

# Hermes highlights need for better formats

Conventional tablets and capsules may no longer be the “go-to solution” for delivering medicines and supplements, according to a survey commissioned by dosage-form specialist Hermes Pharma.

Conducted with market researcher the Spiegel Institut Mannheim, the study – which surveyed over 2,000 people in Germany and the US – revealed that more than 55% of respondents found it difficult to swallow tablets or capsules and that the problem was not just limited to the elderly or children.

“Over half the people surveyed – 50% in the US and more than 60% in Germany – reported difficulties in swallowing tablets or capsules” (see Figure 1), Hermes pointed out.

Furthermore, while 44% of participants aged 65 or older had reported difficulties, the company noted, an even greater number of 16-34 year olds – 70% – had also reported swallowing problems.

This showed, Hermes said, that “solid tablets suffer from a range of drawbacks” and might no longer offer the best way to deliver medicines and supplements to consumers.

Turning to what product characteristics people looked for when selecting a medicine or food

supplement, the study revealed that 64% of those questioned wanted products that were “easy and comfortable to swallow” (see Figure 2).

This was followed by a pleasant flavour/ odour – 41% – while 38% said they felt “ease of integration into everyday routines” was an important factor.

These results, Hermes explained, offered industry an opportunity to increase “acceptance and compliance”, adding that the company was able to help OTC medicines and supplements manufacturers develop and produce dosage forms that were “truly user-friendly” and provided an alternative to existing tablets and capsules.

The vast majority of people questioned in both Germany and the US were already aware of alternatives to traditional tablets and capsules, such as effervescent and chewable tablets, orally-disintegrating granules (ODG), lozenges or instant drinks, the company noted, pointing out that 90% of Germans and 85% of those in the US had heard of such products.

Most of the German participants had already tried these alternatives, Hermes said, with 90% of those questioned having already used effervescent tablets and 86% having tried lozenges.

A smaller proportion – 65% – had used an instant drink, while half had tried a chewable tablet and 39% had used ODG.

In the US, direct experience of the alternatives was lower, the company revealed, with only 52% of participants having tried effervescent tablets, despite a high level of awareness. Similar to Germany, ODG was the least well-known alternative dosage form, with less than half of people aware of it. Only 16% reported using the granules.

User experience of these alternatives was also much better than with conventional tablets or capsules, Hermes pointed out, with participants consistently scoring tablets/capsules lower than all other dosage forms for characteristics such as ease of swallowing, sensation in the mouth, package opening and ease of use.

In the US, instant drinks had polled the best for user experience, Hermes said, with participants agreeing that they were easy to swallow and quick to use.

Lozenges scored highest in Germany, the firm noted, with participants praising the ease with which they could be integrated into their daily routines and how easy they were to ingest.

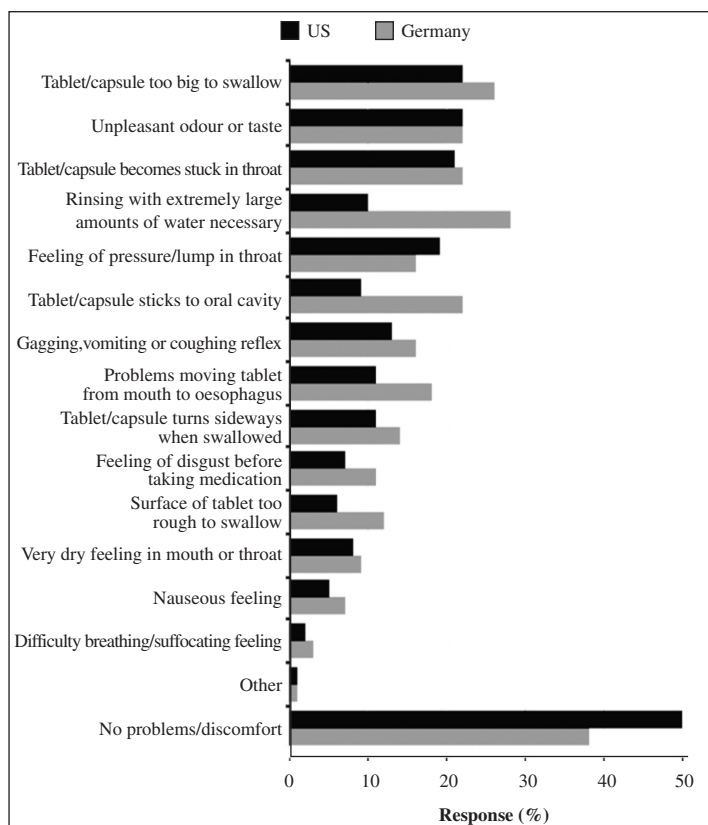


Figure 1: German and US consumers' answer to the question: “Do you have or have you had problems or discomfort prior to or while swallowing tablets or capsules? If so, how do/did they occur?” Multiple responses were permitted (Source – Hermes)

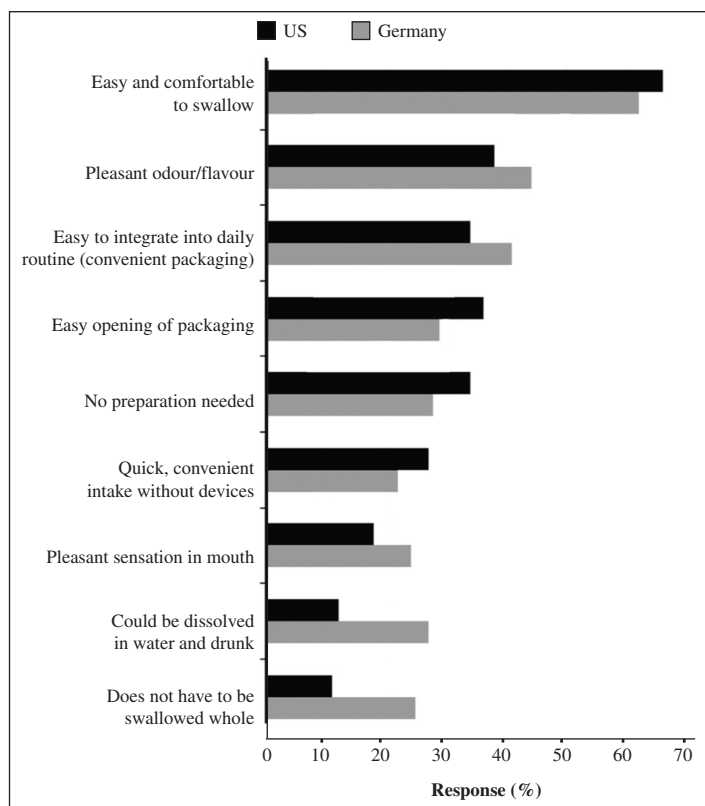


Figure 2: German and US consumers' answer to the question: “If you had to take a medication or a food/dietary supplement for short-term use or chronically over a number of years: What characteristics would then be particularly important to you?” Up to four responses were permitted (Source – Hermes)