

You Are What You Drink: A Case Study of the Drink Up Campaign

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Abstract

Obesity rates have been increasing worldwide over the last several decades. To address this problem, some national and governmental agencies have instituted social marketing campaigns to change food consumption behaviors. However, interpreting the success of these campaigns can be difficult because such national campaigns have multiple components, each of which may or may not be effective. To address this issue, we report a case study of a recent successful social marketing campaign in the U.S.—The Drink Up Campaign—whose objective was to increase water consumption and decrease sugar-sweetened beverage consumption. We focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign and extract the components (strategies and tactics) that were successful and provide recommendations for conducting national-level social marketing campaigns. We discuss how the Drink Up Campaign can potentially serve as a prototype for other large-scale social marketing campaigns.

Keywords: social marketing; obesity; behavior change; national campaign

1. Introduction

Obesity rates are increasing throughout the world, to the point that some have suggested we are in the midst of an obesity epidemic (Seidell & Halberstadt, 2016). As an example, by 2013 in the United States, obesity rates had risen to over 27% (for details see National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). National problems require national solutions, and thus governments and their granting agencies are spending considerable sums on interventions designed to reduce obesity (OECD 2019). The purpose of this case study is to provide a prototype for conducting successful social marketing campaigns on a national level.

We conducted a case study of a recent national social marketing campaign—Drink Up—to identify strengths and weaknesses, with the goal of developing recommendations for designing, implementing, and evaluating national campaigns. We report the results of the case study and provide five key take-aways. Because our focus is on developing recommendations for campaign best practices, we provide detail on the components of the campaign, following the “Global Consensus on Social Marketing Principles, Concepts and Techniques” authored by Carvalho et al. (2017). We focus in particular on what we consider unique aspects of the social marketing campaign that likely contributed to its success.

2. The Drink Up Campaign

In 2013, the Obama administration joined Partnership for a Healthier America (PHA), launching a social marketing campaign—Drink Up—to reduce Americans’ consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) by increasing water consumption, hoping that consumers would replace SSBs with water (Watson, forthcoming). Those involved in the campaign wanted it to be seamless to the target markets with respect to how they “felt” the everyday commercial exposure. It was important to attract multiple partners to join the campaign, including marketers, cultural influencers, and others. Partners were attracted to join the campaign due to concrete measurements of success (or failure), and transparency of the findings.

Drink Up (officially known as the “Water: You Are What You Drink” campaign), was launched in the Fall of 2013 and continues today in some local markets (the national campaign was officially discontinued and declared successful by PHA in 2018). It launched in response to the need to address the severely rising rates of obesity in the U.S. Shifting regulatory pressures to address the burdens of obesity were top-of-mind for campaign creators, and many partners of the campaign played an active role in addressing the need for health behavioral change.

A guiding principle of Drink Up stemmed from the fact that many public health communications messages rely heavily on data obtained from focus groups as a primary indicator of what target markets perceive is being communicated. Such research aims at understanding conscious expressions of how target markets might be persuaded to alter their behavior.

Many public health communications messages deploy loss-framed (as opposed to gain-framed) messages (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1986). In contrast, commercial marketers generally operate on an assumption that many consumers' decisions are made nonconsciously (Fitzsimons et al., 2008; Janiszewski, 1988), and can be motivated by gain-framed messages positioning around behavioral benefits and provide information about specific measures that a consumer can act on to achieve those benefits (Lee et al. 2018).

Although many public health communications campaigns are created by advertising agencies, rarely do they benefit from a full understanding of actual market research data. Such data can provide insights into subtle differences between target market segments of the overall population, in addition to potential regional differences. Further, creators of public health communications campaigns are often constrained by limited budgets, and thus communicate a message that, once determined, remains static, even if research shows that it has only a limited impact on consumer behavior related to the public health issue. The problem is worsened by the fact that many of these public health campaigns' budgets may be lacking substantive measures of successful communication and behavior change. Often, the only measures available are anecdotal in nature, which can lead to campaign decisions that are not well-informed.

Drink Up is a fairly recent, innovative approach that increased public health awareness and behavioral change, particularly for specific target segments. We propose that Drink Up can serve as a prototype that can be applied for the use of social marketing in other areas of public health messaging. We highlight the efforts undertaken to: 1) identify target segments; 2) develop behavioral objectives; 3) develop the overall intervention strategy; 4) create/test campaign messages; 5) form stakeholder partnerships; 6) identify methodologies needed to evaluate the campaign's efficacy; and 7) report results of the campaign on water and SSB consumption.

3. Target Segments

An initial step in the segmentation process was to review general marketplace trends, particularly in terms of consumption patterns. Understanding and defining target segments was crucial for the success of Drink Up in motivating change: who was buying what and where, and most importantly, the underlying motivations for these consumers. This required determining consumers' attitudes toward their health, and a psychographic segmentation on top of which buying behavior and media usage patterns could be superimposed.

The campaign message recipients would need to be profiled and segmented based on their attitudes toward their health, because attitudes normally lead to related behaviors. The Natural Marketing Institute (NMI), a Philadelphia-based company and Nielsen partner, had conducted a longitudinal survey of the U.S. population's attitudes toward health for over a decade. The survey provided psychographic segments with underlying demographic characteristics. Since 2007, the NMI Health and Wellness Segmentation survey had been appended to the Nielsen Homescan panel of participants, who were providing Nielsen with detailed data about their purchase patterns as they brought the products into their homes.

Based on these data, target segments were identified and data about actual behaviors of these segments were compiled. The team identified which segments were more likely than others to be receptive to the message, which were more likely to spread the message among others, and which might be more difficult to influence. NMI's proprietary study segmented the population into five attitudinal groups. Of the five segments, the research team recommended targeting three—these segments, along with brief profiles, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Three NMI Segments

	Well Beings (17%)	Fence Sitters (24%)	Eat, Drink & Be Merry's (22%)
Demographics	Younger–middle age, 35-54	Younger, 25-44	Younger, 25-54
	Wealthy, Income \$100K+	Midscale-upscale income \$50-100K	Downscale, income <\$50K
	Married, some with kids	Married, some with kids	Single, some with kids
	Mostly Caucasian	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse
	Suburban homeowners	Urban or second city	Second city renters

		renters	
Attitudes	Eat healthy, pay attention to nutrition	Influenced by what's hot and what's not	Often feel like life is slipping out of control
	Go to doctor regularly for check-ups	Strive to achieve a high social status	Change brands often for novelty/variety
	Follow a regular exercise routine	Celebrity endorsement may influence purchases	Risk-taking Price conscious
Health & Wellness	Looking for ways to live a healthier life	Eat organic foods	Dine at fast food restaurants
	Concerned about family health	Prefer picking up quick meals to cooking	Below average doctor visits
	Environment-ally conscious	Below average doctor visits	Play sports for exercise

The Well Beings were chosen for their influence on other segments. They were expected to set an example for others (many celebrities are in this segment). The Fence Sitters were chosen because they were expected to be the most eager for knowledge about how to make healthier choices. The Eat, Drink and be Merry's were chosen knowing that the campaign might have difficulty influencing them, even though they were most in need of the message. The team believed that the campaign could be seen as negligent if it did not address the lowest socioeconomic segment, which is also the most recalcitrant.

4. Behavioral Objective

The major behavioral objectives of Drink Up were to encourage Americans to consume more water, more often, and reduce consumption of SSBs. This objective was based on the premise that consumers typically have deeply ingrained habits that are hard to break, and one is the amount of food or beverage consumed (Sato et al., 2016). Thus, "eat less" campaigns often seem to be ineffective (Chambers et al., 2021). Consequently, one objective of the campaign was not merely to increase the consumption of water, but to rely on the "substitute effect:" all else equal, increases in healthy food alternatives should also result in decreases in substitutes.

The Government & Public Sector division of Nielsen (Nielsen's global market research firm based in the U.S.), plus additional organizations brought in by Nielsen as partners to supplement its data, provided intellectual capital and leadership for the campaign. Their work was informed by insights from Nielsen's market research data with insights into consumers' purchasing behavior and media usage. Research indicated an increasing trend in the marketplace away from the purchase of SSBs and toward the purchase of bottled waters. This trend interacted well with additional research which suggested that drinking SSBs was one of the single biggest contributors to obesity in the U.S. for both adults and children (Keller & Della Torre, 2015; Malik, Schulze, & Hu, 2006). Thus, the campaign team wanted to accelerate this trend.

5. Strategy/Intervention Planning & Development

The overarching strategy had multiple facets. The product was water, and the benefits gained by the targets revolved around health. No incentives were included to reduce potential costs, and thus the price was free to low-cost. The place was literally everywhere water can be made available, with a focus on convenience. The promotion was multi-faceted in terms of media, but singular in terms of the key message. Ongoing measurement of the marketing messaging led to continuous improvements, particularly for specific target markets. Competition among stakeholders was minimized by the cooperation of multiple stakeholders that agreed with the overall positioning of water consumption as contributing to one's health.

One goal was to not only rely on earned media (free media), but also on traditional (paid) advertising that was donated by a combination of manufacturers, industry members, and retailers. One important facet of Drink Up was that it took advantage of the great popularity of Ms. Michelle Obama, wife of then President Obama and the First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS), as well as her promotion of the Let's Move program (a multi-faceted program to address childhood obesity). Drink Up's work with PHA was a significant aspect of that agenda, and Ms. Obama had substantial influence.

Her credibility and reputation as an advocate for healthy habits was an important association for many target segments. Because Drink Up was based primarily on pro-bono material, this earned media contribution to the campaign was critically important for the message to reach the public.

One strategy was to generate enough earned media to increase the opportunity for most Americans to have an awareness of the campaign in its launch week. PHA worked with bottled water producers, refillable bottle manufacturers, both large and small restaurants, and water filter manufacturers to ensure that the Drink Up logo would appear in multiple retail venues, so the visual could bolster and reinforce the media messaging.

Celebrity partners were recruited for their ability to influence target segments' cultural norms, and to resonate with specific segments (McCracken, 1989). Thus, the Global Philanthropy Group secured celebrity participation of from the entertainment and sports sectors. Many celebrities engaged with Drink Up by either attending the launch event or participating via social media. The fashion industry also played an important role in the campaign: J. Crew designed limited edition T-shirts featuring creative interpretations of the official campaign logo and tagline, as did Donna Karan and Diane von Furstenberg. A cast of celebrities, graphic artists, sports figures, and others created songs, videos, and art to advance the Drink Up message.

The campaign also included a local strategy to involve local elected officials and align their public health initiatives with the objectives of Drink Up, especially in localities where a large number of individuals fell into the campaign's target segments. Nielsen provided comprehensive consumer profiles, including media consumption and purchasing behaviors reported at the DMA, county, and ZIP postal code levels. U.S. federal agencies also joined the effort, including the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to address issues of water access, safety, and consumption rates.

Determining, implementing, and reporting of success metrics was key to providing concrete value to campaign partners to convince them to continue with the campaign. The success of the campaign's sponsors in recruiting partners from many sectors of society was a unique aspect of Drink Up. This success was driven by the popularity of Ms. Obama, and her skills at generating good will with partners to rally behind Drink Up. Many companies would join celebrities, foundations, governmental entities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support the campaign for the good of the American public (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Partial List of Drink Up Partners

Trade Organizations	Beverage Companies	Local Municipalities	Mfrs. Of Water-related Products	Celebrities/Fashion Designers/Politicians
American Beverage Association	Aquafina	Chicago, IL	GlobalTap	Ashanti
	Evian	Houston, TX	Brita	Stephen Curry
International Bottled Water Association	Nestlé	Los Angeles County, CA		Eva Longoria
	Coca-Cola	Watertown, WI		Local Graffiti Artists
	PepsiCo		Donna Karan	
	WAT-AAH		Diane von Furstenberg	
	Voss		J. Crew	
	Hint	Michelle Obama		
Beverly Hills 90H20	President Obama			
		Vice President Joe Biden		

6. The Multi-Stakeholders

Multiple partners joined the campaign. Celebrities, corporations, foundations, NGOs, and sports figures all worked to amplify the message of Drink Up for the good of the American public. In addition, a very important part of Drink Up was the development of a “brand book” by the advertising agency, which included a set of guidelines for all partners to follow. Examples of such guidelines are that participating companies could not disparage competitors’ products, and a specific definition of water (e.g., artificially sweetened and flavored waters were not included).

7. General Market Trends

Nielsen’s retail measurement store-level data about quantity of a product sold were used to understand market-basket composition and spending. Channel data (type of store where products are purchased; e.g., grocery, warehouse, etc.), were used to provide information about stores where consumers shop. Finally, Homes can panel data were used to gain knowledge of which households were purchasing SSBs in quantities higher than the general population.

Researchers established a baseline for behavior patterns regarding water consumption by measuring beverage consumption (water/other beverages) in months prior to the launch, including information on where water was purchased, how much was spent on bottled water, and what share of the household grocery shopping budget it comprised. Sales of bottled water was a proxy success measure for how water consumption patterns might be changing as a result of Drink Up. The team also wanted to understand choices (and substitutions) consumers were making (relative to other beverage categories), and which demographic groups were making which substitutions.

Water is a category of beverage (as is SSBs). These category definitions (and products within categories) are widely agreed upon within the industry, and tracking is automated at the store level. Water filter sales were included to determine whether consumers were trying to drink more filtered tap water. The controlled study measured the difference between consumer panel participants who were exposed to Drink Up versus those who were not. Also, given the logic of increased water consumption was that it should substitute for, and reduce, consumption of SSBs, sales of SSBs and other beverages were also measured.

8. Creating/Testing the Message

The growth of consumer neuroscience research is a breakthrough for marketers to obtain accurate information for target segments without having to rely on self-report measures, which can be unreliable (Shaw & Bagozzi, 2018). There are three reasons for unreliability: 1) consumers may be reluctant to answer honestly if attitudes or behaviors might be perceived as undesirable (Paulhus, 2002); 2) consumers may not be able to accurately understand their own underlying motivations for their behaviors; and 3) consumers may not be able to articulate their attitudes and emotions. Generally, neuroscience measures can provide accurate information regarding attention, engagement, and memory (Shaw & Bagozzi, 2018).

The Drink Up research team’s advertising agency created several themes to test. Nielsen NeuroFocus (NNF) then tested the themes in a pilot study with 80 participants (40 men, 40 women) for neurological effectiveness—the simultaneous, subconscious activation of attention, memory, and emotional response mechanisms in the brain (Smith & Lane, 2016). Each participant had sensors attached to measure their reactions, and eye tracking was used to pinpoint exactly what participants were reacting to. NNF tested three narrative themes and eight taglines using EEG methodology. Participants were exposed to each theme phrase by phrase. Exposure to taglines were combined with images of glasses of water. NNF wanted to find the messaging that would make the most sense, be intuitive and politically neutral, and be most persuasive.

The three tested narratives included: 1) “The Original,” which linked the health message to universal health care; 2) “The Glass Half-Full,” which linked the health message to optimism; and 3) “Drink Up,” which linked the health message to “you are what you drink.” “The Original” narrative led to negative reactions from some participants due to the universal health care link. “The Glass Half-Full” narrative was not shown to be particularly persuasive. The “Drink Up” narrative performed the most strongly. The eight tested taglines included: 1) Just Add Water; 2) Drink Up; 3) Take a Sip Forward; 4) You Are What You Drink; 5) Water You Made Of; 6) My Glass is Half Full; 7) Be a Body of Water; and 8) Fresh With It. The tagline “You Are What You Drink” produced the most promising results when combined with the “Drink Up” narrative.

NNF’s recommendations were that the campaign should: a) develop a positive frame; b) avoid negative comparisons, however minimal; and c) relate the message to consumers’ personal choices. These recommendations were used to develop advertising copy for the official Drink Up website. Also, a Drink Up logo for water bottles and other products was created, as were a variety of Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for television and digital out-of-home (DOOH) screens. Both PSAs and DOOH featured Ms. Obama, other celebrities, and cultural influencers recruited for the campaign, such as Eva Longoria and Stephen Curry.

9. Implementation

The campaign launched in September 2013. Publicity was generated by the involvement of Ms. Obama and other celebrities, and pre-taped appearances by Ms. Obama were aired on all morning news, midday news, and late-night programs. The Drink Up website launched on the same date, inviting consumers to send in photos to Instagram of themselves drinking water under a specific hashtag. The campaign also had Facebook and Twitter accounts linked by the tag “You Are What You Drink.” All partners’ logos and website links appeared on the Drink Up website.

Because of the prohibitively high cost of television and radio advertising, apart from earned media, the campaign consisted largely of online advertising. Nielsen’s partner Proclivity Media, working with PHA, identified publishers who could identify sites willing to donate banner ad space for the creative visuals. The advertising space was scheduled to appear on sites where the target audience were most likely be expected to visit. Drink Up campaign ads were placed with four publishers: BlogHer, ValueClick, My Recipes, and Proclivity Media. Each site was tasked with finding target audiences within the target segments across the Internet.

10. Evaluation Methods and Results

10.1 Media Measurements

Several measures were used to assess the success of the campaign. Paid media were primarily online/web advertising, but earned television media were also a key component of the campaign, and thus the ratings accompanying television campaign elements were measured. Nielsen’s Online Campaign Ratings (OCR) service measured online reach and frequency. Nielsen Brand Effect, a separate division of Nielsen, measured campaign awareness (with both control and exposed groups). Brand Effect re-contacted exposed individuals to collect several dependent measures, including message favorability and purchase intention. Social media were also measured to understand tweets related to the campaign during exposure to the earned television media appearances of Mrs. Obama. A panel of consumers who agreed to be tracked by cell phone allowed for measurement of DOOH exposure. Nielsen provided reports to demonstrate the impact of traditional and electronic billboards. The campaign provided an opportunity for a collaboration of place-based measurement providers to donate billboard space in exchange for measurement statistics based on a study that used geo-fencing of panel participants.

10.2 Linked Purchase/Search/Social Networking Behaviors

Purchase and search activity were measured, and so was social networking engagement (e.g., Twitter, Instagram). Purchase activity was measured by Nielsen Catalina Solutions (NCS) Sales Effect (NCS is a separately held joint venture owned by Catalina and Nielsen). The Sales Effect service matched offline buying behavior with online ad exposure through a loyalty card panel of 5-10 million panelists. NCS measured the impact of Drink Up for a period of four years, in the 4th quarter of each year, beginning in 2013 when the campaign launched, through 2016. The research traced changes in buying behavior that followed a particular web user’s online exposure to the advertising (by frequency level). Search activity following consumers’ exposure to earned media or online advertising was measured by comparing Google searches with pre-campaign baseline data. Social networking engagement with Drink Up was measured through a Nielsen proprietary software that examined how consumers responded to the Drink Up message on the television programs on which Ms. Obama appeared at campaign launch. Research examined how people behaved online following exposure to the campaign.

Combined, these reports helped optimize cross-platform ad spending and refinements of the campaign’s media strategy and creative messaging. One innovation of Drink Up, and likely a major driver of its success, was the ability of the campaign creators to quickly pinpoint what was and was not resonating with target segments. These insights led to an iterative response to do two things. First, targeting of the Drink Up message could be improved by allowing for adjustments to the campaign placement (to better reach targets). Second, persuasion of the Drink Up message could be improved by enhancements made to the verbal and visual elements (to drive higher audience engagement with the message). Although this is commonly done by commercial marketers, it has rarely been used in previous public health communications campaigns.

10.3 Water and SSB Consumption

The U.S. government’s involvement presented challenges in terms of campaign objectives. Because government ethics guidelines strictly prohibit officials (such as Ms. Obama) from endorsing products, it was important that Drink Up be about drinking more water, not about buying more water. Safe tap water is widely available in the U.S. In addition, bottled water is produced by every major beverage manufacturer, and many retailers have generic brands of water, so the choice of water for the campaign presented a win-win for government, industry, and public health advocates.

Thus, a company like Coca-Cola was willing to participate in the campaign because reduced sales of their SSBs would likely be offset by increased sales of their bottled water brands. In addition, the campaign did not target SSBs as unhealthy, and the companies likely benefited from a positive association with White House partners. However, increased consumption of tap water is difficult to measure. Thus, the main quantitative measurement of the impact of Drink Up would revolve around sales of bottled water as a proxy for overall increased water consumption. Because bottled water sold in stores has a universal product code (UPC), such sales can be easily tracked. Water filter sales were also measured, along with other beverages (SSBs, coffee, tea, juice, etc.).

Purchase activity was measured by Sales Effect, matching data from 70 million U.S. households calibrating Catalina loyalty card data with Nielsen Company's Homescan panel and RMS data. To gauge the effect of the campaign on purchases, two subsets of panelists were matched according to their demographic characteristics and habits: one panel was not exposed to the online advertising based on Nielsen tracking (control group), and the other was the panel exposed to the advertising (treatment group). The online ads were "tagged"—encoded with an identifier so that exposure could be tracked by the individual Internet Protocol address, or IP identifier, of each participant enrolled in the panel of participants who had agreed to allow their online behavior to be tracked by Nielsen. This allowed NCS to determine who had and had not been exposed to the online campaign. Both the exposed panel and the control panel loyalty shopper card purchases were tracked so that differences in purchase patterns could be identified and analysed.

NCS identified the exposed group and control groups for characteristics that matched the groups by geographic location, age, income, race, presence of children, and other (proprietary) characteristics. (The number of characteristics on which test and control groups were matched exceeded 100.) A one-year history was recorded, in total and month-by-month, of pre-period purchasing of the reporting item and category, including basket size and how many dollars were spent, units purchased, and trips to the store completed. NCS also identified these same characteristics in the pre-advertising period for the purchase of competitive items within the category. The data reflect purchases between September 12, 2013 and January 31, 2014.

10.4 Results

We report results of reach and frequency and change in sales of bottled water and SSBs before and after the campaign. We report change in consumption after the first year, as we only have access to first-year data.

10.4.1 Reach and Frequency

The campaign reached 76% of its target, which saw the ad seen average 4.2 times. Within the target, the campaign primarily reached Caucasians (53%), followed by African Americans (23%), and Hispanics (18%). Men received a higher number of impressions than women, and 18-34-year-old men had the most frequency. The campaign most often reached the Eat Drink and Be Merry's (33%), followed by the Well Beings (24%) and the Fence Sitters (19%).

10.4.2 Water Consumption

To assess the effects of the campaign on water and other beverage consumption, Nielsen compared sales for the exposed and control groups. As Table 3 indicates, the campaign resulted in a 3% increase in sales of bottled water per household, a 2% increase in purchase frequency, and a 1% increase in amount per person. The total sales increase was 4% when all water plus water filter purchases were combined. Further, as Figure 1 shows, all three segments indicated increased consumption of bottled water, and the magnitude of the increase was similar for all three. However, as Figure 1 also shows, what the increase came at the expense of (in terms of substitutes) differed across segments. Both Fence Sitters and Well Beings decreased their SSB consumption, but SSB consumption increased for Eat, Drink, and Be Merry's, whereas their consumption of orange juice decreased. The fact that the campaign appeared to increase water consumption of the Eat, Drink and Be Merry's, which is the lowest SES group, was heartening, but the simultaneous increase in SSB consumption was disappointing and difficult to explain.

Figure 1
 Change in Share of Beverage Consumption as a Function of Target Segments

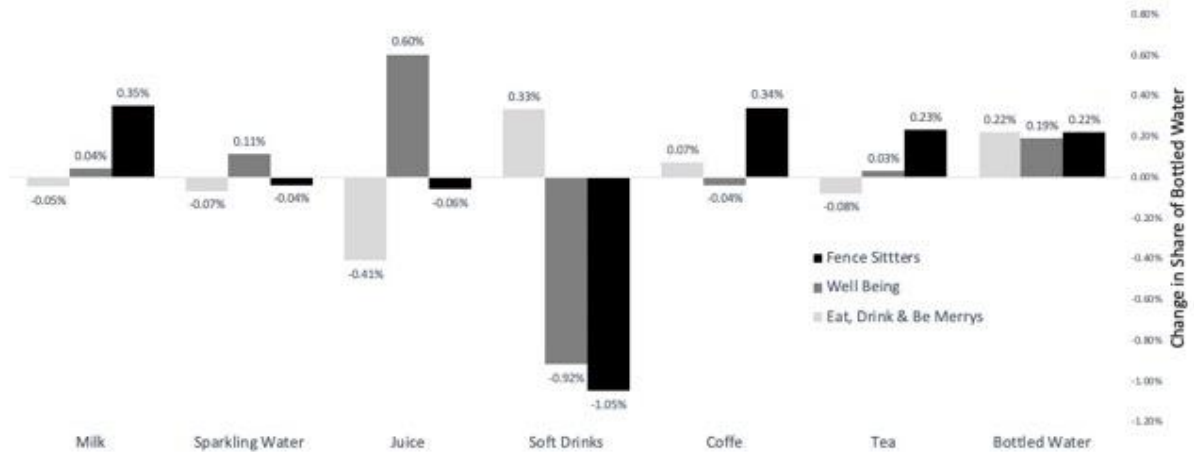


Table 3 – Effects of Campaign Exposure on Bottled Water Sales

	Unexposed (control)	Exposed (Test)	% Difference*
Total Sales (\$ per household)	\$9.05	\$9.33	3%
Dollar Buying Rate (\$ per buying household)	\$17.75	\$18.29	3%
Purchase Frequency (# purchases among buying households)	3.78	3.86	2%
Dollar Purchase Amount (\$ per purchase among buying households)	\$4.70	\$4.73	1%

* all differences significant at $p < .02$.

11. Discussion

Based on data after the first year of Drink Up, the campaign achieved its objectives to increase water consumption and decrease SSB consumption. Although increases in water consumption were fairly uniform across the three segments, the substitute effect objective—to reduce SSB consumption—was not observed for the Eat, Drink, and be Merry’s. Instead, consumption of SSBs increased, while consumption of orange juice decreased. Thus, given that the Eat, Drink, and be Merry segment is the lowest SES segment, and thus arguably the most vulnerable, conclusions about the extent of the success of the campaign must be tempered.

There were a number of innovations that we think are likely contributors to the campaign’s success. One of the key elements of Drink Up success measures was the intention for an iterative process of the campaign’s creative materials to enhance engagement and memorability. Thus, creative materials were often updated based on new research. As one example, it was discovered that late-night television programming was providing sarcastic coverage of the campaign’s intended message. As a result, to offset the negative coverage, the FLOTUS staff was able to have the campaign

messaging embedded in *The Biggest Loser*, a very popular reality TV show in which overweight contestants vied with each other to lose the most weight. The campaign appeared twice on this program. In the first Drink Up appearance, the TV show's host announced the campaign and showed a promotional video clip of Ms. Obama. In the second appearance, the host announced that Eva Longoria was participating in Drink Up. In fact, she designed a limited-edition Brita water bottle with the campaign logo. Contestants and one of the stylists for the show were filmed and photographed with this bottle.

Another example related to ad memorability. Although tracking research indicated that aided ad recall was high, unaided ad recall was low, indicating a potential need to improve the memorability of the ads. The campaign was changed to a more powerful campaign by including the names, visual images, and voices of Mohammad Ali, Albert Einstein, and Audrey Hepburn (all rights were obtained to do so). The new ads associated the celebrities and their reputations (of athleticism, genius, and beauty, respectively) with their habits of water consumption.

11.1 Limitations

Some limitations of the campaign and of the case analysis are worth noting. First, Drink Up had governmental restrictions that constrained design and implementation of the campaign, and had large companies involved in the implementation (although we view that as a strength of the campaign). Second, we did not have access to the proprietary raw data, which greatly limited a complete analysis of the results. Third, the campaign is an example of a national-level social marketing campaign requiring substantial resources and extensive work to establish partners. Thus, it may have limited applicability to social marketing campaigns by smaller entities (e.g., local, state governments or non-profit agencies) who typically lack the required resources.

Despite these limitations, we believe Drink Up compares favorably with other social marketing initiatives. The campaign is an example of well-designed, large-scale, national social marketing, in that it was thoroughly research-informed with multiple methods, included positive and non-hard-sell messages that were continuously updated, and involved a true collaboration of multiple stakeholders. In conclusion, we believe that many social marketers can find relevance in trying to combine as many of the following five success factors as possible in future campaigns.

12. Recommendations: Five Key Take-Aways

Here, we provide five key take-aways based on our analysis of the campaign and what we see as key drivers of its success.

12.1 Go Big

A reasonable reaction to this recommendation is that it is obvious: Bigger budgets are better than smaller ones. However, "go big" does not refer merely to budgets. Social marketers are often unable to purchase market research data to inform their campaigns. For Drink Up, understanding of consumer behavior as it related to purchase patterns was critical. That said, budgets for campaign promotion are indeed important. Often, lacking such budgets, social marketers must rely on earned media to build awareness. The effect of expenditures on desired outcomes (sales, consumption, attitudes, etc.) is not linear, but typically must exceed a critical mass to effect change. Clearly, social marketing campaign budgets must exceed this critical mass. That said, given that less expensive, place-based media were successful at communicating with Drink Up's target markets, such media might be viable options for social marketers with limited budgets.

Less obvious aspects of "bigness" are also important, and these can be classified as scope. First, the campaign must be comprehensive, integrating many different paid and earned marketing channels. Drink Up exemplifies this well. It used many marketing channels, including traditional media such as television, but also online and social media, "on the ground" marketing, and the pro bono use of a variety of celebrities across industries. A second example of "bigness" pertains to stakeholders. Multiple stakeholders converging on a shared objective and willing to deploy the message to their audience signals to the public important buy-in for the campaign. Finally, Drink Up was able to build on successes over time because it could demonstrate concrete behavioural changes. Having concrete measurement of success, allowed the campaign to continue to attract campaign participants over the course of several years.

12.2 Keep it Positive (Gain-Frame)

Drink Up took a gain-framed approach to achieving its objectives. Often, when an objective is to reduce undesired behaviors (eating unhealthy foods here, but it applies to many other risky behaviors), social marketers often try to persuade by emphasizing negative outcomes, or losses, that such behaviors result in. However, social science research clearly indicates that consumers respond more positively to a gain than a loss focus, particularly in individualistic cultures like the U.S and Western Europe (Lalwani et al., 2009; Uskul et al., 2008).

For Drink Up, the gained-frame approach had two dimensions. One was in the advertising and promotional materials: messages focused on the benefits of drinking more water, in explicit messages, but also in implicit ones that linked celebrities who were positively associated with health (e.g., sports figures) with the desired behavior. The second dimension pertained to the strategy to focus on increasing consumption of a healthy option (water), but with no mention of reducing consumption of the unhealthy option (SSBs).

As mentioned earlier, one objective of the campaign was not merely to increase the consumption of water, but to rely on the “substitute effect”: increases in water consumption should result in decreases in consumption of SSBs. Indeed, the data strongly supported this approach for Drink Up.

12.3 Avoid the Hard Sell

Drink Up avoided the hard sell, instead creating a campaign that allowed the audience to view the message as a culturally normative nutritional habit and behavior, which systematic reviews suggest can be effective (Chambers et al., 2021). In the campaign, the celebrities, which included numerous sports figures, musicians, and actors, were chosen for their ability to resonate with both general audiences and specific audience segments targeted by the campaign. Both morning and late-night TV viewers saw their talk show hosts deliver the Drink Up message. Baseball, basketball, and soccer fans heard the messages of the campaign organizers. Thus, the focus was less on constant repetition of the message itself and “reasons why” arguments, and more on establishing simple associations between consumption of water and health.

12.4 Iterative Updating is Crucial

By iterative updating, we mean continual testing to update strategies and tactics. In Drink Up, this can be seen in frequent testing of promotional materials, often using neuroscience techniques to test for appeal, but it was particularly crucial in the early phases. Nielsen’s research team had multiple data points on how the campaign was being viewed by online viewers and whether targets were spending time taking in the message. The campaign ad creatives were then adjusted to make them more memorable in later phases. Also, the campaign iterated its message for local audiences, finding local influencers, and culturally appropriate local references, customising the campaign materials and taking advantage of the DMA and ZIP-code-based or county-level-based data provided for local public health officials to better understand their audiences.

The advantages of such iterative updating seem obvious, and of course the disadvantage is equally obvious—it is expensive. Nevertheless, such updating is crucial for social marketing campaigns that are designed to run over long periods of time, as Drink Up was.

12.5 Stakeholders Matter

Finally, the importance of stakeholder buy-in is essential. Clearly one of the biggest advantages for Drink Up was the ability to have commercial industries participating. The resources they brought to the table were critical. The campaign was seeking to lift sales of a product category and not a specific brand. Thus, the participation of multiple competing companies in an effort to lift the category is a relative anomaly in marketing and advertising, but not as much in social marketing, which seeks to influence a behavior. Thus, a key to the success of the campaign was that all stakeholders, including public health participants, actually shared interest in promoting the campaign. Typically, public health and commercial brand manufacturers are in opposition, and companies compete with one another. If unity with commercial manufacturers is improbable, unity among other stakeholders provides a cohesion important for public understanding of the message. The “brand book” was helpful in this regard.

This factor, along with the other four, combined in Drink Up to lead to the campaign’s success. We believe that other social marketers can benefit from attempting to combine these factors as much as is feasible, given often-limited budgets and other constraints.

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