Finding the keys to successful public health campaigns promoting healthy weight & lifestyle to adults: Quantitative audience testing research

Helen Dixon,1 Maree Scully,1 Sarah Durkin,1 Emily Brennan1, Trish Cotter,2 Sarah Maloney,1 Blythe O’Hara,3 Melanie Wakefield1

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1 Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Cancer Council Victoria, Australia
2 Diabetes Australia, Australian Capital Territory, Australia
3 Prevention Research Collaboration, The University of Sydney, Australia
Mass media campaigns

- Can be effective in changing population health behaviour (e.g. smoking cessation)
- However, there are variable results for mass media campaigns promoting nutrition, physical activity and healthy weight
- There is also limited evidence about the characteristics of effective campaigns related to obesity prevention
Study aim

- To assess audience reactions to existing adult-targeted public health TV ads promoting healthy weight & lifestyle
- Determine which ads have the highest levels of:
  - Perceived effectiveness
  - Message acceptance
  - Emotional impact
Method

- Online survey
- 3,313 Australian adults aged 21-55 years
- Quotas applied for:
  - Gender: Male / female
  - Age group: 21-29 / 30-55 years
  - BMI: Healthy weight / overweight or obese
- Participants randomly assigned to view and rate four of eight ads related to a specified lifestyle topic: weight, diet or activity
Healthy weight advertisements

**Graphic**
- LiveLighter
- Toxic fat
  (Australia)

**Animation**
- Become a swapper
  (Australia)

**+ testimonial**
- Take life on
  (Scotland)

**- testimonial**
- Measure up
  (Australia)

**Depicted scene**
- Piece of string
  (Australia)
- Full monty
  (Scotland)
- Correctly identified
  (USA)
- Why am I fat?
  (USA)
LiveLighter: Toxic fat
Become a swapper
Audience response measures

- **Personalised perceived effectiveness** *(6-item scale, $\alpha=0.92)$*
  - e.g. ‘This ad…was relevant to me / taught me something new / made me motivated to take action’

- **Argument strength** *(2-item scale, $\alpha=0.88)$*
  - This ad…was effective / made a strong argument for being a healthy weight’

- **Message acceptance** *(2-item scale, $\alpha=0.87)$*
  - ‘This ad…was easy to understand / was believable’

- **Negative emotional impact** *(6-item scale, $\alpha=0.95)$*
  - ‘While watching this ad I felt…sad / fearful / ashamed / disgusted / anxious / guilty’

- **Overall ad choice**
  - ad MOST likely to mention to someone else
  - ad MOST likely to motivate lifestyle change
Statistical analyses

- Multivariate logistic regression comparing outcomes across the eight ads
  - Controlled for gender, age group, education level, parental status, weight status and whether or not participants had previously seen the ad

- Significance testing of the highest and then lowest rated ad on each outcome compared with all other ads

- Multivariate logistic regression comparing ratings of each ad by weight status
Responses to weight ads

- Perceived effectiveness
- Message Acceptance
- Argument Strength
- Negative Emotional Impact

Average predicted probabilities of intended responses
Overall ad choice: weight ads

- Mention to someone else
- Motivate lifestyle change
- Chance, 12.5%
Conclusions

- Results provide an evidence base concerning the types of messages and executional styles that may prove most effective in future obesity prevention mass media campaigns.

- Ads emphasising the negative health consequences of excess weight appear most effective.
  - These ad types were effective for both overweight/obese and healthy weight adults.