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SENSA Weight Loss System
Advertising and Media Techniques Analysis

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Health and the Consumer HE 315 Section S

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Advertisement/Brochure/ Product

The Product is SENSEA weight loss system. The company is listed at the bottom of the first page in fine print as SENSEA Products, LLC, 2012 Manhattan Beach, CA 90245-4967. The Catch phrase is “SHAKE YOUR SENSEA loss 30 plus pounds without the traditional diet.” Which they claim is “doctor formulated and back by science.” They also offer a free trial and a link to click immediate take you to purchase the product. As an endorsement, the company list the logo’s from the TV shows, news paper and magazines ads that Dr Hirsh the inventor of SENSEA appeared. The logos included TV’s NBC, CBS, and FOX, The New York Times and The Washington Post newspapers, Shape and Time magazines and EXTRA a television news magazine show. In addition the first page include links to how it works, success stories, doctor formulated, medical advisors, press, shop and my SENSEA. (SENSEA Products LLC [SENSEA], 2012)

Intended Audience & Appeal

The intended audience is busy moms to retired grandmothers. The ad states that “SENSEA lets them lose weight on their own terms” because all they would need to do is to sprinkle SENSEA on their food and loses weight. The customers who use SENSEA, the ad claims, do not have to change their regular eating habits or exercise schedule. They also claim, the increase sensation of smell will automatically decrease the intake of food. (SENSEA, 2012)

Sensa focus their attention on this audience because they know that many people today have very busy schedules. The fact that Sensa is convenient, easy to use, without changing eating habit and exercise will appeal to the targeted audience.

Advertisement/Brochure/Product Purpose & Objective

The purpose of SENSEA, according to the web site is to provide a non-prescription weight loss program. The founder, Dr. Hirsh who claims to be a board certified neurologist and psychologist among other titles are accredited with “Ground-Breaking Research Study.” He claims that after extensive studies on smell and taste he developed a combination of “testants” that will boost the taste and smell of food and lead to weight loss. He claimed “1436 women and men sprinkled the scented, flavorless “Testant” on everything they ate during a 6 month period and they lost an average of 30-5 pounds.” He said that people in the control group lost only 2 pounds. In addition it is asserted that thousands of people have lost weight using SENSEA. (SENSEA, 2012)

The consumer would believe this claim because it came from a doctor and it is supposedly backed by research. The research was not evaluated by his peers or repeated in a Food and Drug Administration laboratory, which would be regarded as a strong basis to the claim.

Suspicion of Quackery/Fraud & Description

(SENSEA, 2012) claims “participants were not asked to change their diet or add an exercise routine.’ In 2007, Barrett, London, Baratz, and Kroger stated that one of the indicators of fraud is when “the manufacture also claimed that the product worked without a change in the user’s diet and exercise routine” (p. 292).

Another indicator of quackery is in the use of bulking ingredients. According to Barrett et al., (2007) “Bulking agents are indigestible, noncaloric substances that absorb water during digestion and supposedly trick the stomach into thinking it is full” (p. 287).

In dissecting the ingredients of SENSEA we found, first maltodextrin which is used as a filler and thickener, and is an easily digestible carbohydrate made from rice, corn or potato starch. Secondly, Tricalcium Phosphate is an electrolyte replacement agent which increases calcium in the bone, kidney and GI tract. Thirdly Silica which is a mineral found in sand and quartz usually rocks and is used as a flow agent in powdered food, it has minute benefit to the body (thefreedictionary.com, 2007). Finally soy and milk products were added to the product.

Further proof of quackery is the use of “testimonials from movie stars, professional athletes and other celebrities [who] are commonly used to promote questionable health methods” Barrett et al., (2007).

The SENSEA website has testimonies from a movie star from the millionaire matchmaker show, a past constant from the biggest loser TV show and a journalist and television host. Added to that there are many before and after pictures of people who said they lost from 10 to 105 pounds (SENSEA, 2012).

Evidence of Doublespeak, Half-Truths, and other Promotional Techniques

The deliberate use of the word doctor, doctor formulated, and medical advisor is a promotional technique to convince consumers of a genuine products. These so called professionals may not be licensed to practice medicine or may have certification from a non-accredited school.

No exercise, no counting calories, no change of diet, is clear evidence of double speaking. As stated by Barrett et al., (2007) “Despite the illusion that the products are useful, the ad actually promises nothing.” (p. 50) Uninformed consumers may buy into the hype in believing this product really works, but according to the (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2012) In order to lose weight successfully it must be gradual and steady about 1to 2 pounds weekly. The CDC also stated that “Healthy weight loss isn’t just about “diet” or “program”. It’s about an ongoing lifestyle that includes long-term changes in daily eating and exercise habits.” (CDC, 2012)

Additionally in order to lose weight the calories used up daily must exceed what a person take in and if you reduce your calories by 500-1000 daily and average weight loss of 1to 2 pounds is possible. Physical activity of about 60-90 minutes of moderate intensity can help to keep weight of for the long term. (CDC, 2012).

Quackery/Fraud Victim Characteristics

Sensa provides “success stories” of consumers who allegedly purchased their weight loss system and was successful with drastic weight loss. According to the story a client lost a total of 93 pounds in 10 months. A person with low self esteem will likely want to use this method, in the belief that such weight loss is possible with just a sprinkle. Sensa states “It’s so easy. If you can season your food, you can lose weight with SENSEA.” (SENSEA, 2012). Secondly many people do not believe in what doctors say about weight loss, but are quick to believe in the print ads, web sites or infomercials on television thus making consumers truly vulnerable to the information they receive via these media. Finally lets take Marcia who was desperate to lose weight, she wanted to “look good” at her sister’s up coming wedding. When Marcia saw the advertisement for SENSEA weight loss system, she believed that was and answers to her prayers and immediately brought the product.

Response by Consumers

A consumer who thinks a product is harmful or thinks that fraud and quackery is involved can take responsibility by making a written complaint to the Federal Trade Commission. A copy of the letter should be sent to the congressperson, the US Postal Service, the Better Business Bureau, Electronic Retailing Association (infomercials) and the editor or manager of media outlet where the ad appears. The consumer must ensure that relevant

information be included such as the name of the product, where and what time did you see the ad, what side effect did they experience, and any additional details in order to give a clear and concise image of the products.

References

Barett, S., London, W.M., Baratz,R.S., & Kroger,M. (2007). *Consumer Health: A Guide to Intelligent Decisions*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

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