has moved from a “disconnected philanthropic” endeavor to an “integrated business strategy” (McElhaney, 2009: p. 30) that is closely related to a firm’s mission statement and its corporate objectives (McElhaney, 2009). This suggests that CSR can only be successfully practiced if the brand/product matches the overall business orientation and is integrated into existing operational practices and concepts. Integrated CSR, thus, alludes to “a business strategy that is integrated with core business objectives and core competencies of the firm, and from the outset is designed to create business value and positive social change” (McElhaney, 2009: p. 31). Linking CSR activities to corporate practices—in the form of a “strategization of CSR” (Sharp & Zaitman, 2010)—can, therefore, be turned into a competitive advantage (Jones, 1999).

Health is a topic that requires both individual involvement and corporate efforts: individuals are called upon to act as self-interested agents to maintain their bodies and health, whereas corporations must place their employees’ safety and well-being at the center of an integrated CSR approach.

3 The (Increasing) Relevance of Integrated CSR/Social Engagement to the Health Communication Sector

Given the importance of CSR engagement by pharmaceutical enterprises, the next section examines the practice of integrated CSR in the health care sector.

3.1 Fundamentals of CSR Communication and Causes Appropriate for the Health Sector

Increased CSR communication originated out of consumers’ growing demands for companies to behave in an ethically, socially, as well as environmentally

responsible fashion (Cone Communications, 2011). At the corporate level, CSR has become an issue that is addressed both practically and communicatively (Cochran, 2007) and has evolved from an “obligation (‘doing good to look good’) to [a] strategy (‘doing well and doing good’)” (Nussbaum, 2009: p. 68). It, thus, can be perceived as an industry’s response to the increasing public concern regarding a corporation’s accountability and the impact of global businesses on society, the economy as well as the environment (Bluestone, Heaton, & Lewis, 2002).

The tendency of consumers to attribute a heightened relevance to social and environmental topics has led to the emergence of a new group, the so-called socially conscious consumer segment. The term was originally coined in the early 1970s by Anderson and Cunningham (1972: p. 24; cf. Kelley, 1971), and was defined as “individuals concerned not only with their personal satisfactions, but also with societal [and environmental] well-being”. Limited attention was given to this segment until 2012, when Nielsen released its first CSR study, which highlighted rising social concerns amongst the general public. This Nielsen study, together with a follow-up survey, emphasized the necessity for firms to align and/or successfully integrate corporate and social interests (Nielsen, 2013). Causes supported as a result of a firm’s own initiative, rather than those, which are borne of social pressure (Maignan & Ralston, 2002), are said to resonate most with consumers. They also represent an integrated CSR approach, which identifies social and environmental concerns as part of a firm’s overall corporate identity (Hooghiemstra, 2000).

In order for consumers to become engaged, companies’ motives for supporting particular projects need to be disclosed and made transparent (Feldman & Vasquez-Parraga, 2013). With regard to their social mission, enterprises can adopt one of two motives: firm-serving motives, which are predominantly economic and concern profit or market share maximization, or public-serving motives, where community and/or social interests are put first (Becker-Olsen et al., 2005): “[W]hen motivations are considered firm serving or profit-related, attitudes towards firms are likely to diminish; when motivations are considered socially motivated, attitudes towards firms are likely to be enhanced” (Becker-Olsen et al., 2005: p. 48). Hence, corporations are advised to give preference to public-serving motives.

Not all issues are of equal concern to consumers throughout the world. According to Nielsen’s most recent opinion poll, consumers care most about global water accessibility (59%), sanitation accessibility (53%), poverty and hunger eradication (51%), disease control (51%), environmental sustainability (50%), as well as child mortality reduction (50%). While environmental topics clearly rank first among socially-responsible consumers (Nielsen, 2012, 2014), they might not always ‘fit’ the company’s mission. The concept of fit looks at the product’s and the company’s compatibility with the designated cause and is usually determined by looking at the two concepts’ commonalities (e.g., similar customer base or values; Nan & Heo, 2007). This means that the promoted brand or product ought to be congruent and integrated with the selected social cause that is supported (Nan & Heo, 2007), rendering fit critical to the promotional campaign’s overall success (Rifon, Choi, Trimble, & Li, 2004).

Health-related causes are deemed to be more appropriate in the health communication context. Drug marketers should therefore adopt CSR practices that are connected to and integrated with their original business missions (Cheah, Chan, & Chieng, 2007), selecting causes that are well-aligned with their core operations. As it is critical for companies to make consumers aware of their efforts, they should not hesitate to make their social and/or environmental programs a central focus of their promotional messages. Selecting a cause, which matches a corporation's mission then ought to positively shape not only the firm's credibility but should also establish it as a 'good' corporate citizen. Social causes should be pursued on an on-going basis, rendering an integrated approach to CSR fruitful, in the course of which both organizational norms and stakeholder interests are taken into account (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). Connecting the core concerns of profit and ethics (Mohr & Webb, 2005), it is also of utmost importance in the health sector for "corporate social responsibility not [to] be divorced from a company's bottom line" (Mueller, 2011: p. 343). Drug manufacturers may redeem themselves from accusations of engaging in unsound business practices by supporting causes in the health-care field. For instance, Bayer HealthCare has teamed up with the WHO to combat neglected diseases such as Chagas Disease or African Sleeping Sickness (Bayer, 2015), while Pfizer offers Prescription Medication Assistance (PfizerRxPathways) to patients as well as Medicine Safety Education programs (Pfizer, 2015). Likewise, Novartis claims to apply its knowledge to "society's biggest health challenges", e.g., drug testing in Brazil and the spreading of chronic diseases in Africa (Novartis, 2015).

Information about these programs is, or should be, made accessible across an array of platforms (e.g., on the Internet, on TV and in magazines), underscoring the importance of integrated communication to social responsibility efforts (Sorsa, 2008). Generally, integrated CSR communication includes all communicative attempts regarding CSR, employed to inform the public about social initiatives and environmental projects, which are meant to strengthen the company's corporate social image (Golob, Podnar, Ellerup Nielsen, Thomsen, & Schultz, 2013). As such, CSR communication presents one means of ensuring the transparency of business engagements (Esteban, 2008) that go beyond economic interests (Turker, 2009). Companies have begun to address social concerns in their promotional messages, incorporating CSR/humane- and social-orientation appeals (Diehl, Mueller, & Terlutter, 2014) across a broad spectrum of message forms, such as Public Service Announcements (PSAs), New Health Messages (e.g., Food, Fitness and Wellness) and pharmaceutical advertising. These three forms of health communication are presented in more detail in the following paragraphs.

3.2 Public Service Announcements

For educational purposes, public service announcements (PSAs) have been utilized to the largest extent (O'Keefe & Reid, 1990). Similar to advertising messages in terms of their length and features, this health communication form solely promotes

projects that hold a high social significance (Lannon, 2008). PSAs are typically sponsored by governmental parties or (non-profit) organizations (Murry, Stam, & Lastovicka, 1996) to increase awareness of “good” and “desirable” causes, such as combatting global warming, drug and alcohol abuse, illiteracy, and social diseases. As such, PSAs are used to promote behaviors that are regarded as socially desirable (Garbett, 1981). With regard to message design, these announcements are rather brief, emphasizing only one single point of view in a straightforward manner (Dillard & Peck, 2000), and intend to transform health-compromising behaviors into health-enhancing behaviors (Fishbein et al., 2002). Therefore, the social appeals incorporated therein can be best described with terms like Societal Social Responsibility (SSR) or Governmental Social Responsibility (GSR).

3.3 New Health Messages: Food, Fitness, Wellness Etc.

Over the years, the spectrum of health communication has widened considerably. Social and demographic changes (e.g., an aging population, decreasing birth rates, new ‘industrial’ diseases, changing lifestyles, etc.) and a rising health consciousness amongst the wider population have led the health-care sector to boom and broaden its boundaries (Mai, Schwarz, & Hoffmann, 2012). Hence, health communication has come to comprise traditional and innovative areas such as health care (Meffert & Rohn, 2011; Thomas, 2008), drugs and medical substances (Harms, Gänshirt, & Rumler, 2008, Umbach, 2011), life-science (Stremersch, 2008; Stremersch & van Dyck, 2009), nutrition (Mai & Hoffmann, 2012; Walker Naylor, Droms, & Haws, 2009), wellness, fitness and sport (Hermanns & Riedmüller, 2008; Nufer & Buehler, 2010), health tourism (WHO, 2013) and ecotourism (Wood, 2002). This extended scope is the result of an altered notion of health that takes a variety of social determinants into consideration (Dahlgren & Whitehead, 1991). In addition to socio-demographic and individual lifestyle factors, living, working and environmental conditions are presumed to have an influence on individual health. This broader perspective suggests that responsibility for health is no longer solely a personal or public responsibility, but rather has been delegated to corporations as well, which are called upon to guarantee their employees’ health, safety and well-being (Scherenberg, 2012).

3.4 Pharmaceutical Advertising

Another, more commercial form of health communication, is pharmaceutical advertising, which “can be defined as [paid] messages created by marketers of pharma products that attempt to inform, persuade and even entertain the target audience with the goal of influencing recipients’ attitudes—and ultimately behavior—in a favorable manner” (Diehl, Mueller, & Terlutter, 2008: p. 100). Pharmaceutical advertisements

are disseminated to promote both prescription and non-prescription drugs. The former are medications intended to address more serious diseases, and since significant adverse effects and risks are attributed to their use (Diehl et al., 2008), they require a doctor's prescription. Direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising is only allowed in two countries world-wide (the U.S. and New Zealand). The latter can be categorized as self-medication preparations and home remedies, and are typically dubbed over-the-counter medications. These are promoted to physicians and consumers alike; by law, they are the only kind of medication that can be promoted directly to consumers in the E.U. (Buckley, 2004).

Having outlined the growing relevance of CSR and social engagements for drug marketers and manufacturers, the remainder of the chapter will focus on non-prescription drug promotions and CSR activities in the pharmaceutical sector. Due to the increased public concern with health issues, as well as the greater interest in corporate responsibility efforts, the two areas deserve further consideration. Given that CSR and health are reciprocally linked to one another, they should be part of an integrated communication effort.

4 CSR and the Pharmaceutical Industry

Increasing public pressure for CSR efforts has not left the pharmaceutical industry unaffected; yet, research in this area is rather scarce. The present chapter attempts to reduce this gap by presenting results from two, independent cross-cultural studies.

4.1 Research Related to CSR in the Pharmaceutical Industry

In the pharmaceutical industry, studies to date have explored CSR definitions and motivations (Droppert & Bennett, 2015; Frederiksborg & Fort, 2014; Salton & Jones, 2015), communication and reporting practices (Smith, 2008), recruitment perspectives (Esteban, 2008), CSR's 'added value' (Story & Neves, 2014), CSR's 'ethical mandate' (Leisinger, 2005; Nussbaum, 2009), CSR's online integration in manufacturers' websites (Sones, Grantham, & Vieira, 2009), as well as the industry's CSR communication on selected social media channels (Adi & Grigore, 2015). While research in this area is on the rise, neither have the recipients of such messages—drug end users/consumers—been surveyed, nor have content analyses and empirical studies addressed the topic of integrated CSR in the pharmaceutical industry. This is, however, a gap the following studies will attempt to address.

4.2 Possible Ad Appeals for Promoting Health Products and Services

The distinguishing mark that separates successful from unsuccessful health messages is the so-called ad appeal—the “life giving spark of an advertisement” and “the promise of the special significant benefit the product will provide” (Kleppner, 1979). Ad appeals describe the way in which advertisers want to trigger attention in recipients (Belch & Belch, 1993) and are usually conveyed through both the ad’s headline and visual, with the body copy building upon those two components (Mueller, 1987). Appeals can take several forms: informative appeals make explicit mention of the product’s functionality and distinctive features, emotional appeals rely on visual stimuli to tell (subjectively) appealing stories (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009; Okazaki, Mueller, & Taylor, 2010a, 2010b), while mixed appeals present a combination of the prior two approaches.

As part of companies’ ethical and moral commitments (Wells, Moriarty, & Burnett, 2006), an advertising appeal that is increasingly being employed, is the CSR appeal, in which marketers integrate references to their social and/or environmental projects in hopes of generating (more) favorable public responses (Diehl et al., 2014). In the case of CSR advertising, the dominant promotional message is complemented with CSR elements, which should be aligned with the company’s mission and philosophy (i.e. in an ‘integrated’ manner; Pomeroy, Johnson, & Noble, 2013). Hence, CSR appeals present hybrid promotional messages (Rossiter & Percy, 1997) and are ideally expressive of a holistic communication approach that permits consumers to form “company images on the basis of [their] total experience of the company” (Kennedy, 1977: p. 121).

4.3 CSR as a Promising Strategy for the Pharmaceutical Industry

For pharmaceutical companies, being (both ethically and socially) responsible means, first and foremost, providing “people, especially the poor, with affordable medication” (Nussbaum, 2009). In addition, pharmaceutical marketers are expected to maintain high social, environmental and economic standards—all under tightening legal restrictions (Roblek & Bertoneclj, 2014). Pharmaceutical manufacturers are also required to reveal their drugs’ potential side effects in their advertising disclosures (Roblek & Bertoneclj, 2014). The integration of social and sustainable message elements, therefore, presents a potential strategy to counteract the accusation that the pharmaceutical industry is solely driven by profits (BBC, 2015). Drug marketers should adopt CSR practices that are connected to and integrated with their original business missions (Cheah et al., 2007), selecting causes that are well aligned with their core operations. As it is critical for companies to make

consumers aware of their efforts, they should not hesitate to promote their social and/or environmental efforts in their promotional messages.

CSR messages are useful in that they aid corporations in communicating “what we say we are” (Balmer, 2006), thereby potentially elevating consumers’ trust in a company and positively shaping a firm’s overall corporate image (Edelman, 2012). Consumers do not necessarily regard profitability and social support as contradictions; rather, CSR efforts can award businesses not only a “license to operate” but also a “license to lead” (Edelman, 2012). For this reason, CSR messages are more frequently made the focus of companies’ business and advertising communications (Diehl et al., 2014; Nielsen, 2014), aiding firms in strengthening their positions regarding their social and environmental involvements (Esteban, 2008): “At the moment of truth—in store, online and elsewhere—consumers are making a choice [...] that is heavily influenced by brands with a social purpose” (Nielsen, 2014: p. 5).

4.4 Potential Negative Aspects of CSR Messages

The inclusion of CSR appeals poses potential problems as well. Social advertising claims are often criticized for not being straightforward and, therefore, difficult to comprehend, resulting in companies being accused of disguising unsound business practices. If CSR messages are portrayed in too positive a light, a “self-promoter’s paradox” might apply, rendering companies’ contributions to social and/or environmental causes too good to be true (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990: p. 188), and CSR messages run the risk of backfiring. A heightened sensitivity towards *corporate green washing* has led consumers to become increasingly skeptical of advertising messages (Nielsen, 2012). This cynicism toward corporate engagement might be explained by the negative social impact respondents ascribe to companies throughout Europe (European Commission, 2013), as well as their poor communication activities (Nielsen, 2013). So, while CSR messages are seen as “marketing’s greatest contribution to society”, at the same time, they are perceived as “marketing’s most unabashed exploitation” (Drumwright, 1996: p. 71). Nonetheless, public communication is of crucial impact to the area of CSR (Ihlen, Bartlett, & May, 2011): “Success will depend on the ability to connect sustainable benefits effectively with consumers’ wants and wallets through clearly communicated and readily available [integrated] brand positioning” (Nielsen, 2014: p. 9).

5 Examining CSR in the Pharmaceutical Industry

In the study of cultural differences in advertising, two analytical approaches can be identified, namely content analysis and empirical effectiveness studies (Diehl, Terlutter, & Weinberg, 2003). The present investigations pay tribute to both forms of research: the first study will present the results of an extensive content

analysis, which explored the potential for advertising standardization in the pharmaceutical (OTC drug) industry (Koinig, 2012; Koinig & Diehl, 2013); the second study employed the findings of the content analysis to design (standardized) OTC drug promotions, which were then evaluated in different cultural contexts (Austria, Germany, the United States and Brazil). These two studies investigate how CSR appeals can be utilized by pharmaceutical manufacturers as part of their promotional messages across the globe. Further, they examine (1) whether CSR positively influences consumer responses, (2) whether product/cause fit indeed impacts a company's CSR evaluations, and (3) whether cultural parameters might render advertising adaptation unavoidable.

The two studies presented next extend previous research on the topic in two ways: Apart from very few contributions (e.g., DeLorme, Huh, Reid, & An, 2010; Diehl et al., 2008; Main, Argo, & Huhmann, 2004), neither consumer evaluations of OTC drug ads, nor the topic of CSR in such commercial messages have been explicitly addressed in cross-cultural studies. Given that a more thorough understanding of the effectiveness of different ad appeals in pharmaceutical advertising can benefit both academics and practitioners, the investigations outlined in the remainder of this chapter serve to address this research gap. The countries examined herein are the U.S., the largest single drug market, Germany, the largest European medications market, Austria, a second European market, and Brazil, an emerging OTC drug market as well as the largest South American pharmaceutical market (MarketLine, 2014). In each of these markets, OTC drug sales, as well as the level of concern with CSR, are on the rise. Differences in advertising evaluations and CSR concerns are anticipated as a result of varying legal regulations as well as the cultural particularities of each market.

5.1 Content Analysis

A total of 385 print ads for non-prescription drugs were obtained from special and general interest magazines, of which 183 ads (47.5 %) were taken from 39 German and Austrian magazines¹ and the remaining 202 ads were obtained from 35 U.-S. American magazines (47.3 %). They were collected during the period from December 2010 to August 2011 in order to achieve extensive coverage of the two pharmaceutical markets surveyed. Adverts were only selected for analysis if they were for non-prescription drugs, treating minor illnesses, and were available over-the-counter (Craig, 1992). Any repeat advertisements were omitted. Ads were coded for a variety of dimensions. In order to ensure objective and comparative results, each of the 385 adverts was analyzed by two independent coders, who reached an inter-coder reliability of .88 according to Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1968). Any disagreements were resolved via a post-coding discussion.

¹Most magazines cover both the German and Austrian market.



Fig. 1 Examples for CSR ad appeals

In addition to uncovering a strong potential for standardization in two areas, namely product endorser portrayal and ad appeal type, the use of social and sustainable or green appeals in non-prescription drug advertising was examined. Despite the growing importance of CSR, appeals emphasizing companies' social and environmental practices to date do not constitute a dominant appeal category in OTC medication advertising—neither in the U.S. nor in the two European markets. Results indicate that socially-oriented efforts, which typically related to a company's support for welfare and/or community projects, and often involved a cooperation with aid agencies, were rarely employed in commercial messages (T: 2.6 %; AUT/GER: 1.6 %; USA: 3.5 %). Green appeals, on the other hand, were featured more frequently (T: 19.2 %; GER/AUT: 20.2 %; USA: 18.3 %) and involved corporations addressing environmental standards, using organic ingredients and substances, as well as preserving natural resources in producing their goods. Several examples are depicted in Fig. 1. In the face of fierce competition and increasingly discerning consumers, companies should not miss any opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to CSR. As CSR initiatives are infrequently featured in OTC preparation advertising, they can potentially be utilized in order to gain a competitive advantage.

5.2 Empirical Investigation

Stimulus Material Ad development followed the procedure outlined by Diehl, Terlutter, and Mueller (2011). The use of a fictitious brand controlled for attitudes towards recognized and established brand names. All four ad appeals were designed to promote a pain reliever with the brand name *Senza*, produced by the fictitious pharmaceutical manufacturer *ProSante*. Pre-tests were conducted, which revealed that the brand and company names were neutrally loaded and seen as suitable for use in the medical domain. They further showed that all ad versions were indeed associated with their intended appeals and were regarded as realistic, trustworthy, sufficiently credible and comprehensible.

The four fictitious full-page ads were professionally designed (see Fig. 2). The informative ad featured the advertised drug in a dominant visual, which was paired with a short body copy emphasizing the product's effectiveness, unique composition, plus its tolerance levels. The slogan included the brand name in a problem/solution manner: "Getting the best out of life despite pain—with *Senza*!" The emotional version used the same slogan, combined with a visual depicting a happy-looking couple that occupied 90 % of the total page. The mixed ad presented a combination of the informative and emotional versions: while it employed the latter's prominent visual, it also incorporated the textual information on product specifics. The CSR appeal ad was identical to the mixed appeal version, but it contained an additional social message. A fictitious CSR initiative, based on the successful CSR efforts linking Pampers and UNICEF, was included to create awareness of tetanus, a disease that can be prevented by the use of vaccines. Product purchase would involve consumers directly, as for every package of *Senza* sold, one crucial vaccination to reduce infant and maternal morbidity would be donated (Mueller, 2011). In terms of causes, this was considered to be a good fit and an integrated effort for a pharmaceutical marketer. The designated CSR message is illustrated in Fig. 3. Ads were translated into English, German and Brazilian Portuguese via the translation/back-translation method.

Study Design The study was conducted in the spring and summer of 2014. In each of the four selected countries, 60 subjects were presented with one of the four ad versions, resulting in a total sample size of 240 subjects per country and a total study population of 967 subjects. In terms of age, respondents were between 18 and 93 years old, with an average age of 35.9 years. Female/male participation was almost equally distributed ($f = 50.6\%$; $m = 49.4\%$). Answers to each question were reported on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) 'I do not agree at all' to (7) 'I fully agree'.

Study Findings Respondents' evaluations of the four ad appeals will be discussed before specific questions related to the CSR appeal are addressed. The strongest predictor of ad effectiveness is attitude towards the ad—also referred to as ad evaluation (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986); the former is concerned with whether or not a message has 'worked', while the latter is the evaluation of the



Getting the best out of life despite pain – with Senza!

Generally, pain surfaces when prostaglandins are created – those are substances that increase the likelihood of pain and are at times accompanied by fever.

What now? The solution is Senza!
Senza is an effective, non-steroidal, well-tolerated anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) which inhibits enzymes triggering swelling and pain (cyclooxygenase) and, thus, prevents the creation of prostaglandins.

Don't ignore the warning signs your body is sending you. Trust Senza.

Senza
100 Film, 100mg/200mg

These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

informative



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**At Senza, we also accept social responsibility.
1 sold package = 1 vaccination against Tetanus**



CSR

Fig. 2 Stimulus material



Fig. 3 CSR message

message content in affective and cognitive terms (Diehl et al., 2008; Edell & Burke, 1987; Lutz, MacKenzie, & Belch, 1983). Over the years, attitude has become one of the most intensively researched aspects of ad effectiveness (Brown & Stayman, 1992), used to determine and measure consumers' reactions towards the promotions encountered (Diehl et al., 2008). The current survey revealed that in terms of ad liking (ad evaluation), both informative and emotional ads were outranked by the mixed appeal version ($M = 4.534$), which combined the best of both worlds (rational arguments with atmospheric images; Kroeber-Riel & Esch, 2011). The mixed appeal version was followed by the plain informative ($M = 4.344$) and CSR appeals ($M = 3.954$). Being short of textual elements, emotional ads obtained low scores ($M = 3.884$). With regard to ad evaluation and taking all four countries together, the mixed appeal received the most favorable evaluations, followed by the informative and CSR ad versions, while the emotional appeal ranked last (results for the single countries will be discussed below).

Respondent's overall attitudes towards sustainable corporate actions were examined based on three questions adopted from Nan and Heo (2007). These questions were deemed sufficient to measure the relevance respondents attributed to socially and environmentally sound corporate actions. Principal component analysis revealed the items to load on one single factor and, consequently, they were combined for analysis (KMO: .722; Significance according to Bartlett: .000; Cronbach α : .868): (1) "I think positively about enterprises which act socially responsible", (2) "It is important to me that enterprises increasingly consider social issues", and (3) "I would increasingly purchase products from enterprises which act socially responsible". Overall, respondents judged corporate social initiatives very favorably (T: 5.4361; AUT: 5.1841; GER: 5.1156; USA: 5.5248; BRA: 5.9225); nonetheless, variations in attitudes towards CSR were seen as being dependent on the country of inquiry ($F = 19.052$, $p = .000$). Brazilian subjects' scores were significantly higher than in both European countries and North America (see Fig. 4).

In order to explore whether consumers considered a firm's record of corporate social engagement, regardless of whether communications to that effect were integrated into the commercial message, the following question was included in the survey instrument for all ad versions: "I have the impression *ProSante* (producer of *Senza*) is a socially responsible company²". Overall, *ProSante* was

²Note: Only in the case of the CSR appeal stimulus ad was any reference made to the fictitious CSR project.

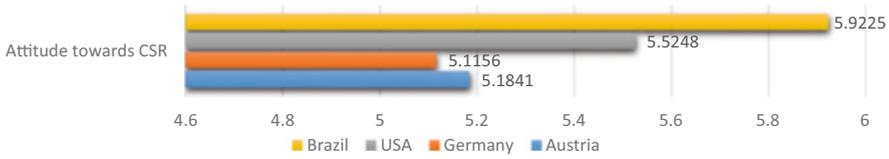


Fig. 4 CSR evaluations in a cross-cultural context

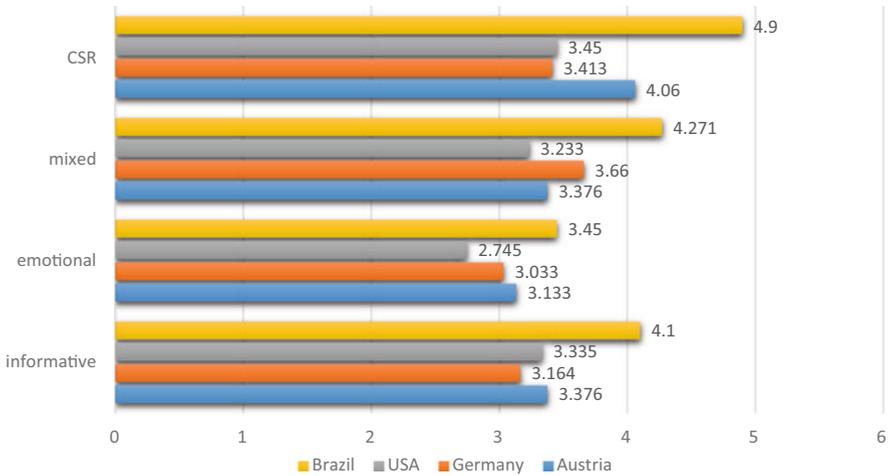


Fig. 5 ProSante’s CSR evaluations in a cross-cultural context

evaluated as acting moderately responsibly even in those ad versions in which no explicit mention of CSR engagement was made (see Fig. 5). Some highly relevant differences in ratings stood out: with the exception of Germany, the CSR ad appeal received significantly more positive evaluations ($M = 3.951$) when compared against all other versions in three out of four countries ($M = 3.413$). Highly pronounced differences in evaluations could be noted between the countries under investigation ($F = 23.655, p = .000$).

The final question explored respondents’ evaluations of the fit between the designated social cause and the promoted product, recognizing the highly contested issue of fit and integrated communication in the marketing domain (Hamlin & Wilson, 2004; Nan & Heo, 2007). The question examining brand-cause-fit was only included in the CSR questionnaire and read as follows: “I think that ProSante donating vaccines to reduce infant death caused by Tetanus represents a good match between the product and the cause”. The overall perceived degree of similarity and/or suitability between the product and designated cause revealed above-average results for three out of four countries ($M = 4.180$), while respondents from Germany did not perceive the anticipated match ($M = 3.160$; see Fig. 6). Findings suggest significant variations on a country basis ($F = 12.592, p = .000$).

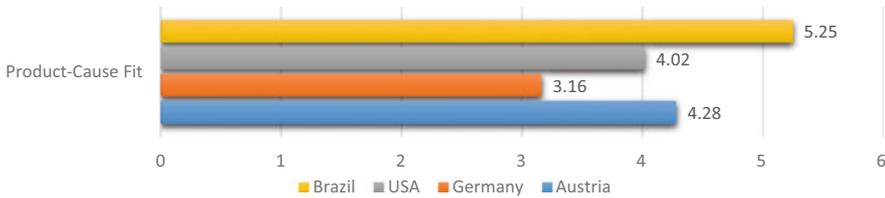


Fig. 6 Product-cause-fit evaluations in a cross-cultural context

6 Discussion of Results

The investigations outlined above illustrate the role communication plays in the practice of CSR in the pharmaceutical industry (Golob et al., 2013), and address whether standardized CSR messages present a fruitful approach for international marketers in the pharmaceutical industry. Above average attitudes towards corporate social engagement in all countries suggest that consumers have begun to attach greater relevance to CSR claims, and are exercising pressure on corporations to publicize their social and/or environmental projects. As part of an integrated CSR strategy, product-cause fit is of utmost importance—companies are encouraged to align their corporate and sustainable strategies with their corporate mission statements.

The highly distinct CSR evaluations by country are in line with Nielsen’s most recent global survey (2014), which found CSR relevance to vary by geographic region. Nielsen reported that 63 % of Latin Americans expected corporations to engage in socially responsible behavior, while only 42 % of Americans and 40 % of Europeans expressed a similar sentiment. Evaluations of the fictitious pharmaceutical producer *ProSante* with regards to its CSR initiatives revealed Brazilian scores to be the highest, in line with Nielsen’s claim of Latin American consumers to ‘care the most’ about ethical corporate behavior and require evidence of CSR efforts (Cone Communications, 2013). American consumers were also more responsive to CSR claims than their European counterparts: In Europe, where businesses, first and foremost, are perceived as economic entities (Maignan & Ralston, 2002), corporations are more reluctant to embrace the concept of corporate philanthropy. In particular, Germany differs from the other countries, in that consumers in this country are not only reluctant to voice their opinions regarding CSR projects publicly, but are also not interested in seeing “flashy campaigns” (Cone Communications, 2013: p. 45). Stricter legal regulations might also render CSR less of an issue in Germany.

Product-cause fit was seen as crucial to the concept of integrated CSR, suggesting that businesses harmonize their corporate and social efforts to create an authentic match between their product(s) and selected (social and environmental) causes. In the present study, fit was seen as crucial in all countries. The CSR ad appeal only received positive evaluations in those countries where a good fit was perceived. Brazilians were seen to detect the common ground between product and

cause to the greatest extent, followed by American and Austrian consumers, whose results came in slightly above average. German respondents failed to perceive the anticipated fit, as reflected in their very low (average) ad evaluations.

Based on the above, the following conclusions can be drawn: while one may be able to standardize emotional, informative or mixed advertising practices across countries (Koinig, 2012; Koinig & Diehl, 2013), this seems not to be the case with CSR claims. CSR messages resonated with Brazilian and U.S. American consumers, yet were not favorably received in Germany. This may be mainly due to the low product-cause fit perceived by German subjects, which warrants further examination.

7 Conclusion and Directions for Further Research

International marketers have started to integrate CSR claims into their promotional messages because they want consumers to lean towards their products (Diehl et al., 2014). CSR is a topic of increasing relevance, which is “not simply a feature of the new global corporation but is also a feature of new societal governance” (Moon, 2007: p. 302). If efforts related to social needs are in line with a firm’s fields of operation and integrated into its communicative practices (Cheah et al., 2007; Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2010), this can result in a competitive advantage (Cochran, 2007).

The investigations outlined in this chapter suggest that while advertising in the pharmaceutical industry can potentially be standardized, CSR messages do not cross borders equally well. A special focus needs to be put on the product-cause fit, which was quite different in the four countries, especially in Germany. Overall findings indicate that CSR appeals in international pharmaceutical ads may need to be tailored to the respective country. Companies need to realize that their social and environmental efforts might be evaluated differently in diverse markets and, due to consumer heterogeneity, they may need to adapt their messages to cultural particularities (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004).

Without question, integrated CSR communication in the health sector warrants further research. Future examinations on the effectiveness of OTC drug ads incorporating a(n integrated) CSR claim should not fail to include countries characterized by even more significant differences. Subsequent researchers may wish explore the perception of CSR in relation to factors such as ad and product evaluation, as well as purchase intention and the perceived degree of a company’s level of social responsibility (Diehl, Terlutter, & Mueller, 2015). In addition, other kinds of health messages and other claims supporting economic, environmental as well as social causes—both related or unrelated to a firm’s mission statement—might yield different findings.

8 Exercise and Reflective Questions

1. What is Health Communication and why is it of increasing concern in the twenty-first century?
2. Why is CSR gaining in relevance globally?
3. Increasing social and environmental concerns have led to the emergence of the socially-conscious consumer. How is this consumer segment characterized?
4. Which motives can companies pursue with their CSR initiatives?
5. What does the concept of fit describe?
6. Which are the greatest challenges the pharmaceutical industry has to face?
7. Why does integrated CSR communication present a fruitful strategy for the pharmaceutical industry?
8. Which CSR programs are best suited for pharmaceutical marketers (and why)?
9. Which aspects are responsible for variances in CSR perceptions?

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