

Generating “Buzz”: Earned Media and NYC’s Pouring on the Pounds Campaign

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Background

- The goal of the Pouring on the Pounds (POP) campaign was to raise awareness of the adverse health effects of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) (Figure 1).
- In August – November 2009, 1500 print advertisements (ads) were placed in New York City (NYC) subways.
- On December 14, 2009, a video ad was placed on various free-access video hosting and social media websites including YouTube™ and Facebook™.
- On May 3 – May 5, 2010, the video was aired on television 59 times.
- The message was disseminated in four ways:
 1. Spots were bought for the print and television ads.
 2. A paid marketer posted links to the ads on selected internet blogs within social networks to encourage “viral” or self-replicating dissemination of the campaign.
 3. Consumers continued to direct new viewers to the ads by sharing them with others in their social networks.
 4. Media outlets directed new viewers to the ads by running news stories about them, a process referred to as *earned media*.



Figure 1: One of the subway ads

Methods

- Web analytics were used to track earned media in newspapers, TV, radio and on-line news and blog sites.
- The number of times the video was viewed was recorded from the YouTube™ site.
- The number of impressions (or viewings) of the television ads was estimated by the media placement buyer.

Outcomes

Earned Media

- After August 31, 2009, the subway print ads were mentioned in 143 newspapers, radio broadcasts, television news, magazines and blogs (Figure 2).

- After the video launch on December 14, 2009, the campaign was mentioned in at least 268 media outlets, including the *New York Times*, MSNBC, CNN, ABC, Fox News, BBC News, the *LA Times*, the Jay Leno Show, *Crain's New York*, *The Huffington Post*, local radio broadcasts, and health-related blogs (Figure 2).

Video Viewings

- The video campaign exceeded the goal of 100,000 viewings in the first several days of the campaign with 284,684 viewings by 12/16/09, and 0.5 million viewings by the end of the first month (Figure 3). To date, it has been viewed 710,173 times.

Relationship between Earned Media and Video Viewings

- The number of video viewings increased rapidly in the first few days, when it was embedded in several internet news and blog sites (Figure 3).

- The number of viewings per day reached a plateau in the first several weeks, corresponding to the drop-off in daily earned media (Figure 3).

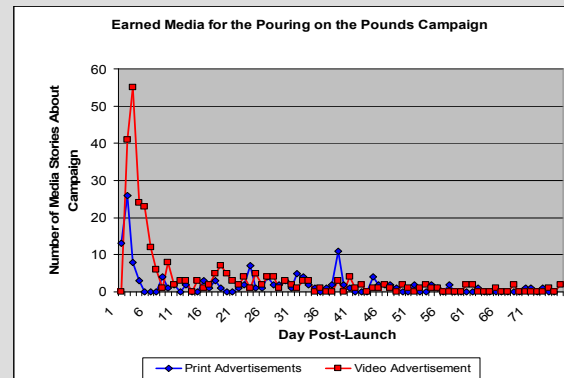


Figure 2: Daily total earned media for the Pouring on the Pounds campaign by days after launch. Day 1 was 8/31/09 for the print advertisements and 12/14/09 for the video.

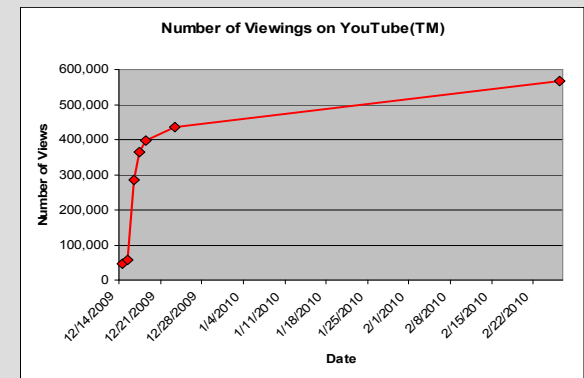


Figure 3: Cumulative number of viewings on YouTube™ over time

Cost Comparison Between Television and Internet Video Views

- After the cost of production of the video ad, there was no additional cost per viewing for the 710,173 Internet viewings. We were unable to determine how many of the Internet viewings were unique as opposed to repeated viewings by the same viewer.

- After production costs, the cost of airing the ad on television was \$100,000. There were an estimated 4,200,000 total viewings, 1,600,000 of which were unique. This represents a cost of \$23.8 per 1000 viewings.

Discussion

- The POP campaign was a widely viewed multi-media campaign that reached over 2 million people.
- Over 0.5 million people viewed the video on-line at considerably less cost compared with television viewings. Viral marketing through social and traditional media may be conducive to disseminating health-related information, however, success depends on sustained public interest.
- It is unclear whether the same audience is reached on the Internet compared with other media. We conducted an Internet survey to determine demographic characteristics of viewers, which was posted as a link on YouTube™. However only 435 people responded (<0.1% of viewers) making it difficult to generalize the results. A next step in improving response rates might include designing a “pop up” survey that automatically launches after viewing a video.
- Using free access video sites may be a viable alternative to paid television spots for future campaigns.