

Behavioral Targeting in Health Care Marketing: Uncovering the Sunny Side of Tracking Consumers Online

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Abstract Whereas tracking and targeting consumers while shopping online has been in extensive focus of marketing practice and research for the last decade it lives a shadowy existence in the context of health care marketing. This is quite surprising as online targeting can help to overcome the anonymity of the internet. The technique of behavioral targeting offers the possibility to learn (more) about the online-shopper, comparable to an offline-pharmacist, who gains more and more information about his customer with every visit. Thus targeting enables online pharmacies to help with words and deeds as consumers become recognizable. In consequence, false medication, adverse effects, and inadequate self-treatment – just to name a few – can be prevented. Whereas, most consumers see targeting as interference with an individual's exercise of the right to privacy, we propose that according to the theory of reciprocity (Gouldner 1984; Becker 1986) consumers will welcome health related targeting of themselves not only to reduce risk but also to optimize treatment effects. With a series of experiments we shed light on this nascent research gap and contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon in the context of health care marketing.

Keywords Health Care Marketing • Consumer Tracking • Health Related Targeting • Behavioral Targeting

References

References Available Upon Request

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M.W. Obal et al. (eds.), *Let's Get Engaged! Crossing the Threshold of Marketing's Engagement Era*, Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-11815-4_90