PHARMACEUTICAL ADVERTISING IN HONG KONG

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Kara Chan, Hong Kong Baptist University
Hong Kong is an aging market

% of population who are aged 65+

Source: population projection, 2010-2039
Census and Statistics Department, July 2010
Ad expenditure on pharmaceutical and health care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>USD million</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>6.4</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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Growth=21%
Major advertiser 1: Fortune Pharmacal
Major advertiser 2: GlaxoSmithKline
TVC 1
TVC 2
Ad for a prescription drug
Ad for a prescription drug (pain-killer)
Regulations of pharmaceutical ads

- Undesirable Medical Advertisements Ordinance
- Generic Code of Practice on Television Advertising Standards (for radio and TV ads)
- Pharmaceutical ads for OTC and treatment for minor diseases are allowed
- Pharmaceutical ads for prescription drugs and treatment for major diseases are restricted or banned
Not allowed in pharmaceutical ads

- Presentation of doctors or other medical professionals giving advice
- Presentations of patients undergoing treatment
- Dramatization of illness
- Offensive description of illness
- Exaggerated claims such as “the most successful” and “quickest”
- Sales promotion
Consumer perception and attitudes

- Self-medication is common
- When the illness is perceived as minor
- Both traditional Chinese and Western medicine are used concurrently
- Consumers had positive attitudes towards OTC pharmaceutical ads (Chan and Ha, 1997); had similar perception of prescription and non-prescription drugs (Diehl et al., 2010)
- Consumers criticized that ad increased the cost of the products; ad exaggerated the curing functions
Complaints of pharmaceutical advertising on the broadcast media

- According to the Broadcasting Authority’s complaint archive, 40 TV commercials of pharmaceutical products received complaints during Jan. 2008 to Feb. 2010
- Types of complaints: disgusting scenes or sounds, such as sneezing at a person, the process of clearing sputum, and black dots on the body
- All complaints were not substantiated (judged by BA), indicating self-regulation of advertisers
5 complaints were about the claims and the possibility of misleading info

- Panadol Reluctance ad: the claim of “all residues would be discharged after taken”
- Through expert advice, the active ingredient is extensively metabolized and its metabolites can be excreted
- Coltalin GP Extra flu killer: the remark “for ordinary cold or flu, it is not a must to see a doctor”
- BA of the view that the remark did not encourage viewers not to consult doctors
Social debates of pharmaceutical ad

- The trade and the advertisers ask for relaxation on advertising of restricted drugs
- Medical professionals ask for stricter regulation of pharmaceuticals disguised as health foods
- Consumers ask for right to know
- Consumers ask for clarification as they were confused with claims regarding detoxification; slimming; and regulation of the immune systems
Future changes

- Government’s move to encourage all employed workers to buy medical insurance
- Government hospitals encourage patients to pay for selected medicines
- Consumers adopt more preventive measures to improve health conditions
- Consumers faced increased rate of chronic diseases because of poor work-life balance
Thank you