

Regional considerations for state-wide social marketing campaigns—some lessons learned

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Introduction

Social marketing campaigns play an important role in raising awareness, changing attitudes and contributing to positive health behaviour change. The Heart Foundation (WA Division) is contracted by the Department of Health, WA to implement both the Find Thirty every day[®] state-wide adult physical activity campaign and the Draw the Line state-wide adult healthy weight campaign in WA.

Both campaigns are highly relevant to two of Western Australia's most pressing public health issues, physical inactivity and overweight and obesity. Health problems related to physical inactivity and excess weight result in substantial health and economic cost to individuals, families and communities. In Western Australia (WA) in 2006, 41% of adults were inactive or insufficiently physically active for good health, 37% were overweight and 14% obese¹. In 2009, 40% were inactive or insufficiently physically active for good health, 37% were overweight and the proportion of obese adults had increased to 18%². Those living outside of the Perth metropolitan area recorded higher rates of overweight and obesity.

Adults living outside of metropolitan areas often have a higher prevalence of risk factors for chronic disease and poorer health outcomes. Therefore, regional populations are a priority target group for WA state-wide social marketing campaigns. A challenge for the developers of these campaigns is to ensure that the messages and images in these campaigns equally resonate with metropolitan and non-metropolitan audiences. This article describes the formative processes undertaken to ensure the campaigns had appeal and relevance in WA and describes results which confirm the effectiveness of the campaigns in reaching a regional audience.

Campaign overview and objectives

The Find Thirty every day[®] campaign, launched in 2008, is a comprehensive campaign with elements of mass media, a website, advocacy and public relations and it seeks to promote community engagement in physical activity programs. The campaign aims to increase the number of WA adults who are sufficiently active for good health. The campaign objectives are to:

- increase awareness of the type and frequency of physical activity required for good health
- increase awareness of the specific benefits of physical activity in relation to chronic disease and general health (physical, mental, social)

- demonstrate how people who are insufficiently active can overcome perceived barriers to participation in physical activity
- congratulate people who are already active.

Similarly, the Draw the Line campaign is a comprehensive initiative with similar elements to the physical activity campaign. It aims to prevent unhealthy weight gain among WA adults by promoting practical ways to make healthier choices. Launched in 2009, the campaign is a collaborative initiative of the Heart Foundation, Cancer Council WA and Diabetes WA. The campaign objectives are to:

- increase awareness of the benefits associated with being a healthy weight
- increase awareness of the steps that can be taken to prevent weight gain and maintain a healthy weight
- increase the confidence of adults in their ability to take the steps promoted to prevent weight gain and maintain a healthy weight
- increase the proportion of adults in WA who report changes in attitudes, intentions and behaviour in relation to their own weight as a result of the campaign.

Methods

In developing and testing the mass media concepts, a thorough process of formative research was undertaken to ensure the campaign messages and images would have relevance and meet with acceptance in the community. Both campaigns were developed using a 10-step formative process:

Step 1 Literature and scientific review

Step 2 Epidemiological review

Step 3 Theoretical considerations

Step 4 Campaign brief development (based on information from steps 1 to 3)

Step 5 Proposition development and testing with target group

Step 6 Creative brief development (based on information from steps 4 to 5)

Step 7 Advertising concept development and testing with target group (including metropolitan, regional and Aboriginal adults in WA)

Step 8 Concept refinement and pre-production (including confirmation of scripts and selection of cast, locations and wardrobes with target groups in mind)

Step 9 Campaign channel selection, scheduling and implementation (including television, supporting media and support strategies)

Step 10 Campaign review and evaluation (ongoing formative, process and impact evaluation)

Regional populations were considered during all stages of the formative development process. For example, consultation with regional health professionals was conducted during step 1 and step 9. Focus groups conducted for campaign concept testing included metropolitan, regional and rural adults, and paired interviews with Aboriginal adults, to ensure key target groups were represented during these stages.

Both campaigns use a social marketing framework to develop the campaign strategies, including mass media, educational materials, professional development and links to community programs. A network of health practitioners is used to facilitate ongoing regional engagement and support community activities.

The impact evaluation of both campaigns is measured by random pre and post cross-sectional Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) surveys of WA adults. Surveys include a sufficient sample of regional adults to provide adequate numbers for meaningful comparisons.

The Find Thirty every day[®] impact evaluation model consists of a random sample of 1,000 adults (including 250 regional adults) aged 20–54 years, at baseline (pre-test, April/May 2008), after media wave three (post-test 1, March/April 2009) and after media wave seven (post-test 2, Feb/March 2010). A cohort was also followed throughout the first two years of the campaign, however, results from this group are not yet available.

The Draw the Line impact evaluation model consists of a random sample of 600 adults conducted at baseline (pre-test, January 2009), after media wave one (post-test 1, February 2009), after media wave three (post-test 2, November 2009) and after media wave four (post-test 3, May 2010). Respondents are aged 18–65 years and there is oversampling of regional adults to include 300 regional adults in each sample (50%).

The survey instruments are based on McGuire's cognitive impact methodology to measure a hierarchy of campaign impacts across awareness, comprehension, acceptance, attitudes, intentions and behaviour³.

Key results—formative evaluation

Key themes to emerge from the Find Thirty every day[®] formative evaluation and that informed final mass media messages included:

- 30-minute duration message is well known and accepted
- confusion around sessions and how often to be active
- important to continue with a self-efficacy focus
- need to communicate benefits in a response-efficacy focus
- mental and social health benefits resonate well
- people are busy and time is a key barrier
- need to clarify what counts as physical activity
- connection with others is positive
- type of activity and setting is important.

Results from Find Thirty every day[®] concept testing with regional, metropolitan and Aboriginal adults generally showed little difference. Additional themes from regional focus groups included the important role of sport in the community and radio as a medium for communication. Additional recommendations emerging from the Aboriginal interviews included representing cultural diversity and reinforcing social and family connections.

Key themes to emerge from the Draw the Line formative evaluation and that informed final mass media advertising and messages were:

- solutions to maintain a healthy weight should be included—people liked and wanted solutions
- the healthier food options shown should be more visually appealing and unhealthier food options shown should look more unappealing
- more explicit focus on the benefit of small changes
- the 'line' used should clearly divide healthier food from unhealthier food
- the reasons why people should make changes should be included
- simplify advertising by including fewer scenarios
- use more positive language to motivate people

- website was not well recalled, therefore should be more prominent
- ensure materials are relevant to lower socioeconomic status groups.

Overall findings were very consistent across groups. The initial campaign concept tested was called “Line in the Sand.” Some people found this confusing and some linked the reference to sand, with the beach. Aboriginal adults seemed to take a literal meaning to this message demonstrated by the following comment “*Where is the sand? Our people draw lines in the sand with sticks ...*” Based on feedback, the campaign name was refined to “Draw the Line.” Interviews with Aboriginal people also identified that the settings portrayed were important and a recommendation was to incorporate home environments.

Key results—impact evaluation

For Find Thirty every day[®], cognitive impact measures increased from baseline to both post-test 1 and 2⁴ (Table 1).

- At post-test 1 and 2, 45% and 48% of respondents were aware of the Find Thirty every day[®] campaign, a significant increase from pre-test (30%; $p < 0.001$).
- At post-test 1 and 2, more than 11% of respondents took action as a result of the campaign, a significant increase from pre-test (5%).
- Significantly higher campaign cognitive impacts were found at post-test 1 and 2 than pre-test in regional groups.
- Awareness and acceptance of the campaign at post-test 1 was higher in regional adults compared to metropolitan adults, however this was not observed at post-test 2.

Table 1 Cognitive impact of Find Thirty every day[®] campaign as a proportion of all respondents surveyed

	Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2
	%	%	%
Total awareness	31.0	46.1	48.4
Comprehension	23.2	38.1	40.3
Acceptance	22.5	37.6	39.8
Intention	11.1	18.6	20.8
Action	5.4	11.7	11.9

For Draw the Line cognitive impact measures, only small differences were detected between evaluation phases⁵. The cues to action promoted in the campaign were reflected in the reasonably high intention and action. Table 2 below shows the cognitive impact of the Draw the Line campaign across evaluation periods as a proportion of all respondents.

Table 2 Cognitive impact of Draw the Line campaign as a proportion of all respondents surveyed

	Post 1	Post 2	Post 3
	%	%	%
Total awareness	62.9	57.9	55.5
Comprehension	47.7	50.6	50.8
Acceptance	47.1	49.3	50.7
Intention	27.8	32.1	27.9
Action	16.8	20.1	18.1

Results from post 3 evaluation included:

- the % of respondents taking action as the result of the campaign remained high at 18.1%
- a significant difference in awareness among metropolitan and regional respondents in post 1 was found, which was not observed in post 2 and post 3. (Note: media scheduling changes were made following the results of post 1 evaluation)
- awareness rates were slightly higher among metropolitan residents at 58.8% compared to regional residents at 54.4%, however not statistically significant
- awareness of the campaign was between 54% and 57% across the three SES categories measured (highest disadvantage, middle and highest advantage)
- intention to act increased significantly amongst regional respondents from 18.6% at post 1 to 34.4% at post 2, declining slightly to 30.6% at post 3, while remaining constant among metropolitan respondents.

Lessons learned

This research highlights the importance of investing in thorough formative processes to ensure campaign concepts are accepted and acted upon by both regional and metropolitan populations. To achieve this we have demonstrated that it is essential to engage priority target groups, including regional populations, in campaign development. The development of practitioner networks greatly assisted these campaigns to access, reach and engage key target groups at the community level throughout Western Australia. The qualitative formative evaluation showed few differences between metropolitan and regional adults.

These campaigns have implemented effective processes for ensuring key target groups remain top of mind when making production decisions such as casting, location and wardrobe. The campaign team worked closely with creative companies and media buyers to secure an appropriate media buy in priority areas and with priority population groups. Regional television and radio proved effective channels for reaching regional populations.

Other key lessons included that these campaigns should continue to refine their materials based on ongoing feedback and process evaluation, ensuring that the support materials have simple messages and relevant imagery and that priority target groups are included in campaign evaluation so impact outcomes can be measured.

Conclusions

Implementing state-wide social marketing campaigns that have relevance to specific sub-populations is challenging. It is important to engage priority target groups in campaign development and include these groups in impact evaluation. Campaign media and support materials and media scheduling can improve the relevance and reach of social marketing campaigns to regional areas.

References

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