



LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 9-11
About the Author: MediaSmarts

Don't Drink and Drive: Assessing the Effectiveness of Anti-Drinking Campaigns

Overview

In this lesson, students explore a variety of anti-drinking and alcohol awareness campaigns in order to determine their effectiveness. Students will deconstruct the different approaches that have been used by various organizations to reach teens and young adults and will debate those techniques that are most likely to resonate with youth. In a summative activity, groups of students create and implement an alcohol awareness campaign for students.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate an understanding of:

- the significance of public awareness campaigns in influencing public opinion on important issues
- the importance of focus testing in the research process
- the planning, implementation and assessment of focus groups
- the different types of messages about alcohol consumption that are promoted in public awareness messaging by various groups
- the consequences associated with drinking
- an awareness of:
 - the process by which public awareness campaigns are developed

Preparation and Materials

Prepare the following PSAs about Drinking overheads:

- *Shock Effects, Using Humour, Serious Messages and Industry Campaigns*
- Photocopy the *Middlesex-London Health Unit Binge Drinking Campaign: Case Study* and the student handout *Elements of a Successful PSA Campaign*



Procedure

Class Discussion

Ask students:

- What is a public service announcement, or PSA?

(The American Ad Council defines PSAs as “advertising that serves the public interest.” The objective of a public service announcement is to educate and create awareness of significant social issues in an effort to change the public’s attitudes and behaviours and stimulate positive social change.)

PSAs are usually developed by non-profit organizations [or as part of the social responsibility mandate of various industries] and may involve TV and radio spots, movie content, and print messages on billboards, posters, brochures and postcards. As part of their licensing agreements, Canadian television stations must broadcast public service announcements. For other campaigns, non-profit organizations will often partner with a sponsor.)

- Can you think of any public service messages that you’ve seen recently?
- What are some of the topics or issues PSAs address? *(Name the issue – it’s probably been tackled at one time or another. PSAs address an incredibly broad cross-section of social concerns: everything from keeping your dog away from anti-freeze, to pollution, work safety, heart disease, childhood hunger, and the dangers of smoking and drinking.)*
- When it comes to drinking, what are some of the issues associated with alcohol that PSAs might address? *(The most common answer will probably be drinking and driving campaigns. These have been phenomenally successful in raising public awareness about the dangers of drinking and driving. Other issues include: binge drinking, long-term health consequences of drinking, impaired decision making, personal vulnerability and advertising myths.)*

Depending on the target audience, PSAs use different approaches to direct their messages. What might be the advantages or disadvantages of the following styles?

- Humour *(Catches your attention, especially for kids and teens, but humour may trivialize serious issues.)*
- Shock treatment *(Provides a realistic look at an issue, but may turn people off entirely. Also, broadcasters may be reluctant to broadcast PSAs they feel may be too controversial.)*
- Preaching *(There’s a fine line between earnestness and appearing to be patronizing.)*
- Using a celebrity *(Celebrities do get favourable attention, but sometimes people are so distracted by the celebrity they forget the message.)*

What do you think are the qualities that make up an effective PSA? According to Bill Goodwill, CEO of Goodwill Communications, effective PSAs:

- are relevant to their audience
- are interesting or entertaining
- leave the audience with a message that can be summarized in a single declarative sentence
- demand an action or response from the audience



- are empathetic are simple in their execution
- can be easily adapted for different media
- use the strengths of each medium to build a message

We're now going to take a look at some sample PSAs about the dangers associated with drinking.

(Note: the "Before and After" poster is particularly graphic and may be disturbing to some students. You may choose not to show it; however, it does represent a public awareness campaign that was used in schools in Texas and does provide a realistic portrayal of the devastating effects of drinking and driving.)

(Place *Shock Effects* onto the overhead projector.)

1. "Before and After"

This prevention campaign was developed by the Texas Department of Transportation and features 24-year-old Jacqueline Saburido, victim of an accident involving a drunk driver. "Her gripping story was the centrepiece of a comprehensive anti-impaired driving campaign targeting underage drinkers, college students and young adults. People throughout the world are saying 'Before and After' is one of the most powerful campaigns ever developed to call attention to the consequences of drunk driving." This campaign includes an extensive education program.

2. Last Round With My Buddies

This campaign, from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), underlines the possibly fatal consequences of drinking and driving.

Ask students:

- What is the main message for each campaign?
- What are the similarities and differences between these two campaigns?
- Which of these is most effective in illustrating the dangers of drunk driving? Why?
- Would either of these PSAs influence you personally? Why or why not?
- Jacque's poster is an example of using extreme shock value to get a message across. As we discussed earlier, a downside of using shocking elements is that they can be so upsetting that people are repelled from the ad and the message. Do you think this poster is an effective or ineffective use of shock value?

(Place *Using Humour* on the overhead projector. All three of these posters address messages that appear in alcohol ads.)

1. Adbusters: "Absolute End" and "Absolute Hangover"

The Canadian organization Adbusters is well known for its "spoof ads" that parody popular advertising campaigns. In the case of the ads shown here, Adbusters is parodying Absolut Vodka ads.

The small print for "Absolute End" reads: "Nearly 50% of automobile fatalities are linked to alcohol. 10% of North Americans are alcoholics. A teenager sees 100,000 alcohol ads before reaching the legal drinking age."



2. The More You Drink, The Less You Think

This PSA, created by Éduc'alcool, an association of Quebec alcohol makers and vendors, reads “The more you drink, the less you think”.

- Who do you think is the target audience for these ads?
- What assumptions do they make about their target audience?
- What is the main message of each ad?
- Are they effective? Why or why not?
- Is humour an appropriate tool for addressing these issues?

(Place *Serious Messages* onto the overhead projector.)

1. Don't let good times turn bad

This PSA, produced by MADD and FACE, reads: “Assault. Burns. Drowning. Car crashes. Rape. Suicides. Alcohol Poisoning. You can die from drinking too much. You can also drown, get burned, get in a fight, get raped, fall off a balcony or end up in a wheelchair. Stop drinking fast and hard. Don't let good times turn bad.”

2. Best night of my life

This campaign, created by the LCBO, is distributed every May and June. The caption reads: “Your prom should be memorable – for all the right reasons. You know you don't need to drink to have fun. Plan ahead and make smart choices. Don't let drinking flush your prom night down the drain.”

3. The last thing you remember is dancing

Another ad from MADD and FACE, this poster reads: “The last thing you remember is dancing. How you got here is pretty much a blur. You went to a party, drank way too much and aren't really sure where you're going now. Who is this guy anyway? It started out fun, but now it doesn't feel so great. Next time – stay at the party if you want, dance, get to know the guy – but lighten up on the alcohol. Take care of the girl in the mirror.”

- Do any of these ads cross the fine line between seriousness and preaching? If they do, explain how.
- What is the target audience for each?
- What techniques are used to appeal to the target audience?
- Which are most effective? Why?
- Which are least effective? Why?
- Would any of these messages influence your own decisions regarding alcohol?

Place *Industry Campaigns* onto the overhead projector.

A criticism of public service campaigns created by the alcohol industry is that they often downplay the serious problems associated with alcohol abuse.



- Do you think any of these posters downplay the problems associated with alcohol? How? (*The Diageo “A night to remember” ad is aimed at young women. Though it does show some consequences of heavy drinking, it still associates drinking with having a good time socially. The Budweiser “We brew our beers” PSA is uninspiring and unlikely to resonate with young adults, while their “Great times start by designating a driver” and Bacardi’s “Champions drink responsibly” have barely any moderation message: they’re actually more like regular ads that associate the brand with sports and celebrities. Nowhere in these campaigns is “not drinking at all” suggested as an option.*)
- Who are the target audiences for each of these campaigns?
- Do you think any of these campaigns would be effective? Which ones? Why?
- Do you think the alcohol industry is sincere in its efforts to promote responsible drinking? Why or why not?

Think about the PSAs we’ve just looked at.

- Is it possible to deliver messages about serious issues in a positive manner?
- What are some positive messages that could be used to encourage young people not to drink? (*For example, good friends don’t need alcohol to have a good time; there are lots of fun things to do that don’t involve drinking; it’s okay to say “No thanks”; not drinking is your choice, and so on.*)

As a class, review *Elements of a Successful PSA Campaign*.

Group Activity: Planning a public awareness campaign.

Divide the class into groups of approximately five or six students each. In their groups, have students review and discuss the Middlesex-London Health Unit Binge Drinking Campaign: Case Study. Take up answers as a class. Ensure students understand the concept of focus groups and how they operate.

In this activity, students will create public awareness campaigns that relate to alcohol use. They may choose any drinking-related issue for the focus of their campaign. The target audience will be fellow students in their class.

Steps include the following:

- Select an issue associated with alcohol use to address
- Conduct research on that issue
- Establish the goals (end results) of the campaign
- Establish the objectives of the campaign (what do you want to develop knowledge/awareness of?)
- Research the target audience through focus groups (knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, tastes and preferences)
- Establish the main message(s) (For example, the LCBO’s “Smart Choices” campaign offers some excellent suggestions that could be the basis of campaign messages: know the law, don’t drink and drive, be aware of risks, keep your edge, stay smart, less is more, stand up to pressure, don’t kid yourself, watch out for lethal mixes, be a good friend, recognize the warning signs.)



- Decide on the method that will be used to spread the message(s): billboards? Posters? Radio spots? Online ads, games or websites? Television? Magazines? Focus testing questions should include those that help the group determine the best medium to reach the target audience. Groups may use more than one medium if they wish. (Samples of different types of ads can be found on the CAMY website: <http://www.camy.org/gallery>.)
- Create the campaign, including the PSA and an implementation plan
- Present the campaign and findings to the class

Focus Groups

The target audience of this campaign will be the students' own classmates. Two class periods should be set aside for focus group sessions. Each group will prepare and run a focus session with another group. In one class, half the groups will conduct sessions, while the others become interviewees, and in the second class, groups will reverse roles.

In order to prepare for focus groups, students should be instructed as follows:

1. Develop concrete, simple open-ended questions that will elicit the information you need about your target audience in order to develop a meaningful and effective campaign. In order to develop these questions, the group must have a very clear idea about what they are looking for during the focus group process. During the focus group session, stick to these questions.
2. Select one group member to act as a moderator. This individual should be focused, familiar with what you need to know, a good listener, friendly and able to keep everyone on track. A good moderator should be able to probe for more information and draw answers out of participants. He or she should also be able to diplomatically "tone down" dominant interviewees, and get shyer participants to speak up. (Other group members will act as note-takers during the questioning. They will not be able to participate directly in the focus groups but will observe and help in interpreting and applying the information collected.) Remember, you want to create an environment where people feel relaxed and comfortable discussing these issues.

Emphasize the importance of interviewees respecting moderators and their classmates during this process. Traditionally, people who participate in focus tests receive some sort of payment or reward. Students conducting focus groups may wish to bring cookies or treats to "reward" those being interviewed. Each student will be asked to submit a one-page reflection on his or her focus group experience.

Evaluation

Groups will be assessed on the following:

1. An outline of the issue, including in-depth information/statistics, identification of target audience, goals and objectives
2. Focus group questions
3. Focus group summary and analysis
4. Individual reflection on the focus group process
5. Main messages based on focus groups
6. Final PSA and campaign



Extension Activity

Every year MADD Canada sponsors an essay writing and poster campaign. Groups may wish to enter their posters in this campaign. Anyone can enter the contest at a local and/or national level in either of the age categories: Category One: 10 years and under, and Category Two: 11- to 14-years-old. Information about this campaign can be found on the MADD website at: <http://www.madd.ca/english/youth/awards.html>.



PSAs about Drinking: Shock Effects



**Not everyone who gets hit
by a drunk driver dies.**



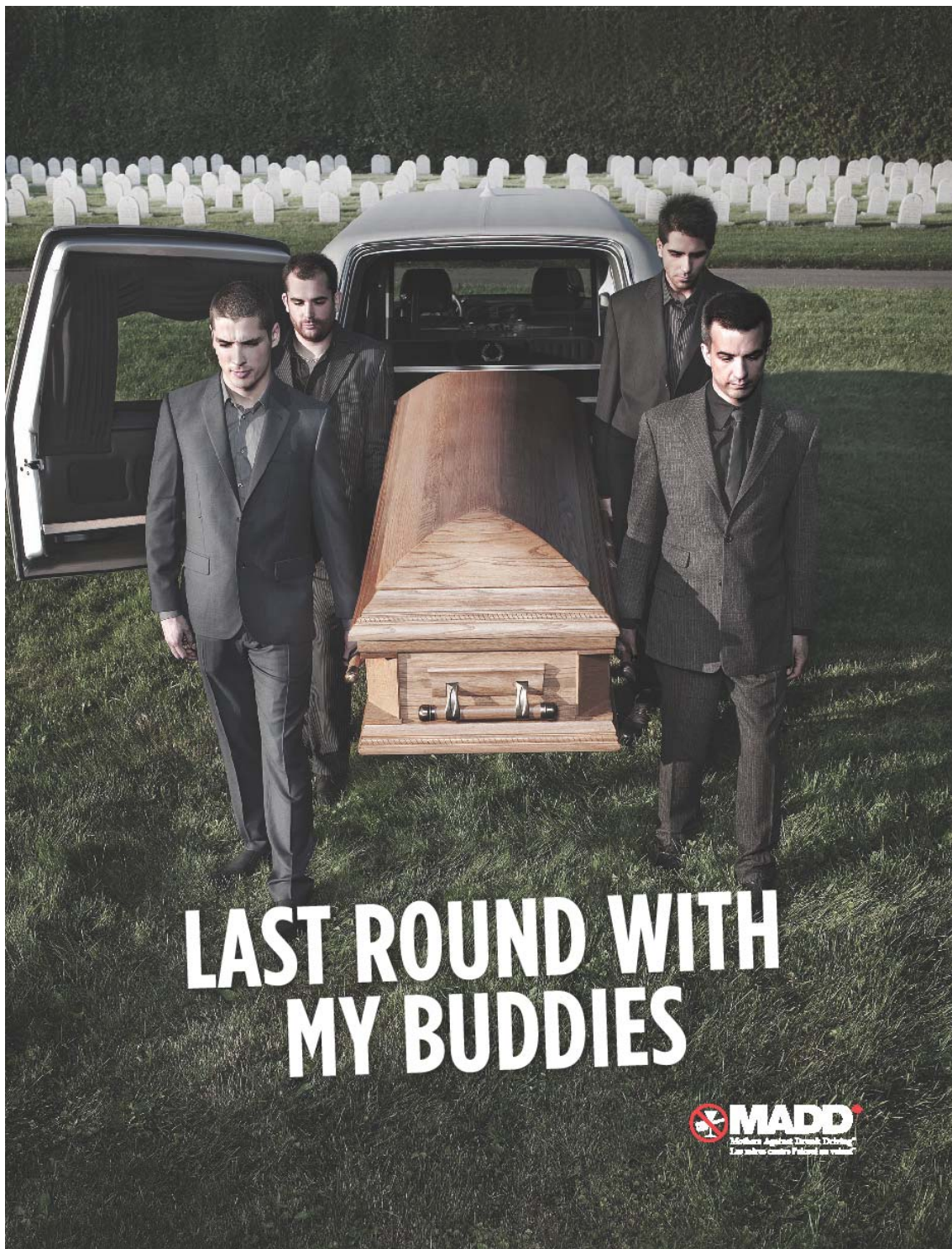
Jacqueline Saburido was 20 years old when the car she was riding in was hit by a drunk driver. Today, at 23, she is still working to put her life back together.
Learn more at www.TexasDWI.org

DON'T DRINK & DRIVE 

Texas Department of Public Safety • Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission • Texas's Standing Tall • Partnership for a Drug-Free Texas • Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse
© Texas Department of Transportation

Texas Department of Transportation

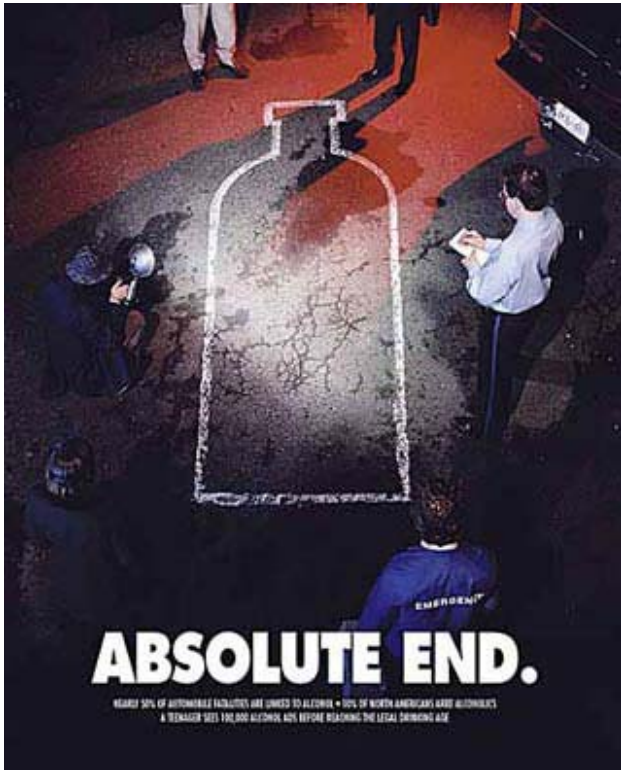




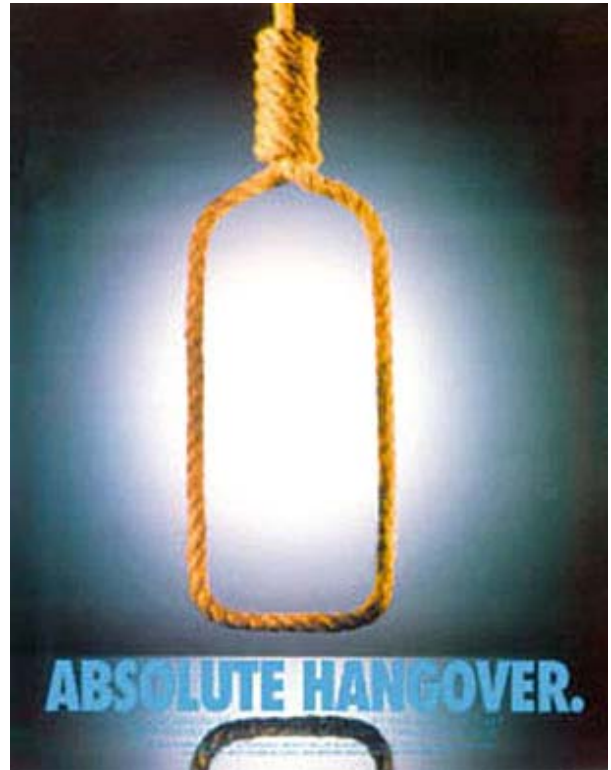
MADD Canada



PSAs about Drinking: Using Humour



Adbusters



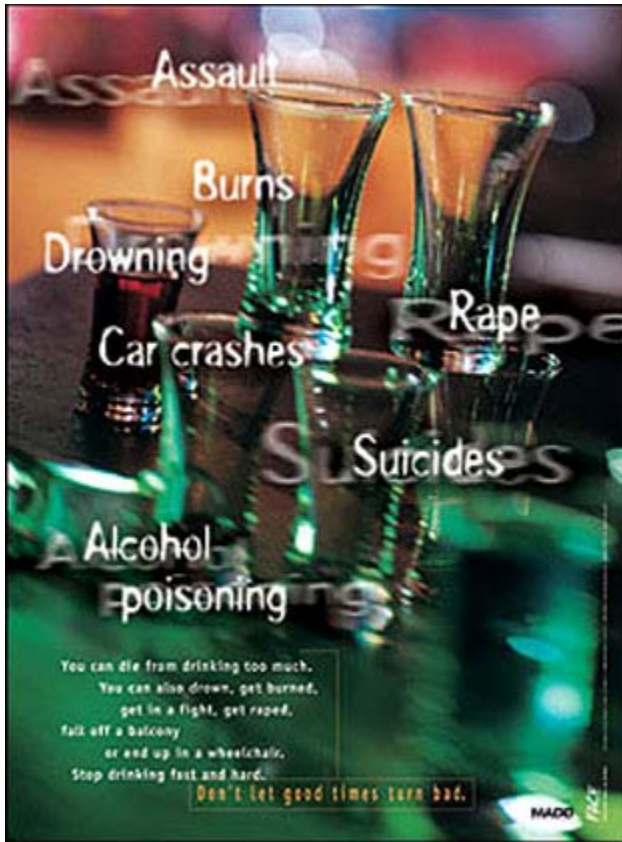
Adbusters



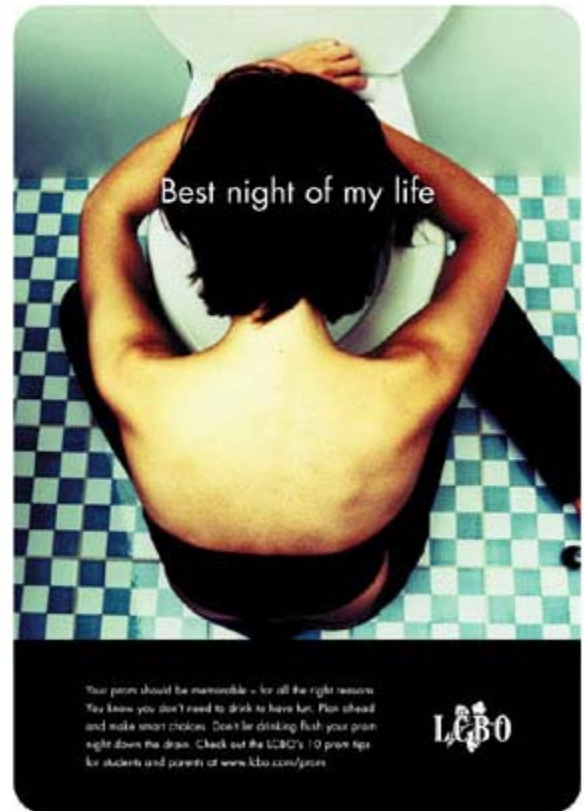
Éduc'alcool



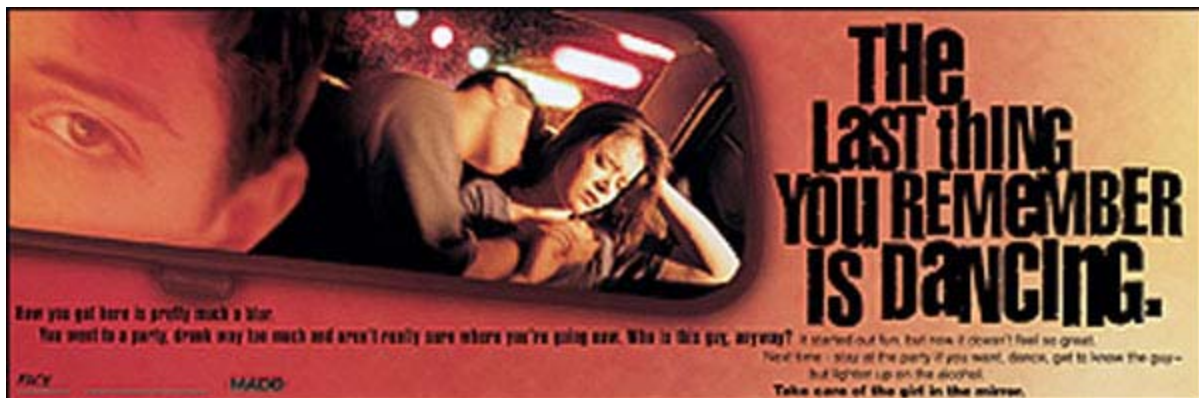
PSAs about Drinking: Serious Messages



MADD and FACE – Truth and Clarity About Alcohol



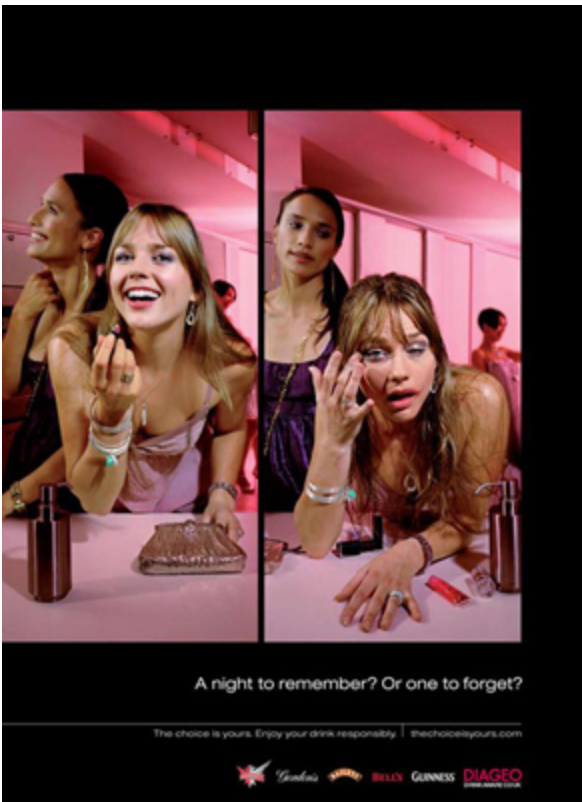
Liquor Control Board of Ontario



MADD and FACE – Truth and Clarity About Alcohol



PSAs about Drinking: Industry Campaigns

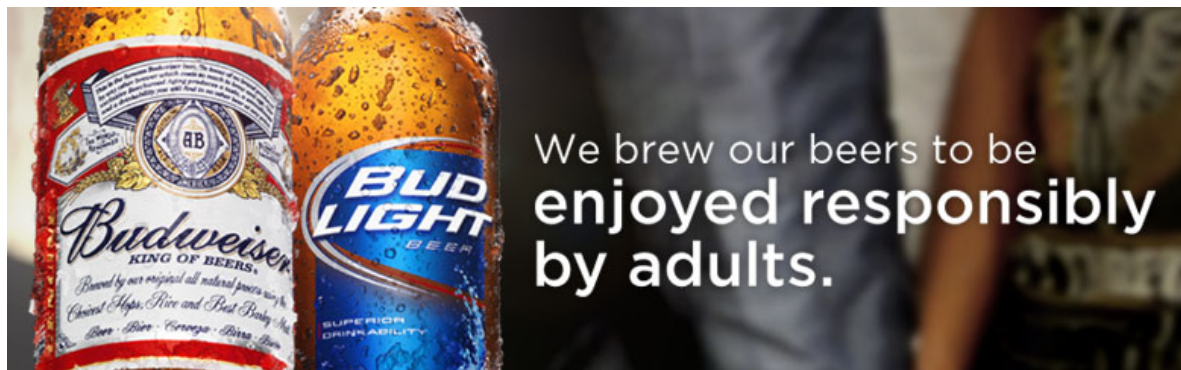


CHAMPIONS
DRINK RESPONSIBLY



BACARDI LIMITED

championsdrinkresponsibly.com



Middlesex-London Health Unit Binge Drinking Campaign: Case Study

Excerpted from *Process Evaluation of the Central West/Southwest Binge Drinking Media Campaign*, 2001 Middlesex-London Health Unit, London, Ontario. <http://www.healthunit.com/uploads/BingeDrinkingTHEFINALREPORT.pdf>.

Used with permission.

In 2001, 16 public health units that participate in the Substance Abuse Prevention Network of Central West and Southwest Ontario developed a public awareness campaign about binge drinking, geared towards young adults. As part of the evaluation of this campaign a document on the lessons that had been learned was released.

The following excerpts, from the Executive Summary, provide an excellent example of the thinking that goes into the creation of a public awareness campaign.

Rationale for the Campaign

"In Canada, 2/3 of young adults binge drink. Binge drinking is an important public health issue in this population because it can lead to alcohol poisoning, impaired judgement, injuries and death. To increase awareness about the definition, risks and alternatives to binge drinking, the health units developed and implemented a large scale media campaign targeted to 19- to 24-year-olds. The campaign consisted of the wide distribution of posters and postcards, paid radio advertisements, media releases and health unit participation at related community events." (p.1)

As part of the post-campaign assessment, focus groups were conducted with 66 young adults from the main target audience. These focus groups were held to better understand the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of young men and women about binge drinking. Based on their responses, researchers were better able to understand how this group defines binge drinking, how they see binge drinking as a social norm, the perceived benefits of binge drinking, and the factors that influence their decisions to binge drink.

From the focus groups, the health units were able to establish a clear picture of young adults in this age group and their beliefs about binge drinking. They found:

"The term 'binge drinking' is not used by the participants. They used terms associated with less risk such as "chugging" and "funneling" to describe excessive drinking. The term 'binge drinking' had a negative connotation for the participants, who were surprised that binge drinking is defined as having more than five drinks on a single occasion. They did not like the idea of defining binge drinking based on a set number of drinks because individual tolerance levels vary. Given this, some individuals may have disregarded the campaign messages being promoted. The participants distinguished binge drinking from other types of drinking based on the *purposeful intent to drink excessively* and the *speed at which drinks are consumed*. Binge drinking was generally seen as a purposeful action, where the primary purpose and focus was to get drunk.

The students viewed binge drinking as a social norm and explained that experiencing the consequences of excessive alcohol consumption were part of a 'rite of passage.' Participants said that they binge drink because it is fun and because it is seen to enhance social interactions. To them, the benefits of having fun outweigh any potential risks or negative consequences related to binge drinking.

Many factors that influence a person's decision to binge drink were identified. Interpersonal factors include peer pressure, perceived self-concept and parental influences. Situational factors include being a part of the 'university



experience' and a supposed lack of non-alcohol related activities to participate in. The expense of binge drinking was not a major factor in deciding to not binge drink. There was considerable discussion about the irony that people don't seem to mind spending a lot of money on drinking but they resent having to pay a relatively small amount of money to participate in non-drinking activities." (pp. 1&2)

Based on the responses from the young adults who participated in the focus groups, the health units came up with a series of recommendations for future social marketing campaigns targeting 19-24-year-olds:

1. When discussing serious messages such as binge drinking, use a serious tone.
2. Develop messages that are different from all the other advertisements – either by using vivid graphic images or being simple and quiet.
3. Make sure the messages have direct personal relevance to the target population, use real stories and local statistics.
4. Messages about risks should not focus on long-term physical health effects. If the campaign message is about health effects, the focus should be on the immediate and short-term risks to the target population.

They also pinpointed four possible messages to use in future binge drinking media campaigns:

1. Be a good friend.
2. Drink responsibly.
3. Chugging alcohol can have an impact on your family and friends.
4. Chugging alcohol can affect your immediate health and personal safety.

Questions

1. What are the four aspects of binge drinking that these researchers wanted more information on?
2. Review the findings from the focus groups and create a list of questions that a moderator might ask to collect this information.

"Anyone who drinks too much alcohol too fast can die from alcohol poisoning. Even you."



3. This is the poster that was created as part of the original awareness campaign. Given what you know about this group from the focus testing, do you think this poster would be effective? Why or why not?



Elements of a Successful PSA Campaign

By Dr. Jack Jorgens

Accent Media, McLean, VA. <http://www.psaresearch.com/bib4111.html>

Used with permission from Goodwill Communications PSA Research Center.

Quality

People remember a dramatic or entertaining spot that is beautifully produced, but this doesn't mean that high-budget PSAs are always the most effective. Simplicity sometimes works best. But the intelligence, sensitivity and imagination reflected in that 30 or 60 seconds does much to influence the public perception of the sponsoring organization, and the importance of the issue.

Variety

Use different arguments, characters, tones and bits of information, and allow programmers to rotate spots so that they don't become annoying to viewers. The most successful campaigns approach different parts of you, hit you in several different ways.

Different Media

TV, radio, websites, brochures, pamphlets, comic books, signage, posters, refrigerator magnets, tee shirts, and so on reinforce each other in a campaign. Words, images, statistics, testimonials, appeals to self-interest, appeals to the public good, how it affects you, how it affects your family and friends – all work on viewers and listeners to change even the most deeply-seated prejudices, habits and beliefs. On the other hand, these things take time. Sudden massive changes are rare in this arena.

Repetition

All the research indicates that the more often the audience hears a message, the more likely they are to get it.

Multilingual / Multicultural

Most minority groups prefer to be addressed in their native language. Every ethnic culture has its unique range of values, prejudices, interests, filters.

Attractive Packaging

Programmers are more likely to air material that gets their attention, presents the messages in words and images, and persuades them to sit down and listen to your PSA. Use a powerful design and, if possible, integrate the messages of the campaign into it.

Strong Marketing

To get buy-in for your PSA, a notification may get some usage. Add an articulate and persuasive phone call and you will get more. Add a call from a powerful local official reinforcing the importance of the PSA to the local community, and you will do even better.

Thorough Evaluation

It is good to have the numbers, and the who, when and where of airings. But qualitative assessments — asking people what they think — are very valuable too as you work through revisions in a campaign strategy.

