

# When Does a GLP-1 Become a **Christmas** Decoration?



## When you can buy Ozempic-inspired decorations at your local department store

GLP-1s for weight loss (Mounjaro, Wegovy) have slipped their original boundaries. What started as a targeted metabolic treatment is now a pop-culture object. They sit in the same mental carousel as Stanley Cups, Lululemon leggings, a Trader Joe's tote bag, the Oura ring and Taylor Swift merch: 'signalling devices', the things people talk about to say something about themselves.

For pharma companies, this changes everything.



## The Core Shift: From Molecule to Meme

This isn't a trend. It's a fundamental change in how people engage with this category.

### Before:

People with obesity (PwO) encountered GLP-1s through their doctor, clinical guidelines or maybe a friend's quiet mention.

### Now:

PwO arrive at the consultation already immersed in GLP-1 culture; celebrity transformations, scarcity headlines, moral debates, Reddit threads. They're not exploring options; they're **editing an existing narrative they've absorbed from social media, dinner parties and gossip.**

### The result:

- **PwO are 'pre-primed'** with beliefs, fears, and expectations formed outside the clinic
- **HCPs become gatekeepers** of something that feels fashionable, finite and fraught
- **Social contagion outpaces clinical communications** – one friend's success story at the gym matters more than an educational brochure



# Why Traditional Research Approaches Are Missing This

If GLP-1s now behave like consumer super-brands (think: Apple, Peloton, Dyson), then ‘aided-awareness trackers’ and ‘message testing’ won’t capture what’s actually driving decisions.

The brand is being built in public, with or without pharma’s involvement. **Most people’s first contact with GLP-1s is cultural, not clinical.**

To understand behaviour, you need to study GLP-1s as:

- a medical intervention, AND
- a cultural phenomenon shaping identity, aspiration and access



## What You Should Actually Be Researching

### 1. What are the dominant narratives?

‘Magic fix’, ‘unfair shortcut’, ‘elite access’, ‘finally, real help’, ‘will it be taken away?’ Map these to understand where your brand can credibly play and where you’ll face backlash.

### 2. How are HCPs managing the dissonance?

They’re caught between excitement about efficacy and concern about long-term use, PwO pressure and a sense that the conversation has escaped their control.

### 3. How do PwO integrate GLP-1s into their identity?

Are they ‘managing a chronic disease’, ‘prepping for a wedding’ or ‘trying that thing everyone’s talking about’? These distinctions drive adherence, advocacy and dropout.

### 4. Where does cultural buzz help and where does it erode trust?

The same visibility that reduces stigma can breed cynicism if your brand looks opportunistic or tone-deaf.

## The Risk of Getting This Wrong

Two equally costly outcomes:

1



**Look cynical:** Chase the trend too hard and you appear opportunistic, especially if clinical data doesn't support the hype.

2



**Look invisible:** Ignore the cultural moment and you cede narrative control to competitors, influencers and compounders.

Both erode trust. Both cost market share.



## The Opportunity

Read GLP-1s not just as products in a class, but as participants in culture. Then design market research, segmentation and messaging that reflect how people actually think and feel in this moment.

The brands that win won't be those with the best clinical data alone. They'll be those which understand that their audiences are navigating both a treatment decision and a cultural minefield – and those who design strategies accordingly.

### Image references

1. <https://www.tiktok.com/@alaniscooperx/video/7553267289273961750>
2. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCRpklgOQJc/>

## Want to discuss how this applies to your brand?

If your brand is caught between cultural momentum and clinical credibility, you're not alone; and this is precisely where strategic thinking pays off. We can help you deliver insights for all stages of your brand life cycle through custom solutions that impact strategic decision-making.



**Schedule a 30-minute session** to map your brand positioning and navigate the 'decoration effect' in your strategy. Let's explore your specific challenges and opportunities.

Reach out to your Adelphi team or Contact [AR@adelphigroup.com](mailto:AR@adelphigroup.com)