

A Visual Rhetorical Analysis of selected Nexium Prescription Drug Advertisements  
According to the methodology of Sonja Foss

by  
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## Abstract

Direct-to-consumer advertising has gathered much negative attention. It's purpose is filled with questions of ethics and legitimacy. This analytical study takes a deeper look into the advertisements that promote prescription drugs. The advertisements can be seen at the flip of a magazine, click of a button, or a walk down the road. The methodology for analyzing visual images according to Sonja Foss provided a framework to provide results. This preliminary study found evident problems in the drug advertising industry. Further research was beckoned due to the findings of this exploratory project.

Key Terms: Nexium, AstraZeneca, Direct-to-Consumer Advertising, Prescription Drugs,  
and Qualitative

## Dedication

On behalf of Ross and Nancy Law who instilled in me hard work ethics along with perseverance. Their guidance and love provided the motivation necessary to complete this study.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family for their support, help, and encouragement. My parents pushed me to achieve higher things than I thought imaginable. My brothers taught me to consistently work hard and be persistent, and without them I could not have made it through.

I also would like to thank Reverend Gary Orr who pushed me to go for my masters. Without his extra push I would not have considered further education. Thank you for your support.

Finally, I would like to thank my committee who served with me through this process. Each of you provided great guidance to my scholarship, but more importantly to my character. I thank each of you.

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## Introduction

I remember being in the doctor's office at a young age of 22 explaining my symptoms to the doctor. Very few tests were conducted, and I simply was told that I needed to take Nexium. This lack of explanation and quick action led to the initial trivial question of direct-to-consumer advertising. The quickness of action on the prescription of the drug, and the lack of questions probed further research.

I realized that there is more to the industry of advertisement prescription drugs. I desired to analyze this industry, but did not know where to start. At this point I came across Sonja Foss and her methodology of analyzing visual images. This helped shape the study and provide an analysis guideline.



## Table of Contents

Thesis Committee Signatures.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements .....	vi
Introduction.....	viii
Table of Contents .....	ix
Chapter One-The Presented Problem.....	1
Chapter Two-Literature Review .....	4
Chapter Three-Methodology .....	16
Chapter Four-Application and Analysis: Advertisement Number One.....	19
Chapter Five-Application and Analysis: Advertisement Number Two .....	32
Chapter Six-Results and Discussion .....	42
Works Cited.....	45
Appendix .....	48

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PRESENTED PROBLEM

Although drugs, from tonics for hair growth to headache medicines, have been advertised aggressively since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, prescription drug advertising has only existed since the early 1980's. Because advertisements for direct-to-consumer (DTC) drugs have been widely criticized, research into the methods used and effects of these advertisements is important. A look into some of today's top selling drugs and their advertisements can produce unique insight into the industry. A recent study conducted by Royne and Myers stated, "Nearly half of the respondents in both the 1999 and the 2002 surveys who recalled seeing DTC ads indicated that the ad motivated them to seek additional information from their doctor" (61). This elevated rate of return strongly beckons study into why these advertisements are so successful.

A recent article in the *Washington Post* discusses the issue and transitions of the advertising industry. The writer, Melody Peterson, discusses key issues in regards to the industry's growth. She states,

Today, of course, drug companies are hugely profitable enterprises and the darlings of both Wall Street and K Street, having spent more on lobbying than any other industry between 1998 and 2004. Their transformation from small chemical manufacturers to marketing machines with sidelines in drug development is owed in large measure to blockbuster drugs. (Peterson, BW 3)

The article continues to focus on the competition in the industry as well as the rise in spending on marketing pharmaceutical drugs.

Studies reveal that pharmaceutical companies spend more of their funds on promotion and advertising than on research. A recent study conducted by Shaw revealed that Astra-Zeneca, a pharmaceutical company, spent \$216 million on promoting its drugs. In the same year Pepsi only spent \$212 million on promotion.

The prescription drug industry grows nearly 100% every two years. A 1989 study revealed that the drug industry spent a combined \$712 million on Direct to Consumer advertising (DTCA). That figure increased to \$2.38 billion in 2001 (Palumbo, 423). The industry has undergone studies to reveal the increase in revenue, but few studies have been done on its advertisements.

Because the strategies used in DTC advertising are extremely successful based on financial revenue and money spent on DTC ads, it is important to evaluate the tactics used in this form of advertising and to analyze what makes them so successful. This thesis will attempt to answer the following questions:

- (1) What does DTC advertising consist of?
- (2) What concepts and terms derived from the academic study of visual rhetoric are useful to the study of DTC advertising?
- (3) What insights about DTC advertising can be gained from the application of concepts and terminology discovered in question two?

The sections to follow analyze scholarly literature relevant to the advertising industry's DTC ads. The next chapter will also discuss the methods discovered in visual rhetorical scholarship that appear to be most germane to the study of DTC ads for drugs and that will be used for this study.

This thesis analyzes two print advertisements from Nexium's direct-to-consumer database. Nexium is a drug developed and distributed by pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca. Two advertisements provide a strong comparison and provide a successful foundation for using visual rhetorical critique. Nexium also has an online presence, but the scope of this study is strictly related to the print media.

This study, although unique and beneficial, does have a few limitations. The average magazine consumer may not look as intentionally upon an advertisement as this study has. He or she also may have several other things occurring at the time the ad is in view. Frequent magazine viewers typically will not look as intentionally at a present advertisement. Dominick L. Frosch and Patrick M. Krueger's state that, "viewers are also likely to interpret DTCA based on their own beliefs about the power of medication and the role of lifestyle change" (3). Their study focused predominantly on TV ads, but this limitation exists for this study. These constraints should be taken into consideration when reading this thesis.

## CHAPTER TWO

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## Direct-to-Consumer Advertising

According to Wilkes, Bell, and Kravitz:

Direct-To-Consumer (DTC) Advertising of prescription drugs is affecting patients, doctors, and health care organizations in profound but not always predictable ways. In a recent survey more than one-third of respondents reported asking their doctors for information about a drug they had seen or heard advertised.

(Wilkes, Bell, and Kravitz, 111)

Direct to Consumer (DTC) advertising infiltrates almost every home in America. The industry has become one of the most profitable and controversial businesses in existence and is therefore of significance to be studied. Ad effectiveness is a large portion of this study, making it necessary to analyze literature that gives a historical account of DTC advertising. This chapter analyzes research on the pharmaceutical advertising industry and shows how it relates to this study.

Before I discuss the history of DTC advertising, the term “DTC advertising” must be defined. The term Direct to Consumer advertising is usually directly related to the pharmaceutical industry. Vogt states:

Direct-to-Consumer advertising is usually described as any promotional effort by pharmaceutical companies to present prescription drug information to the general public through the lay media. DTC advertising shows up in magazines, newspapers, non-medical journals, pharmacy brochures, and direct-mail letters, and on television, radio, videos, and Internet websites. Anyone who watches

television or listens to the radio today has likely seen or heard some sort of DTC advertisement for prescription drugs. (Vogt, 1)

Individuals in today's culture are constantly bombarded with these types of advertisements. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) breaks DTC advertisement into three categories:

- "Product-claim" ads that include a product's name and a therapeutic claim about the product.
- "Help-seeking" ads that discuss a particular disease or health condition and advise the consumer to "see your doctor" but do not mention the product's name.
- "Reminder" ads that call attention to the product's name but make no reference to the health condition the drug is used to treat.<sup>1</sup>

Given the above information, an overview of the pharmaceutical advertising industry follows. This industry has undergone numerous transitions in the past one hundred years. The Food and Drug Law Journal of 2002 revealed that previous to the onset of DTC ads, prescription drug advertising was directed primarily to the doctors and prescribers of medicine rather than the consumers. The same journal stated:

As patients became more involved in their treatment, drug companies expanded their promotional efforts to include consumers. The first U.S. prescription drug print advertisement directed to the consumer was issued in 1981 by Boots

Pharmaceuticals, a British drug company whose American subsidiary was located

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<sup>1</sup> Gathered from the Food and Drug Administration.

[<http://www.fda.gov/cder/handbook/adverdef.html>]

in Shreveport, Louisiana, for the ibuprofen product, Rufen. (Palumbo; Mullins, 424)

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, the pharmaceutical companies realized that consumers desired to have more of a voice in their medical treatment. Pharmaceutical companies realized that they had a golden opportunity to capitalize on this phenomenon.

Following the release of this first DTC advertisement in the early 1980's, Palumbo and Mullins state, "The first U.S. prescription drug print advertisement directed to the consumer was issued in 1981 by Boots Pharmaceuticals, a British Drug company whose American subsidiary was located in Shreveport, Louisiana, for the ibuprofen product, Rufen." Many other pharmaceutical companies followed suit and began to release their own advertisements. According to Palumbo and Mullins in the Food and Drug Journal, "In September 1982, faced with a novel concept for which the FDA was unprepared, the Commissioner of the FDA issued a formal request to the pharmaceutical industry for a voluntary moratorium on DTC advertisements" (424). The FDA did this to give the agency time to research the industry and the possible effects of DTC advertising. The FDA was not prepared to put clear restrictions on the industry at that point.

Regarding the research period by the FDA, Morris and Millstein stated, "During the moratorium, FDA and the industry conducted several studies on the effects of DTC advertisements. One study, commissioned by the FDA, showed that consumers retained more information about the benefits of the products than the risks" (Morris and Millstein, 497). This provided the information that the FDA needed to start setting up some kind of regulations regarding this controversial type of advertising. Another important point that the FDA realized during this period was that individuals purchasing

prescription drugs wanted more information, and potentially would view DTC advertising favorably (Morris, Brinberg and Klimberg, 82).

The road to this development was long and full of confusion as DTC advertising went through many transitional periods. As noted above, prior to 1981 pharmaceutical advertisements were directed to physicians and places that provided health care. Regulations for this portion of the industry occurred long before 1981. The following section will provide a brief summary regarding the industry, which birthed DTC advertising.

In 1906 the FDA pressured legislation to issue the Wiley Act. This basically touched on the label of prescription drugs and only stated that they could not be misleading. The act specified that a product was misleading or misbranded “only if its label contained false statements about its ingredients’ curative or therapeutic effects (Palumbo and Mullins, 425). Palumbo and Mullins note that this left room for error in regards to drugs. There still were questions of safety and efficiency that were not addressed in the promotional copy label. At this point in time the label was the only form of promotion for a product.

From 1906 to 1938 technology grew rapidly, as did advertising techniques. Therefore, new regulation appeared to be necessary. The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938 soon replaced the Wiley Act and addressed other important issues such as fraudulent marketing techniques (Toumlin, 16). This act granted regulation of advertisements to the Federal Trade Commission. The main reason for the switch from the FDA to the FTC was due to the influence of the Commissioner who was in place, Ewin Davis (Palumbo and Mullins, 426). He was the major lobbyist for the FTC at the time.



According to Palumbo and Mullins, Ewin Davis's lobbying efforts were extraordinary and drew much attention to the issue of prescription drug advertising (426). Ewin Davis showed that it was possible to change the current status of the drug advertising industry.

The major issue at this point was that before 1951 there was no clear line between over the counter drugs and prescription drugs. Palumbo and Mullins stated, "In 1951, the Durham-Humphrey amendments to the FDCA required drugs that are not safe for use except under medical supervision to be dispensed only by prescription of [a] licensed practitioner" (426). This is a critical historical event, which would eventually lead to the controversial issue of DTC advertising. Following this important decision in 1962, regulation power was given back to the FDA.<sup>2</sup> During the time of this transition, prescription drug advertising was not practiced so it is not referenced in the act. The FDA in the U.S. Code Collection states that ads must contain "information in brief summary relating to the side effects, contraindications, and effectiveness" (352). All of this has led to the current state of FDA regulation, which is stated above. This is essential to the study because it provides an understanding as to public policy regarding the pharmaceutical advertising industry. It provides a backdrop for the current condition of the industry and can explain the necessity of having regulation on things such as drugs.

There is still negaiding speculation regarding the FDA's guidelines to the current condition of DTC advertising. An article in *Health Affairs* stated,

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<sup>2</sup> For further information see Kefauver-Harris Drug Amendments.

The FDA's oversight has not prevented companies from making misleading claims in subsequent advertisements, and a recent policy change has lengthened the FDA's review process, raising the possibility that some misleading campaigns could run their course before review. (Gahart, Duhamel, Dievler, and Price, 1)

This is important to the study because it provides a perspective from which to view the current condition of direct-to-consumer advertisements.

It will also be beneficial to provide a concise history of the product under the microscope. Nexium's history has gathered much recognition regard the billions of dollars of revenue.

Nexium is a product of AstraZeneca, which is one of the most profitable pharmaceutical companies in existence. Nexium, according the product's website, is an esomeprazole magnesium developed to combat issues such as heartburn and acid reflux. According to *NexiumResearch.com*, Nexium is placed in the category of proton pump inhibitors along with drugs such as Prilosec and Prevacid. The basic goal of these products is to reduce the production of acid in the stomach.

According to the 2001 annual report under the "Key Products" section, Nexium was first launched in Sweden in August of 2000. The report continues, "Nexium was launched in 82 markets during 2001 including the U.S., Canada, and key European countries." This was simply the beginning of what is known as the famous "purple-pill." A 2004 article in *FreshNews* stated, "in 2004, Nexium--aka, the Purple Pill--was the No. 1 drug directly marketed to consumers in America" (Watson, 1). From this point Nexium

continued to be one of the top-grossing proton pump inhibitors. In 2006 AstraZeneca spent well over a billion dollars to advertise products, especially Nexium (Staton, 1).

Now that a foundation has been laid in the topic of prescription drug advertising and a brief history of Nexium was provided, the visual rhetorical framework will now be outlined. This section will set out the concepts and terminology needed to analyze pharmaceutical advertisements. This section will first justify visual rhetoric as a legitimate form of analysis as well as discuss the specific theories used to analyze DTC advertising.

According to a study conducted by Lawrence J. Mullen and Julie D. Fisher:

In the late-1980's and 1990s Sonja Foss developed a research program using rhetorical strategies to examine visual images. . . Providing a language and a new way to think about visual images, her work continues to influence the study of visual images. (185)

Sonja Foss was not, however, the first to examine visual images, but her areas of focus played a large role in making the study a legitimate area of attention.<sup>3</sup> This form of rhetorical strategies will provide the majority of the methodology used for this study (described in detail below).

Sonja Foss provides a map to initiate this section by breaking the topic down into three clearly laid out areas: (1) definitions of visual rhetoric; (2) areas of focus in the study of visual rhetoric; and (3) approaches to the rhetorical study of visual artifacts (Hill and Helmers, 304). Foss argues that these three topics can change the world of

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<sup>3</sup> See T. Benson: *The Rhetorical Structure of Frederick Wiseman's High School*, or M. J. Medhurst & M. DeSousa, *Political Cartoons as Rhetorical Form*.

rhetorical studies in significant ways. She writes from a contemporary perspective of theory and criticizes normal rhetorical studies for not recognizing images as a form of persuasion. Her argument is that visual images can be just as powerful or even more potent than the verbal. She writes the following in the Handbook of Visual Communication:

In the most basic sense, rhetoric is an ancient term for what now typically is called communication. Visual rhetoric is a very new area of study within this centuries-old discipline. The late 1980's was the first formal call made to include visual images in the study of rhetoric, which until then had been conceived exclusively as verbal discourse. In that year, at the National Conference of Rhetoric, convened by the Speech Communication Association, a recommendation produced by the conference participants called for an expansion of the study of rhetoric.<sup>4</sup> (141)

The 1970's brought an expansion of this new area of thinking in visual rhetoric, which has as its basis the study of visual depictions that can persuade an individual to action.

Many rhetorical scholars disregard visual rhetoric, but Foss states, "Visual artifacts constitute a major part of the rhetorical environment, and to ignore them to focus only on verbal discourse means we understand only a miniscule portion of the symbols that affect us daily" (as cited in Hill and Helmers, 303). Foss continues to formulate the relationship between rhetoric and the need for visual rhetoric. She elaborates on this topic and states, "Because rhetorical theory has been created almost exclusively from the study of discourse, rhetoricians largely lack sophisticated

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<sup>4</sup> For complete historic account of rhetoric consider Wendy Olmsted.

understanding of the conventions through which meaning is created in visual artifacts and the processes by which they influence viewers” (as cited in Hill and Helmers, 303). This statement depicts the gap that can exist between visual rhetoric and “normal” rhetoric, but in reality visual rhetoric uses the same theories, and more, as traditional rhetoric to analyze the visual rather than the verbal. In today’s society visual images are effective ways of persuading individuals. It is impossible to go for a walk without seeing an advertisement or a photograph that was designed to persuade. Foss goes further to explain and quote Audigier: “human experiences that are spatially oriented, non-linear, multidimensional, and dynamic often can be communicated only through visual imagery or other nondiscursive symbols” (Foss, 303).

According to Foss there are three main areas of focus in regards to visual objects: . . .nature, function, or evaluation. In this pillar of the framework for studies of visual rhetoric, nature deals with the components, qualities, and characteristics of visual artifacts; function concerns the communicative effects of visual rhetoric on audiences; and evaluation is the process of assessing visual artifacts. (as cited in Hill and Helmers, 307)

These three areas of focus provide a path for this study that can help the evaluation process of advertisements and more specifically DTC advertising. It will be beneficial to look at each one of these in depth to provide a firm foundation for the framework that will be used to evaluate DTC advertising.

Nature is broken down further into two separate components, which include presented elements and suggested elements. The presented elements include naming the dominant physical features such as color, space, and medium. These elements are

physically present in regards to the visual and leave little room for assumptions.

Outlining the presented elements can lead to an evaluation of the suggested elements, which are based around viewer assumptions; Foss states, "It is the process of discovering the concepts, ideas, themes, and allusions that a viewer is likely to infer from presented elements" (as cited in Hill and Helmers, 307). Mullen and Fisher argue that this is the process of "the identification of visual concepts within an image such as lines, textures, colors, lighting, camera angles, and various other identifiable visual concepts" (Mullen and Fisher, 187). An example of suggested elements in the visual would be the ornate gold leafing on buildings, which depict wealth and power (Kanangieter 12-13).

The second area of focus is the function of a visual artifact. As outlined by Foss, it is "the action it communicates" (as cited in Hill and Helmers, 309). Advertising is created to cause an action, predisposition, or attitude in the viewer. Once a visual artifact is created, the function can take on different forms depending on the viewer. The function is depicted through the viewer and the individual evaluating the visual object. The intent of the "artist" or producer is irrelevant to the function, according to Foss.

Edwards reveals an example of this concept by stating, "one use of iconic images is their appropriation to new contexts, where they function to create analogies that recall past moments and suggest future possibilities" (Hill and Helmers, 308). These images include the use of visual objects to promote things that may come, which are particularly relevant to advertising that seeks to promote future consumer behavior. According to Foss, this new way of thinking can transform rhetorical theory. Foss and Griffin release what seems to be a warning in regards to this form of analysis: "Exactly what the message is of an artifact is often open to myriad interpretations, limiting its persuasive

potential but expanding its potential to communicate functions that may be less dominating and more invitational” (as cited in Hill and Helmers, 309).

As stated above, Foss takes the position that the function can be different from the creator’s view or the critic’s. Similarly, according to Mullen and Fisher, the process is predominately the role of the receiver (187). Mullen and Fisher also observe that the function is “not the function intended by an advertisement’s creator, but rather encompasses the action the image communicates as named by the critic” (187).

The final area of focus is the evaluation of the artifact. It is the job of the rhetorical analyst in the evaluation step to assess how well the function is actually communicated. This area of focus is summarized by Foss in this way: “If an artifact functions to memorialize someone, for example, such an evaluation would involve discovery of whether its media, colors, forms and content actually accomplish that function” (Hill and Helmers, ed. 309). This form of evaluation is used when looking at the artist’s intended function, compared to the function of the critic. Foss reveals that this third area can also be looked at from another perspective. She states in regards to functions: “Reflecting on their legitimacy or soundness determined largely by the implications and consequences of those functions—perhaps, for example, whether an artifact is congruent with a particular ethical system or whether it offers emancipatory potential” (as cited in Hill and Helmers, 309). This form of evaluation places the function in a specific context and looks at the function from the ethical framework.

Mullen and Fisher provide a clear example regarding this idea of evaluation of functions:

If a television commercial, or ad from some other visual medium, is to function to increase the sales of a product and sales do not increase, then one might say that the function of the ad is of poor quality, at least in terms of sales. But even if the image's function is fulfilled on this base level, one must also consider its legitimacy and appropriateness. (188)

This perhaps is the most critical portion of the analysis process. This area of focus can define the advertisement as a success or failure in ethical terms.

A recent study led by Mullen and Fisher took many of Foss's strategies and put them to practical use in regards to the prescription drug advertising industry. The study is clearly laid out in the language of the following portion of the abstract:

By combining two methods of rhetorical visual analysis developed by Sonja Foss, this study "elaborates" her techniques. An analysis of prescription drug advertisement that was commonly seen in general interest magazines was used to test the elaborated method. (185)

Mullen and Fisher provide the technique that I will appropriate to generate a pattern of analysis and much of the methodological rigor of the present study. Mullen and Fisher's study takes many of Foss's techniques and adapts them to prescription drug advertising in an elaborated fashion. This thesis will take a similar approach but will limit Sonja Foss's strategies to strictly the nature, function, and evaluation of visual images.



## CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

The main methodology of this thesis is the adaption of Sonja Foss's theories regarding visual artifacts combined with the approaches to DTC advertising as extended and applied by Mullen and Fisher. This project will take on a similar approach, as stated in the literature review, as outlined in Lawrence Mullen and Julie Fisher's study, *A Visual Analysis of Prescription Drug Advertising Imagery: Elaborating Foss's Rhetorical Techniques*.

This thesis will evaluate two advertisements. The rationale for choosing two ads is twofold: (1) to suitably depict the use of the analysis process and (2) to provide a solid base for a comparison and contrast. A compare and contrast approach will facilitate the identification of the similarities and differences. Choosing two advertisements from the same product at two different periods in time can enable a wider variety of study and reveal the differences in nature, function, and evaluation.

The two advertisements selected are from the campaign to market the very controversial "purple pill." The famous Nexium advertisements are put under the microscope of Foss's theories. This drug is used to treat heartburn and is often accused of targeting women. This is critical because of the quantity of ads that were created. Nexium is produced by a company known as AstraZeneca, which is the supplier and distributor. According to Tracy Staton, a journalist for FiercePharma, in 2007 AstraZeneca spent close to \$700 million on advertising and promotion. The largest portion of those advertisements existed in magazines. In fact, \$200 million of that total was used for print advertising.

There are several reasons why the Nexium ads were selected. First, these advertisements have frequently provoked controversy as many previous studies have stated. There have been lawsuits over the alleged “money-hungry corporation” to change a product name from Prilosec to Nexium. Prilosec costs about an eighth of Nexium and can be bought over-the-counter (Hagens-Bermen). Immediately this change raises ethical questions and is one of the primary reasons why the Nexium advertisements were selected. DTC advertising in general has invited attention on the issues of ethics and legitimacy. The General Accounting Office developed a report titled, *FDA Oversight of Direct-to-Consumer Advertising Has Limitations*, and it states:

The potential consequences of print and broadcast DTC advertising have prompted much debate. Supporters of DTC advertising maintain that it educates consumers about medical conditions and care options and that the increased use of prescription drugs that DTC advertising encourages has improved the public’s health. Critics of DTC advertising contend that it is sometimes misleading, leads consumers to seek prescription drugs when other treatments may be more appropriate. (GOA)

With that stated, two print advertisements for AstraZeneca’s Nexium is selected at random for this study. The two following chapters are broken down by the three different categories regarding Foss’s three-step method. They consist of nature, function, and evaluation. Each of the advertisements will be compared using these strategies.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Numerous attempts have been made to contact AstraZeneca by phone and email but they have been unresponsive.

Mullen and Fisher furthermore categorize and lump function and evaluation in to what they call the *Evaluation of images* (187). Mullen and Fisher state, “The procedure for the evaluation of images focuses on 1) identifying the function of the image, 2) assessing the function, and 3) analyzing the connection between the features of the image and the function of the image.” This provides a solid foundation to guide this study, and these elements will be seen through the following two analysis chapters.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### APPLICATION & ANALYSIS: ADVERTISEMENT NUMBER ONE

A Report to Congressional Requesters developed by the United States General Accounting Office stated in the report of prescription drugs:

Spending on direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs has tripled in recent years. Pharmaceutical companies promote their products directly to consumers through advertisements in magazines, newspapers, and consumer brochures; on the Internet; and on radio and television. (GAO, 1)

This chapter's analysis focuses on this type of promotion. Specifically, here a popular print ad produced and distributed by AstraZeneca on the prescription drug Nexium will be scrutinized. The Nexium ad will be examined under the microscope of Sonja Foss's visual rhetorical methods strategy in hopes of discovering a rationale for such a high return.<sup>6</sup> As noted previously, those three critical parts of analysis are the nature of the ad, the function of the ad, and the evaluation of the ad.

To preface the study it is beneficial to look over and define a few of the key design concepts that are discussed. This is critical to understand different graphic elements as well as specific design language that will be used.

This study will use the classic graphic design theory in regards to the visual analysis that will take place. Many of the terms to follow are defined by Bonnie Skaalid from the University of Saskatchewan.

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<sup>6</sup> As previously stated, there is a 40% return on direct-to-consumer advertising.

The first concept is that of lines. Lines have the power to convey a mood.

Different types of lines such as curved lines, jagged lines, or vertical lines all convey a different message. Skaalid then moves on to discuss the elements of value and design. She defines value as “the relative lightness or darkness of a certain area.” Value basically refers to a picture’s lighting, and it can be used to emphasize a specific part of the picture, or can be used to draw attention away from a specific part of the picture. Color value is the lightness or darkness of a specific color. Hue is strongly correlated with this concept. Colors have the ability to portray a specific meaning. Colors used in different circumstances have given color the ability to describe something, for example purple=royalty.

Finally, Skaalid discusses the terms space and depth, which will be beneficial for this study. She states, “We live in a three-dimensional world of depth. When we look around us, some things seem closer, some further away. The artist can also show the illusion of depth. . . “. Furthermore space and depth are broken into size and vertical location, overlapping, detail, and linear perspective. These issues all play a role in giving a flat image different perspective, for example, using size to make objects in pictures farther away. Detail is also a very common use in design; further away objects have a tendency of having less detail. These are just a few of the concepts that are used, and it is vital to the study to understand the elements and terminology of design.

To commence the analysis, this chapter begins with a description of the ad, a step that helps illuminate the nature of the ad, a copy of which is found in the appendix. This step includes a basic summary of a depiction of the ad as well as a discussion of the

presented and un-presented elements in the advertisement. Those things that are not physically present in the advertisement, but are things that the advertisers have elected not to say or to show can define un-presented elements.

The first advertisement selected was approved by the FDA in 1997 according to a 2004 *New York Times* article. The opening headline reads: “It’s happening across America.” These words are followed by a brief statement explaining the growing number of Nexium patients as recommended by doctors, which means that prescribed doctors have helped the success of Nexium through prescriptions. The ad pictures an aerial view looking over neighborhoods with a mountain skyline in the background. Many of the rooftops depicted in the ad are purple, but not all of them. Some roofs are simply gray or white, but they just fade into the surroundings. There is a curving line in the middle of the ad separating the picture from the text’s dominant lower right and left sections of the ad. There is a pill bridging the gap between the upper part of the ad and the lower part. This advertisement contains two sections, which according to Royne and Myers, includes “an FDA required portion containing risk information and a promotional portion containing the persuasive message” (68). For complete depiction, refer to the advertisement in the Appendix.<sup>7</sup> The following sections of this chapter look at the nature, function, and evaluation of the above described advertisement.

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<sup>7</sup> Please note, only the front side of the advertisement will be analyzed. The reverse side consists of detailed medical information.

## NATURE

With the description in hand, the sections to follow will begin to analyze the rhetorical appeal of this advertisement. The study can now turn to the nature of the advertisement, which sets the foundation to provide a proper clear seg-way into the function and evaluation of the advertisement.

This section will break down the advertisement even further and will provide insight into a possible deeper meaning of the visual advertisement. As stated in the literature review, the nature of the ad is identifying the ideas, themes, and allusions that the viewer will take away after looking at the ad. To understand the nature of the advertisement it is critical to depict the visual elements as stated by Mullen and Fisher. These elements consist of lines, textures, lighting, color, and other visual elements that can be identified (Mullen and Fisher, 187). Furthermore, Mullen and Fisher call these the production elements of the advertisement. The production elements as well as the aesthetic elements are combined to form the nature element of an advertisement. From this point a critic can depict the presented and un-presented elements in an advertisement.

To identify these elements the ad is observed from its most dominant features, moving on to perhaps its more overlooked features. The first thing that draws the eyes in the ad is the center picture of the neighborhood with purple roofs. As far as the eye can see, there are purple rooftops with the random out of place white roofs sporadically intermixed. The picture looks like a real image with some digital illustration over the top. The camera looks like it is sitting on top of a rooftop that is just slightly higher than

all the other homes to give it some depth. It is easy to notice that the houses are larger than the average American home. This element of the image can possibly be explained through reference to the expense of Nexium. As stated previously, Nexium is far more expensive than many others such as its counterpart Prilosec. Secondly, the viewer notices that many of the rooftops are purple. This instantly is eye-catching because purple shingles are quite rare. Purple is also popularly known as the color of royalty, which can be easily associated with things such as wealth or power. This visual note of difference immediately connotes the idea that some people in this neighborhood are being left out. The visual cue prompts the viewer to look further into the advertisement to find out what it is about and what the elusive message is referring to.

The subheading that follows the proclamation, "It's happening across America," reads: "Nationwide, doctors who specialize in acid reflux disease have switched more patients to NEXIUM-the purple pill-than to any other prescription of its kind." This tag line seems to be directed not only at the consumer, but also to the physicians who are potential prescribers of the drug. This statement also does an excellent job to stroke the egos of those doctors who are already prescribing the drug, therefore enforcing those actions that they are currently doing. These are the doctors and physicians across the country the deal with issues of acid reflux and heartburn.

The main colors that exist in the advertisement are purple and white. There are many other colors in the potential pallet, but these are the visually dominant colors in this advertisement. The purpose of white in this advertisement is only to make the purple more visible. Also, in the ad a very subtle curvy line is shown in the center of the



advertisement to separate the text from the picture. The purpose of the line is to simply act as a divider and move the viewer's eyes to the different sections of the ad. According to Charlotte Jirousek of Cornell University, "curved lines do vary in meaning. . . . Soft, shallow curves suggest comfort, safety, familiarity, and relaxation. They recall the curves of the human body, and therefore have a pleasing, sensual quality."<sup>8</sup> Regardless of what the creators of the ad intended, these are among the possible feelings induced by the existence of the curved line in the ad.

Also present in the advertisement is a very wordy lower portion. This constitutes the government (FDA) mandated and regulated portion of the advertisement. The rest of the advertisement is present in hopes that the viewer will not read this lower, more verbose section, for this section is required by the FDA and may actually subvert the function of the ad. This mandated text states what relief might be obtained through Nexium and the side effects that may exist, all of which are extremely negative to the function of the advertisement: to market the drug. The text also directs the reader to another form of promotion, which is sampling. According to Ginwalla, Chergui, and Mathews (2004), sampling occurs when physicians provide free samples to inquiring patients. This process will most likely help move the viewer to the ultimate function of the advertisement, analyzed sections to follow.

Most of the text in the lower portion of the advertisement appears in a normal font(not bold or italics), while one sentence stands out from the rest: "Healing Is Such A Great Feeling." It stands out from the rest because it is larger and bolder than the rest of

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<sup>8</sup> <http://char.txa.cornell.edu/language/element/element.htm>

the copy in the lower right portion of the advertisement. This statement is ironic because Nexium does not have healing power, which is why it is a pill that needs to be taken every day. Further exploration can reveal the irony in this statement. This statement exists for its functionality, which is also discussed in the section to follow. Notice that the statement never claims that Nexium actually heals, only that healing feels good. The idea of healing to most people who see this ad carries a positive light and builds an affinity to Nexium in the audience. The consumer thus fights an inner cognitive battle, which subconsciously 40 percent of the time the advertisement wins.

### FUNCTION

After review of the nature of the ad using Sonja Foss's approach, it is now feasible to look into the function of the advertisement. An article about drug ads, which appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, states: "Almost 60 percent of adults say they learn little or nothing about the drug itself." That is clearly not the case with this Nexium advertisement. From the very first glance it is apparent what this advertisement is for, or is it? These advertisements might carry more underlying functions, which can be decoded using Foss's critical eye.

As stated in the literature review the function is not necessarily based on the creator's intention, rather, from the viewpoint of this methodological approach, it is strictly based on the perception and interpretation of the receiver. The consumer, or the critic rather, creates the function. Shapiro (39) states that when the receiver interprets the ad, it "will have more meanings for its collective audience than it does for its producer" (as cited in Mullen and Fisher 187). According to Mullen and Fisher, "This

puts the focus on the decoding processes of the receiver” (187). The majority of individuals do not use a strategy of decoding, but such an approach is critical to understanding the functionality of an advertisement. Now we will look more closely at this advertisement and the functions it could possibly create.

This portion of the chapter will discuss some primary and secondary functions that could be deduced through a rhetorical critic’s eye. Perhaps the most dominant function of this advertisement is to build a curiosity in the viewer’s eyes. The opening statement, “It’s happen across America,” leaves the viewer questioning what the advertisement is really about. A primary question that may exist is: what is happening across America? This question probes further curiosity by its elusiveness. It hints that the majority of America is doing something that the viewer is not yet aware of. The statement begs for a response, setting up the viewer to search for clues to a riddle. It sets the viewer into an interactive frame of mind with the ad. The statement triggers viewer curiosity that leads the viewer to continue reading what the advertisement is about.

The second possible function that exists is promoting an urgency to be involved. This urgency is promoted through the tagline below the main heading “Nationwide, doctors who specialize in acid reflux disease have switched more patients to NEXIUM- the purple pill- than to any other prescription of its kind.” This function can be decoded by not only a consumer, but also by a potentially prescribing doctor. Doctors that are “not in the know” feel an urgency to be informed about Nexium. The tagline also provokes urgency in the consumer to find out what he or she have been missing out on.

This tagline corresponds with the visual image of the houses, some with purple roofs, and some with white roofs. This function ties strongly into the emotional appeal of the advertisement. Royne and Myers' study found that "emotional appeals were far more prevalent than rational appeals in the promotional portion of DTC ads. . ." (68). This appeal for urgency strikes a chord in the viewer because the majority of individuals do not like the feeling of not knowing something, which leads us to deduce the following presumed function.

This function takes a more rational as well as an emotional approach and creates a feeling of ignorance. This function can strictly only be addressed through further investigation. Rationally the advertisement functions to promote a lack of knowledge regarding the popular drug Nexium. This then stimulates an emotional response in the viewer, because individuals desire the answers, and more often than not will seek in the advertisement for them. This function could cause the consumer to feel uninformed, which, in turn, produces a feeling of ignorance. This function ties together the phenomena of curiosity and urgency and moves the critic or consumer to the text copy the lies on the lower portion of the ad. This text, as noted above, contains the FDA mandatory information of the side effects of the product. Since this portion is government mandated, the major function of this section is simply to inform. This portion takes a back seat to the predominant promotional function of the advertisement. Royne and Myers state in regards to this issue:

The overwhelming presence of emotional appeals in the headline and pictorial portions of the ads indicates that advertisers attempt to place the promotional

elements in a more prominent position, leaving the government mandated information about risks and side effects in the rarely read body copy. (68)

It is ironic that this portion of the DTC ad ends with the statement, “Healing Is Such A Great Feeling.” Just before this statement, the ad lists the possible side effects of the drug, which include: “headache, diarrhea, abdominal pain. . . “ just to name a few. The ending statement functions to smooth over that which has just been stated. This juxtaposition perhaps could be the most misleading part of the entire advertisement. Nexium does not necessarily cure heartburn, but rather relieves it. This is why people have to take the “purple pill” daily. The word “healing” hints to the fact that an individual possibly can be healed from heartburn using Nexium. The statement functions primarily to produce a cognitive bias in the consumer’s mind. The majority of the advertisement is directed at the uninformed person, so this link to “healing” is no different. If a person is uninformed, then this statement becomes extremely powerful. It ascribes a healing power for the issue of heartburn, which AstraZeneca has labeled as a “disease.”

Each of the above functions leads to what seemingly is the primary overall underlying function of the ad: the promotion of two distinct functions, with a singular mission to increase revenue for the drug company. In sum, the first function is moving the consumer to further inquiry about the product, and the second function is to promote the prescription of the product by doctors. This is typically the creator’s purpose of the advertisement, but intermixed in those functions lies an array of functions that cause the viewer to think or act a certain way. All of these functions

employ the amusing fantasy that your roof can be painted purple as well, if you just ask your doctor about the purple pill.

## EVALUATION

As previously stated, in the literature review, the evaluation step in Foss's schema consists of the assessment of how well or if the function was actually brought to fruition. Mullen and Fisher state:

One way to assess the function is to determine if the elements of the image contribute to the function. The aesthetic, production, and interpersonal visual elements all contribute to the function of associating the drug. . ." (193)

Mullen and Fisher's study evaluated the success of a DTC ad because it was not racially biased. Strictly following that idea, the ad using the image of purple roofs would be judged as successful as well. However, the advertisement lacks the presence of a human being; therefore, the advertisement cannot be biased to any specific race. This ad could be placed a number of places and be successful because this advertisement crosses all racial boundaries, it will evaluate the success of some of the other functions, as well as discuss issues of ethics in this final section of chapter four.<sup>9</sup>

Statistics prove that this advertisement had a measure of positive results from the functions listed above. The DTC advertisements provide an influx of revenue for the pharmaceutical companies. An article in the *Washington Post* refers to Nexium as a

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<sup>9</sup> For further discussion of the racial bias issue, see Mullen and Fisher.

“blockbuster drug.” Peterson states in her article “Big Pharma’s Golden Eggs”: “This is the term for any medication that generates more than \$1 billion in sales annually.” If Nexium is one of these “blockbuster drugs,” then there is no question that the advertisement helped further this result and was thus successful on the issue providing a profit.

A 2001 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* states: “40 percent say they plan to talk with their doctor about the health condition cited in the ad” (B-1). From an advertising perspective, this is a shocking amount of return on any given DTC advertisement. Perhaps more alarming, a study conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, cited by David Lazarus in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, revealed, “70 percent of adults learn little or nothing from such ads about the health condition in question.” This begins to raise questions of ethics regarding these forms of advertisements.

With such a large amount of success with DTC advertisements, pharmaceutical companies are encouraged to raise the prices of the drugs. Ads such as the one in question may be playing off the weak and uninformed. Many individuals buying into this advertisement’s enticing behavior do not know that cheaper similar drugs exist. Nexium has provided a marketing scheme to promote a much more expensive drug developed by the same organization that created a cheaper over-the-counter version of the same drug known as Prilosec.

Clearly, there are many ethical questions at hand. These types of advertisements are successful, but are they successful at the expense of ethics? Rather than inform those that are not educated, this advertisement makes those that do not know about

Nexium feel “left out of the neighborhood.” This form of advertisement provides a sense of urgency, which can possibly induce readers to skip the process of becoming properly informed. An individual viewing the advertisement could begin taking the Nexium pill without ever learning the full effects of the pill. It could also be misleading for the advertising to use the word “healing.” This linguistic choice creates an excitement in the consumer’s mind that helps promote the uninformed attitude.



## CHAPTER FIVE

## APPLICATION AND ANALYSIS: ADVERTISEMENT NUMBER TWO

Now that the methodology of Foss has been conducted on the “purple roof” ad, this chapter focuses its attention on a second advertisement. The methods of Foss will again be used as a tool to analyze the advertisements. This chapter will have several sections similar to the previous chapter. It will be critical to provide a detailed visual description of the visual image/advertisement, which is contained in the Appendix. This chapter will also include the nature, function, and evaluation aspects of Sonja Foss’s visual image analysis. The selected ad is a product claim ad as well as a reminder ad. It calls attention to the product name and supplies the side effects in a very subtle way. It also just reminds individuals of the product and beckons further research about the advertisement.

As noted in the previous chapter, it is vital to discuss the presented and un-presented elements in the advertisement. The presented elements are the graphical themes that exist in the image, while the un-presented elements are those things that are not visually present. This advertisement begins with the predominant phrase, “A new experience in power.” Situated below the statement is a male maestro waving a wand in his hands directing what seems to be a symphony orchestra. The maestro is dressed in a strapping tuxedo with a black blazer, over a white vest, shirt, and bow tie. His hair is almost shiny silver with a beard to match. Directly below the maestro are a few faceless individuals, as if they are actually musicians in the orchestra looking to the maestro for the next melodious transition.

Flowing from the maestro's hands is a part of the Nexium logo,<sup>10</sup> which is made up of circles of different sizes in a swoop motion appearance. They differ slightly from the logo in that they are white, and the logo is purple. Purple and white are again the most predominant colors in the advertisement. The mid-section contains a line that separates the purple dominant top portion from the white dominant lower section. Further description of the advertisement is presented in the sections to follow. The nature, function, and evaluation of the advertisement as previously conducted using Foss's methodology of analyzing visual images is discussed.

The advertisement, like the previously analyzed advertisement, has a line in the middle that separates the visually "captivating" portion of the advertisement from the verbose descriptive lower portion. The lower portion begins with a statement that reads, "A new feeling of relief, Nexium 40 mg offers greater acid control than the initiation dose of all other PPI's and greater healing power than either omeprazole or lansoprazole with no compromise in tolerability." Following that statement is the most prevalent statement due to its much larger font selection, which states, "It's got the power Nexium." Following this portion of the advertisement is a very wordy passage, in much smaller print that describes all of the side affects as well as much of the governmental regulatory language and a brief statement courtesy of AstraZeneca. This statement is present to clearly show the viewer that the drug Nexium is a product of AstraZeneca.

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<sup>10</sup> Nexium logo: see Appendix.

## NATURE

As stated previously, the nature of a visual image consists of the ideas, themes, and allusions that the viewer will take away after looking at the advertisement/image. This section of the chapter will discuss the aesthetic elements as well as the production elements and will help move the analysis into the function stage (Mullen and Fisher, 187).

There are a few key presented elements that hint at the different functions that this ad portrays. First and foremost, the critical eye cannot help but notice the maestro that is situated front and center. Secondly, the baton in his hand demonstrates ideas such as leadership and power. The majority of the attention of this advertisement is dedicated to this maestro, due to its dominant presence and catchy color. The implication of leadership and power from in this depiction is an important example of un-presented, but implied elements. Furthermore, the visual image also contains a bright spotlight pointed directly down on top of the maestro, exposing his black and white tuxedo as well as his glowing white hair and full mixed colored beard, which again calls attention to the maestro. To express the existence of power further, there is a giant swoosh of glowing white orbs strolling from the maestro's hands across the entire center of the image. These are white orbs on a dark background, which contain a bright outer glow that causes them to be a dominant feature of the image. These elements collectively imply that all eyes are on the maestro, including those of the consumer/critic.

The actual perspective of the image is that from a seated musician facing the maestro. On the sides of the image fellow musicians are seated with their eyes fixed on the maestro with music stands standing upright. These musicians are clearly secondary to the maestro and have minimal light vaguely illuminating their presence. It is also clear that the musicians are of minimal value because only the sides and backs of their heads can be seen.

As far as textual elements are concerned, the beginning phrase is the most highly visible portion of the advertisement that states, “ A new experience in power. “ The entire text is written in large white font, which is much larger than the rest of the presented text. The font also contains a bright outer glow, which from a designer's perspective is a method used to call attention. The words “new” and “power” are double the size of the words that are contained in the sentence. They also are presented in a bright, bold, and glowing fashion, which draws the attention of the viewer. The function this promotes will be outlined in the following section. The entire lower fourth of the advertisement is consumed by medical mandatory information, which fades into the background due to its opaqueness. This portion of the advertisement is the last part that draws the attention of the viewer or critic, if at all.

## FUNCTION

The function of the advertisement is, as Foss states, “the action it communicates” (as cited in Hill and Helmers 309). Once the visual image is captured, it can then take on different functions based on the viewing audience. This section looks specifically at the advertisement described above and will look at the different functions that this

advertisement effects. As previously stated, the function is not necessarily based on the creator's intention, but is rather formed through the perception and interpretation of the receiver or critic. The actual functions of this advertisement could expand to larger purposes than the creator intended it to.

This advertisement communicates many different functions according to the eye of the critic. The assessment of the nature of this advertisement probes at several different key functions, in which some are text-based, while others are image-based. The text combined with the visual provide a much more elaborate function, which perhaps is the most dominant. This function is likely to be that of the intentions of the creator.

The first function will focus on a few of the aesthetic elements of the advertisement. As stated in the nature section of this chapter, the image is taken from that of a seated orchestra member position. This can lead to a several different functions that call the consumer to action. First of all, the role of a musician is primarily to watch the maestro, and be ready to come in, cut off, or hold a note. The musicians also have music stands, which correspond with what the maestro is portraying with his baton and hands. A music stand exists to hold the music for the selected music piece, which correlates to the movements of the maestro's hands.

Each musician in an orchestra or symphony has a specific role to play, and a masterpiece can only be perfected, when each one of those roles is filled. If the viewer of this advertisement is sitting in and is part of the orchestra, the role of the viewer is to follow the maestro, which in this case is branding the drug Nexium in a classy subtle fashion. Every individual musician of a great symphony orchestra desires to play his or

her part perfectly and never be negatively noticed. If this is the case, then it is critical for the viewer to play his or her part in the advertisement, which, in this case, is to follow the lead and explore Nexium further. The advertisement thus invites a response similar to the advertisement in the previous analysis, which created a feeling of “being left out.”

Secondly, the existence, posture, and leadership of the maestro provides more functionality to this advertisement. A maestro exists to compose<sup>11</sup>, direct, and lead many individuals in hopes of producing the perfect music performance. Maestros are masters at what they do; they are usually considered the best of the best, which is why he or she is in the position that they fill. They are completely in control at all times, or should come across as such. The maestro in this advertisement even has his eyes closed and his head cocked back as if enjoying the music. Maestros are in the leadership position because he or she are the most learned, and he or she most likely sat in the seat of a musician for years and slowly became better and better until he or she reached a point where they were considered experts in the field, and thus worthy to lead.

The maestro’s posture is that of confidence, power, and presence. Confidence is critical and connects with many different target audiences. The viewer of this advertisement is invited to connect with the level of confidence of the maestro. The viewer might also desire that level of confidence, and quite possibly, the viewer might not even realize that this is a Nexium advertisement. Perhaps, a function of this advertisement is simply to promote confidence in the viewer, and in turn, connect confidence with Nexium. This correlation suggests further investigation into what the

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<sup>11</sup> Compose: A term used to relate to musicians who write his or her own symphony.

visual image is about, which may lead the viewer to further education about what Nexium is.

The most central function of this advertisement seems to be tied to the desire for power. It looks as if the headline, picture, and slogan all point to one major concept, which is power. The headline copy reads, "A new experience in power." That headline correlated with the image of the maestro all point to the issue of power and direction. To further this notion, as previously stated, the maestro has a swoosh of glowing orbs from his hands as if the music and power and just being poured out. If the viewer is familiar with Nexium, then the viewer most likely recognizes that the advertisement is associated with Nexium after viewing this portion of the image.

The elements of power and self-control can be utilized to promote the drug Nexium. The educated individual regarding Nexium feels the need to be in control of his or her heartburn, and thus empowered to stop that which is hindering the individual from doing exactly what he or she wants to be doing. The maestro's posture shows that he is completely comfortable where he is standing. If he were experiencing problems, such as heart burn or acid reflux, he most likely would not be standing in that position, or have such a relaxed look on his face. The function of empowerment is beneficial, because a majority of individuals do not want to be hindered by something that could be fixed, in this case, persistent heartburn.

The desire for power, has been shown throughout history to be largely associated with values such as leadership and confidence. Power also is strongly associated with concepts such as wealth and even royalty. Each of these things are desired by a majority

of people which helps to widen the actual target for the advertisement. There are several negative aspects of the advertisement and some elements that could decrease the effectiveness of this advertisement. The advertisement, like the previous analysis could possibly seem to be aimed at a wealthier audience. Symphony Orchestras are usually associated with middle-upper to upper-class individuals, which could correlate with the high price of Nexium.

Another function I will focus on is that which the word “new” promotes. Many prior studies have discussed and analyzed the success of this word in advertisement and the different messages it can portray.<sup>12</sup> The opening text reads, “A new experience in power.” This statement can produce several different responses in the viewer. People generally are excited by new things, which is why society supports so many different types of stores. People like to purchase new things. This eye-catching word strikes a chord with the viewer on that level. It builds an affinity to look further into the advertisement. It raises and develops curiosity in the viewer to ask the simple question: what is new?

The beginning copy in the lower right portion of the advertisement also reads “a new feeling of relief.” The desire for something new, as well as the desire for power, provides versatile functionality to this advertisement. The viewer struggles to find affinity with the maestro or with those that are looking at the maestro. The viewer can potentially be the maestro or the seated musician. Now that the nature and function of

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<sup>12</sup> See D. Ogilvy: *On Advertising*, 1995.



the advertisement have been addressed, it is now possible to assess and evaluate how well those things worked.

## EVALUATION

The use of and promotion of ideas such as power and confidence can prove to be beneficial to the ad creator's purpose. Like the majority of all advertising, the strategy is to promote/sell a product, service, or idea. This advertisement does just that, and, given the popularity of Nexium, the advertisement is successful from that perspective. Nexium is part of multi-billion dollar industry and is one of the most successful and most highly promoted proton-pump inhibitors on the market.

The over all assessment of the function and nature of the advertisement prove to be beneficial from a revenue perspective. Since Nexium's birth, it has grown rapidly and seen revenue of more than three billion dollars for the year 2003, the time period just after this advertisement was developed. It is not easy to track the benefits of this exact advertisement financially, but at least it can be said that it did not hinder the growth of the product. Hugo Carlos, a marketing analyst, stated,

Nexium is indeed perceived as salvation for those who suffer from gastrointestinal disease, and for those who have used the drug. . . they have also done a great job in getting their name to be known, even for the people with no need for the treatment. (Zumpano, 3)

The advertisement selected for this analysis is a perfect example of what Huga Carlos is discussing. The advertisement does an excellent job promoting the drug Nexium, as well as provides positive promotion for AstraZeneca.

However, the ad does raise ethical questions, which is part of the evaluation included in Foss's methods. Playing on the idea and need of power can itself be misleading. The advertisement influences the use of the product and puts a small influence on the side effects and the different forms of treatment for the given health problem. The side effects are not properly and predominantly displayed therefore they have a much smaller influence on the viewer. It also keenly plays to a higher-income crowd very subtly through the use of orchestrated elements such as the use of a symphony. Promotion of a drug and branding it in such a way that is necessary, from a critical ethical perspective is slightly misleading. An article in *New York Times* stated

... many medical experts say most patients would do just as well with various cheaper over-the-counter remedies for indigestion and heartburn, including AstraZeneca's own Prilosec—a chemically similar predecessor that no longer requires a prescription and sells for \$40 a month or less. (Elliott and Ives)

The same article went on to quote Dr. Sharone Levine from Kaiser Permanente, "Nexium is no more effective than Prilosec" (Elliott and Ives, 2). So, ethically speaking, the majority of print advertisements for Nexium are slightly misleading and a little disturbing. It has been promoted as a new type of relief, which in reality it is the same relief that has previously existed, just with better brand identity and with slightly different ingredients.

## CHAPTER SIX

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of Mullen and Fisher's study of Sonja Foss's visual rhetorical analysis provided a proper guideline at which to conduct this study. This study has revealed some key issues regarding the direct-to-consumer advertising industry. As previously stated, the industry has been in much scrutiny regarding the legitimacy and power it holds. It is critical to see exactly what is taking place in advertisements and to understand the power a single advertisement can carry. This success is due to the nature of the advertisement, the functions the advertisements conclude, as well as the successful evaluation and assessment of the advertisements.

By sales revenue alone, AstraZeneca has done an excellent job of branding. Branding is a popular strategy of advertisers that is used to build popularity of a any given product or service. According to *Advertising Glossary*, branding is "a marketing function that identifies products and their source and differentiates them from all other products." AstraZeneca has done just that with the above advertisements, along with their current advertising strategy.

The nature section's of each advertisement providing an enlightening principle by which to dissect the visual image. Sonja Foss's methods originally created for traditional images as well as photography can also be applied to any visual image whose goal is to move to some form of action. It is an elementary concept to conclude that the purpose of direct-to-consumer advertising's main goal is to bring in revenue on

whatever product or service is being advertised. It is not however elementary to pinpoint in an advertisement that which calls the viewer to action.

This study has produced many questions regarding the actual functionality of an advertisement. It is a simple concept, but the ability to look past the creator's intention of a visual image can provide some valuable outcomes. As seen in the two chapters of analysis the functions are much larger when seen from a critical rhetorical analysis perspective. Each production and aesthetic element of the advertisement can hold a separate function that can cause side effects for the viewer. There have been many previous studies regarding the side effects of direct-to-consumer advertising and this study touches on those. The purpose of this study was to show the adaption of Sonja Foss's visual rhetorical analysis on other forms of the visual than traditional art or the like. The functions probe questions on ethical issues, and could possibly generate a much firmer regulation from organizations such as the FDA.

The compare and contrast analysis of the two separate ads raises some ethical questions, as well as some questions of a lack of integrity and honesty. This study has revealed that one of the advertisements states that the pill Nexium is used for relief, while the other advertisement uses the word healing. Clearly these are two separate things. Relief is usually something a case where the pain is reprieved for a time, while healing provides a complete deletion of whatever the problem may be. This raises further ethical questions regarding the advertisement's functions.

This study also could serve as a point of reference for how to properly analyze a current non-traditional art form, in this case direct-to-consumer advertising. Ethical

questions will always linger regarding the legitimacy of these advertisements. This study could serve as a map for further advertising developmental process, and help eliminate issues involving ethics.

Although recently AstraZeneca has cut back on the amount of print advertising, the company still pushes the famous or infamous purple pill. A recent FiercePharma article stated that \$200 million was spent on print advertising in 2007 (Staton, 1). Further study might consist of analyzing AstraZeneca's "successful" online presence.

This study has provided an enlightening look into the adaption of Sonja Foss's methods on the issue of DTC advertising. This style of analysis can be adapted to any form of visual art or image and can provide a framework for viewing different advertisements.

Future study might look at the current condition of television advertisements; they may be analyzed within a specific ethical framework. Continuous study could also reveal that the FDA needs to change some of the regulation regarding DTC advertising.

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Appendix A

**It's happening across America**  
 Nationwide, doctors who specialize in acid reflux disease have switched more patients to NEXIUM—the purple pill—than to any other prescription of its kind.\*



If you've treated your symptoms and changed your diet, but persistent heartburn still comes back two or more days a week, it could be acid reflux disease. For many people, just one NEXIUM pill a day—along with a sensible diet and lifestyle changes—can mean 24-hour heartburn relief. And NEXIUM goes deeper. It heals erosions in your esophagus that, over time, acid reflux can cause—a condition called erosive esophagitis. Only a doctor can determine if you have it. Most erosions heal in 4 to 8 weeks. Your results may vary.

So if you're still getting heartburn, don't suffer in silence. Go back to your doctor and ask if NEXIUM is right for you. NEXIUM has a low occurrence of side effects, the most common being headache, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Symptom relief does not rule out serious stomach conditions. Take advantage of our Free Trial Offer. Don't wait. Bring the free trial certificate to your doctor and ask if NEXIUM, the healing purple pill, is right for you. **Healing Is Such A Great Feeling.**

Visit us at [purplepill.com](http://purplepill.com) or call 1-800-4-NEXIUM  
 Please read the important Product Information about NEXIUM on the reverse side and discuss it with your doctor.

**AstraZeneca**

\* Source: VeriScan. Among gastroenterologists. Week 2003-January 2004. NEXIUM and the purple pill are either registered or unregistered trademarks of AstraZeneca, one of our partners. ©2004 AstraZeneca. All rights reserved. 210001-2004



Appendix B



PBS listed  
1 August

A new experience  
in power.\*

A new feeling of relief.\*  
Nexium 40 mg offers greater acid control than  
the initiation dose of all other PPIs<sup>1,4</sup> and greater  
healing power than either omeprazole<sup>5</sup> or  
lansoprazole<sup>6</sup> with no compromise in tolerability.<sup>7</sup>

It's got the power. **Nexium**<sup>®</sup>  
esomeprazole

\*In clinical studies of reflux oesophagitis comparing Nexium 40 mg vs omeprazole 20 mg and lansoprazole 30 mg. †Clinical significance is yet to be established.

**AstraZeneca** Please review Product Information before prescribing. Full Product Information is available from the AstraZeneca Information Service on 1800 815 342. Nexium<sup>®</sup> (esomeprazole) Indication: Symptomatic gastro-oesophageal reflux, treatment and relapse prevention in erosive oesophagitis, combination therapy (with appropriate antacids) in peptic ulcer associated with H. pylori. Contraindications: Known hypersensitivity to esomeprazole, substituted benzimidazoles or any other constituents of Nexium. Precautions: Exclude malignancy, porphyria, lactation. Patients with hepatic insufficiency, glucose-galactose malabsorption or sucrose-isomaltase insufficiency. Adverse Reactions: GI upset, headache, dizziness, pruritis, urticaria, dermatitis. Interactions: citalopram, clarithromycin, clozapine, dexamethasone, digoxin, phenytoin, ketoconazole, itraconazole, warfarin. Dosage: Treatment of erosive reflux oesophagitis: 40 mg once daily for four or eight weeks. Long term management of patients will benefit, according to its prevention, 20 mg once daily. Symptomatic treatment of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD): In patients without oesophagitis, 20 mg once daily for four weeks. If symptom control has not been achieved after four weeks, the patient should be further investigated. After initial therapy, subsequent symptom control can be achieved using an on-demand regimen taking 20 mg orally when needed. Healing of duodenal ulcer associated with H. pylori or eradication of H. pylori with active or healed peptic ulceration: Nexium 20 mg was used in combination with 1000 mg amoxicillin and 500 mg clarithromycin, twice daily for seven days. Presentation: Nexium 20 mg and 40 mg tablets are comprised of white coated tablets containing esomeprazole (as magnesium trihydrate). Available in blister packs of 30 tablets. PBS Dispensed Price: 40 mg 20c, \$75.22; 20 mg 20c, \$46.15. Sponsor: AstraZeneca Pty Ltd, AEN 54 000 682 511, Alma Road, North Ryde NSW 2113.

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