

# Comparative analysis of advertising and promotion of traditional herbal medicine and food supplement at different markets - case study

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## Introduction

Macedonia and Serbia fully follow EU regulation of medicines. Herbal medicines in Macedonia are regulated by the Law on Medicines and Medical Devices (2007) and the Regulation on the registration of traditional herbal medicinal products from 2008. Serbia also follows EU legislation. Laws on Medicines in Macedonia and Serbia are harmonized with the EU regulation of medicines.

Macedonia follows EU legislation for food supplements. The products are regulated by the special requirements for safety of food supplements from 2012 (Official Gazette of Republic of Serbia no. 45/10, 27/11; 50/12), and the Rulebook amending the Rulebook on special requirements for food supplements from 2013 and 2015 (Official Gazette of Republic of Serbia, no. 41/13), and in compliance with the Croatian Rulebook on food supplements in terms of their classification from 2013. Serbia also follows EU legislation, but has not implemented and do not follow the Regulation on nutrition and health claims, novel food regulation procedures and the law on using symbols on packaging and packaging waste. For food supplements, indications and properties that are not possessed should not be attributed (Dzeperoski, 2013; Kotler, 1989; Kotler and Keler, 2009).

The main goal of this paper was to make comparative analysis of advertising and promotion of the product Sentis by the company Bionika Pharmaceuticals in Macedonia and Serbia. The marketing campaigns, TV spots and internet advertisement have been analyzed. The choice of the countries is based upon different product categorization in which Sentis is classified.

## Materials and methods

Comparative method for analyzing the regulation, advertising and promotion of the food supplements and traditional herbal medicines was used.

## Results and discussion

### Case study

Sentis is a natural sedative in the form of soft gelatin capsules containing 200 mg of extract of valerian root (*Valeriana Officinalis*). In Macedonia Sentis is registered in 2012 as traditional herbal medicine (THM), while in Serbia is registered as a food supplement in 2013. Valerian root has been used since ancient times before the existence of synthetic sedatives. The action is due to valerenic acid; experimental pharmacological studies have shown that it reduces motility, causing hypnotic activity, offsetting the effect of caffeine and improves coordination. In both countries registered indications are temporary relieve of the symptoms of nervous tension, stress and insomnia. Benefits are unlike synthetic sedatives, it does not cause drowsiness and dependence (Bionika, 2013; PDR, 2007; WHO, 1999).

The differences regarding dosing and indications, resulting from the different classification of the same product are as follows:

- dosing registered as THM in Macedonia is 4 x 200 mg, while as food supplement in Serbia maximum daily dose is decreased to 2 x 200 mg;
- indications are the same in both countries, except that in Macedonia additionally is registered the sedative effect.

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These differences concern advertising and promotional activities.

In Macedonia and Serbia same package in green and stylized cubist design of flowers and brain with minimalistic look is used. The text on the package and the patient leaflets are different in accordance with the categorization, in correlation with the specific regulation. For THM it is written clearly that it is medicine without prescription, with specific 6 line content structure of the patient leaflet and indications based on traditional use. For the food supplement is clearly stated that the product is food supplement and also ingredients, nutrition and energetic values must be printed on the package, whereas the leaflet and claims are not obligatory. In Serbia the food supplement Sentsis is sold with leaflet which contains claims.

Internet is universal and powerful digital marketing tool in promotion of company products, including company web-sites. The content of websites also varies in different countries.

Promotional materials are with similar text content and same design in both countries, except the statement that it is THM or food supplement. The other difference for the THM is also that "the patient leaflet should be read, for more information you should consult your pharmacist or doctor". The last is valid for all forms of advertisement.

TV spot for Sentsis as THM has been approved for advertising in electronic media to the general public by the Ministry of Health. The message which should remain in the subconscious of the audience is that when you use Sentsis the life will be without anxiety, stress, carefree, without worries and the consumer will continue on with life. TV spot for Sentsis as food supplement in Serbia is from informative character. It is not necessary approval for advertising, because is based on generally accepted scientific data and they are comprehensible to the average consumer. In Serbia should be submitted for approval only health claims for reducing the risk of disease. The message which should remain in the subconscious of the audience is that it is a natural product for healthy people, which if used will help reduce certain symptoms.

Except promoting the product, with both advertisements is also promoted the new pharmaceutical company.

TV advertising in Macedonia with a strong and distinctive message, along with the promotion activities, helped the company to achieve significant market share in this segment. Marketing of products by companies should be in accordance with the current country regulation for specific product category.

## Conclusion

There are major differences in the marketing of THM/OTC and food supplements. All promotional materials for THM to the general public are subject to approval by regulatory bodies, based on the approved summary of product characteristics and patient leaflet. The marketing of food supplements is more liberal in advertising and in Serbia is not subject to approval, if based on generally accepted scientific data. Macedonia follows the EU Regulation on nutrition and health claims for food supplements. The results of the case study can also be used for preparation of marketing materials for other products on other markets of interest with similar regulation.

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