

Operation Sweet Tooth: Effective Use of Social Marketing Campaigns in Non-Traditional Social Settings

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ABSTRACT

Operation “Sweet Tooth” is a social marketing campaign designed to capture the attention of African American Men who have Sex with Men. The campaign is designed to draw attention to some of the potential HIV/STD exposure risks associated with oral sex. The organization’s goal for this campaign is to distribute 10,000 condoms during the Black Gay Pride Labor Day Weekend, and to have quality education sessions regarding oral sex risks with at least 1000 event-goers.

INTRODUCTION

The sub-theme for 2008 was “Team Survival” Your Mission: To Stay Safe. Staff and volunteers wore T-Shirts bearing the “Team Survival” slogan; also they wore hats, khaki shorts, boots, a canteen and dog tags. Candy is associated with candy flavored condoms (i.e. cherry candy with cherry flavored condoms). Individuals are encouraged not to brush teeth just prior to performing oral sex, but instead to use mints, gum and candy as an alternative. Safer sex kits were packaged in 2.5” X 4.5” manila envelopes. There was a label on the exterior of the package displaying “Your Mission: To Stay Safe”. Condom kits contained condoms, lubrication, and a piece of candy. Social marketing campaigns can appear less threatening while adding clarity; often they provide brevity and sometimes levity. The advertisements are catchy even to non-gay identified men; this can lead to a diffusion of “guilt.”

SIMPLE DIRECT MESSAGE

- Candy associated with candy flavored condoms (i.e. cherry hard candy with cherry flavored condoms)
- Encouraged not to brush teeth just prior to performing oral sex; use mints, candy instead

SOCIAL MARKETING

- Commercial marketing techniques employed for behavior change
- Is consumer driven, constantly changing must be monitored for rapid review of strategies and tactics
- Increases awareness of health issues and reduces morality judgments

HIV PREVENTION SOCIAL MARKETING

- Social marketing campaigns can appear less threatening while adding clarity
- Infuses humor and relaxed attitude to serious health issues.
- Is culturally sensitive
- Initiatives may circumvent purported HIV prevention fatigue

ATTRACTING TARGET AUDIENCE

- Advertisements are catchy even to non-MSM as well (diffusion of guilt)

ENABLE QUALITY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

- More than 1500 direct contacts during Black Gay Pride Weekend in Atlanta
- Duplicated with different core group of health educators

REORGANIZATION OF THINKING

- BE SEXY WEAR A CONDOM
- DON'T THINK, USE IT!
- Images help reflect that healthier behavior is the “in” thing

UNCONVENTIONAL ADS ARE MEMORABLE

- Flashbulb Memory

*a detailed and vivid **memory** that is developed and stored in one instance and retained forever*

NEXT STEPS

- Marketing to various areas and venues frequented by Black MSM
- Advertising at major LGBTQ events allows reaching target populations from a variety of geographic locations.
- Black Gay Pride (Atlanta)
- Black Gay Pride (Washington, D.C.)

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