

Reader's Digest

EUROPE HEALTH SURVEY 2008

Fewer people agree that the information in health ads is useful

People across Europe seek out a lot of information before they buy medicines and remedies, but compared to 2006 they find the information in health ads less useful

Over the past 2 years there's little change in many of the attitudes consumers have towards purchasing drugs and remedies. 59% of Europeans say that they seek out a lot of information before they buy (same as in 2006) and 56% have more confidence in the quality of a product if they know who made it (v 57% in 2006). However in the case of advertising 12% less people find health advertising useful (42%). The fall is especially severe in the Netherlands where perception of the value of health ads has dropped -32% (from 50% to 34%).

These findings are highlighted in a recent consumer study conducted by Reader's Digest in 11 European countries*. Over 20,000 adults participated in this survey focussed exclusively on health. The aim of the research was to capture people's opinions and understand more about who, and what they trust on issues relating to their own and their family's wellbeing. It measures their attitudes towards advertising and the media, the actions they take to maintain their health and what influences their purchase of OTC remedies.

The perceived value of ads is highest in Poland and Portugal

Just over half the people in Portugal (52%) find health advertising of value, an increase of 27% over 2006. Although 50% of Poles also acknowledge advertising to be useful this is 18% lower than before (61%). The greatest increase (+33%), is in Russia from 24% to 32% this is especially significant because overall the Russians claim to be badly informed about health issues in general.

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Few admit that advertising influences their purchase of medicines and remedies

Across Europe only 13% of people agree that advertising they've seen for a product influences their purchase, 73% say it doesn't. Denial is especially high in Netherlands (82%) and France (81%). However in Czech Republic and Finland 20% of consumers are prepared to acknowledge that advertising does have some influence on the products they buy to cure everyday ailments.

“We need to understand what is important to our readers in the fast changing health environment. It also helps advertisers’ make better decisions in how they communicate” said Gavin Murray Regional Advertising Director Europe at Reader's Digest

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Notes to editors:

- Europe Health 2008 was conducted across 11 countries in Central, Eastern and Western Europe. To enable comparison it followed the same structure as the 2006 survey
- This consumer survey focuses on how people view their general health and wellbeing and the sources of information they use and trust
- It identifies the illnesses and ailments people suffer in each country and the different ways they treat these ailments
- Results enable comparison by country, and over time, of adults' perceived value of the many different sources of healthcare information
- For the first time it highlights their attitudes towards travelling abroad for medical treatment and purchase via the internet
- Respondents were drawn from the Reader's Digest subscriber database of more than 3.5 million households across Europe. Sample selection and results were weighted to reflect the broad population profiles of each of the participating countries
- A total of 20,357 questionnaires in 10 languages (including English) were analysed
- Fieldwork was carried out during June/July and August 2008 by post and on-line

Table 1
Influences on consumer purchase of medicines and remedies for everyday ailments

Statement	2008 agree	2006 agree	Difference
I usually seek out lots of information about a medicine/remedy before I buy it	59%	59%	0%
Its important to have the name of the pharmaceutical manufacturer in the ads for its products	59%	64%	-8%
I have more confidence in the quality of a product if I'm familiar with the manufacturer	56%	57%	0%
I'm more inclined to trust a new brand if its made by a well-known pharmaceutical co.	50%	50%	-1%
I find the information in health advertisements useful	42%	48%	-12%
Advertising influences my purchase	13%	13%	0%

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Table 2
I find the information in health advertisements useful

Country	2008	2006	Difference
All country average - agree	42%	48%	-12%
Belgium	44%	52%	-15%
Czech	40%	39%	3%
Finland	45%	56%	-20%
France	41%	52%	-21%
Germany	39%	48%	-19%
Netherlands	34%	50%	-32%
Poland	50%	61%	-18%
Portugal	52%	41%	27%
Russia	32%	24%	33%
Switzerland	45%	54%	-17%
UK	40%	47%	-15%

Table 3
Advertising influences my choice of medicine or remedy

Country	Agree	Disagree
All country average agree*	13%	73%
Belgium	6%	79%
Czech	20%	62%
Finland	20%	70%
France	17%	81%
Germany	8%	74%
Netherlands	6%	82%
Poland	14%	64%
Portugal	8%	73%
Russia*	NA	NA
Switzerland	12%	72%
UK	14%	73%

*NB although this question was asked in Russia the phrasing was slightly different and therefore not comparable with other countries or the 2006 survey

Multi country media enquiries please contact: Gavin Murray, **Regional Advertising Director** Europe at Reader's Digest. Tel: +44 (0)20 7715 8927 or e-mail gavin_murray@rd.com or visit our website: www.rdeuropehealth.com for more results and further information about the survey.