

Get what you pay for or pay for what you get?

Comparing the impact of popular promotional strategies used in a public health marketing initiative

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MCD

- Founded in Augusta Maine – 1966 – NGO
- Maine is in the northeastern corner of the country bordered by Canada, New Hampshire and the Atlantic Ocean
- We currently work in Maine, other US states, and 15 African countries.
- Active in the prevention, management and remediation of chronic and infectious diseases as well as in behavioral health and policy.
- Particularly interested in multi-sector projects and the ROI of the programs we design.



21 Reasons & MESAP



21 Reasons and MESAP

- **21 Reasons:** Field project based in Portland, Maine, USA. Uses community organizing and environmental-change strategies to reduce youth access to alcohol.
- **MESAP:** Provides substance abuse prevention training and technical assistance based on our lessons learned in the field.



This presentation

- Case study comparing **traditional vs. online** marketing strategies to address alcohol consumption by young adults in a small city
- Examines results including...
 - Number of total respondents
 - Demographic accuracy in reaching target audience
 - Return on investment



The Project: MaineBAC.org

- Part of a broader initiative to address excess alcohol consumption among 18-25 year olds in Cumberland County, Maine, USA.
- Web-based alcohol assessment and feedback tool used e-CHUG, designed to reduce high-risk drinking among college students (Hustad, Barnett, Borsari, & Jackson, 2010; Walters, Vader, & Harris, 2007).
- Organizers translated e-CHUG to be used with off-campus audience.



The Project: MaineBAC.org

- Tool aims to help move high-risk subset of the target audience from pre-contemplation to contemplation of reduced-risk drinking.
- Marketing focused on directing target audience to visit MaineBAC.org, from which they would then click on link to the test.



Marketing Strategies

- Earned media
- In-person outreach and distribution of branded materials
- Online advertising



Strategy: *Earned Media*

- Press release distributed via email in July 2008 to announce the launch of website
- Resulted in news and editorial coverage by several local and regional media outlets, including newspaper and television news





Strategy: *In-person Outreach*

- Conducted by young adult “promoters”
- Conducted at free outdoor concerts, outdoor fairs and festivals, and evenings in the “Old Port”
- Promoters received training & scripts to promoters to enhance consistency.
- Promoters taught to visually identify potential members of target age group and offer free branded merchandise



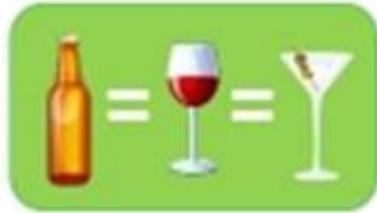


Strategy: ***Online Advertising***

- 2008: Banner advertisements on two locally popular news sites.
- 2009 and 2010: A series of 7 ads on Facebook, targeted at members ages 21-25 living in Portland region.



True or False?



Which has more alcohol per serving? MaineBAC.org

Chris Pan likes this ad.



Process Measures

- ***# news stories generated***: This helps measure earned media efforts.
- ***# branded items distributed***: This helps us to measure in-person outreach efforts.
- ***# online ad impressions & “click-throughs”***: This helps us measure online advertising efforts



Outcome Measures

- **Site visitors:** Number of unique site visitors to the MaineBAC.org shell
- **Test takers:** Number of individuals who clicked through from MaineBac.org to take the e-CHUG test
- **Demographic information:** Self-reported age of the test taker (used to calculate accuracy in reaching target age group of 18-25)



Results: Total numbers, 2008-2010

- **Site visitors:** 6,071 unique site visitors to MaineBAC.org
- **Test takers:** 2,918 clicked through and took the e-CHUG test
 - 1600 test takers during the first weekend (media coverage, website launch). Total of 2,392 test takers for year 1.
 - In years 2 and 3, the number of test takers dropped to 280 and 246 respectively.

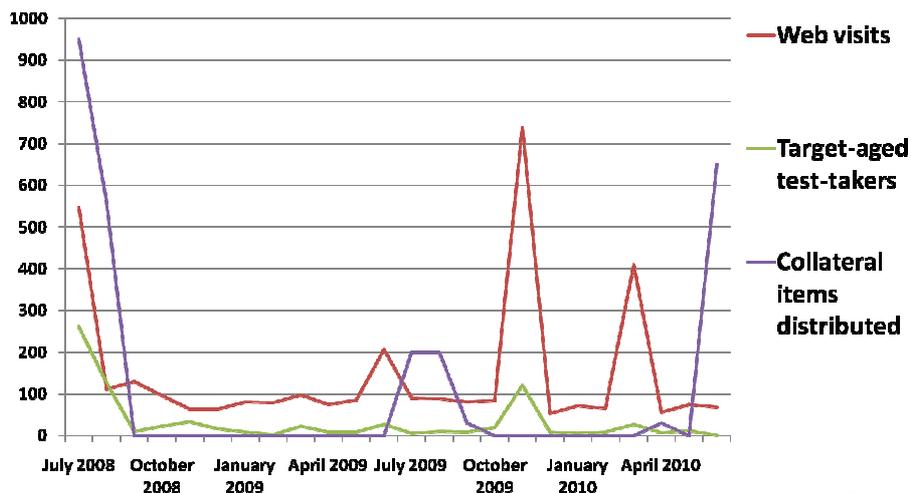


Results: Demographic Accuracy

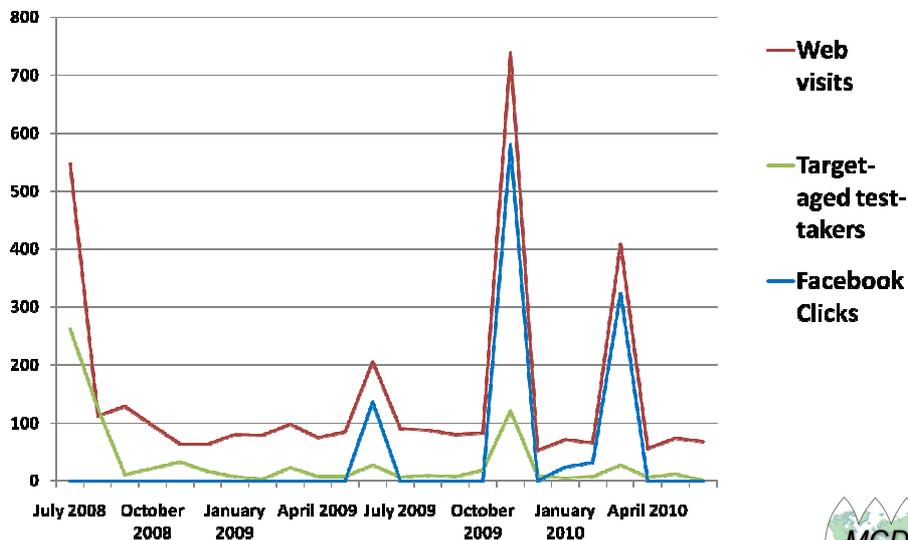
| Year | Site visitors | total # taking test | # in target age taking test | % of test takers in target age group |
|--------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2008 | 3,494 | 2,392 | 317 | 13.29% |
| 2009 | 958 | 280 | 173 | 61.79% |
| 2010 | 1,619 | 246 | 208 | 84.55% |
| TOTAL | 6,071 | 2,918 | 699 | |



Outreach vs. Web Visits vs. Test Takers



Facebook Clicks vs. Web Visits vs. Test Takers



Discussion: *Earned Media*

- Primary cost is staff time.
- Large numbers visiting the site and taking the test.
- Effective strategy to optimize the novelty and news-worthiness of a project launch.

But...

- Momentum is not sustainable past initial launch period, unless new and news-worthy announcements are generated.
- Drew large numbers of people who were not in target age group.



Discussion: *In-person outreach*

- Relatively expensive
- Investment did not necessarily translate into web visits or target-age test takers
- “Getting what you pay for” is not guaranteed
- Quality control factors can impact success, unrelated to methodology or messaging
 - the personality of the promoters
 - the weather



Burger Converter ×



Ever wonder how many cheeseburgers you drink in a month? Find out with MaineBAC.org. Personalized results, free, anonymous, online.

 Like



Discussion: *Online advertising*

- Total number of test-takers went down, but higher proportion are in target age group
- Peaks in 2009-2010 online advertising coincided closely with peaks in web visits and target-age test takers.
- “Pay for what you get” low-cost price-per-click, indicates that online advertising that can be targeted to a tailored demographic is both efficient and cost-effective



Return on Investment, estimated in cost per year

| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---|---------|---------|--------|
| Total cost (in-person, online, and earned media combined) | \$3,836 | \$1,058 | \$1610 |
| Average cost per site visitor | \$1.10 | \$1.10 | \$0.99 |
| Average cost per test taker in the 18-25 age group | \$12.06 | \$6.11 | \$7.74 |



Conclusion

- **Traditional methods** (earned media, in-person outreach) netted the most visitors to the website.
- **Targeted online advertising** resulted in greater demographic accuracy and a higher return on investment.



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