

Assessment of Purdue Extension's New Digital Social Marketing Campaign Designed to Reach Low-Income Indiana Residents

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Abstract

Objective

To assess reach and awareness of Purdue Extension's social marketing campaign, "Easy As: Eat, Gather Go" among the target audience in Indiana. The campaign was launched in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2017.

Target Audience

Low-income women with children across the state of Indiana.

Theory, Prior Research, Rationale

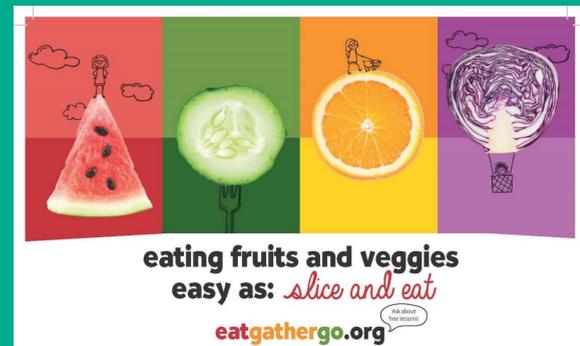
The Purdue Extension Nutrition Education Program (NEP) works to improve nutrition and health of audiences with limited resources in Indiana through Nutrition Education and Community Wellness Coordination. The USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) Plan Guidance recognizes that multi-level interventions, such as social marketing are necessary to have an impact on nutrition and physical activity related behaviors.

Study Design and Participation

Altarum employed a cross-sectional, multi-mode data collection protocol of web and paper surveys from a representative sample of low-income Indiana residents. In total, 1,172 surveys were returned.

Conclusions and Implications

Purdue Extension successfully launched a new social marketing campaign recognized by one-third of the target population surveyed. Exposure to the campaign was significantly higher among limited-resource and younger respondents, and participants reported that they were encouraged to take action after seeing messages. This has the potential to support behavior change among the target audience.



Overview

In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2017, Purdue Extension launched a statewide digital social marketing campaign, "Easy As: Eat, Gather, Go," in Indiana, to reach low-income women with children, the primary target audience of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed). The campaign promoted fruit and vegetable consumption, family mealtime, and physical activity. The overarching strategy of the campaign was to build and promote a website that contained information for eating healthy on a budget. Purdue Extension contracted with Altarum to conduct an outcome evaluation of the campaign.

Objective

The purpose of the outcome evaluation was to assess reach and awareness of Purdue Extension's social marketing messages among low-income women with children in Indiana.



Methodology

Altarum employed a cross-sectional, multi-mode data collection protocol of web and paper surveys, drawing from a representative sample of low-income Indiana residents. Metrics utilized were identified from the SNAP-Ed Evaluation framework and interpretive guide. In total, 1,172 surveys were returned from all five regions of Indiana.

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were performed on the whole sample as well as subgroups. Confidence intervals were calculated to estimate significant differences among respondents at the alpha = 0.05 level.

Results

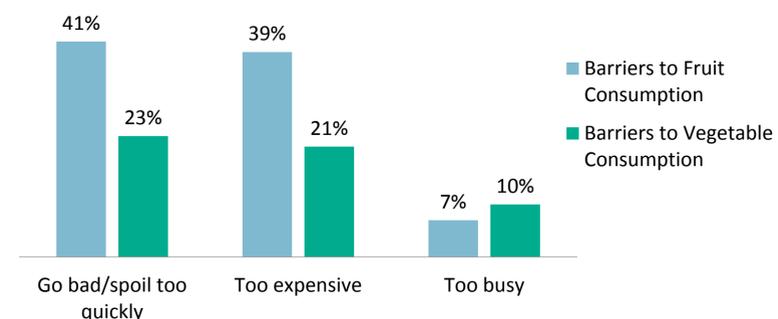
Exposure:

More than one-quarter (29%) of respondents reported exposure to the campaign. If any respondent had a child under age 18, their exposure (33%) was significantly higher than all others (24%). Among sub-groups, respondents who reported participating in one or more assistance programs were significantly more likely to have been exposed to the campaign than those who did not (33% and 25%, respectively). Younger respondents, ages 18 to 24, were significantly more likely to report exposure than older respondents, ages 55 to 64 (49% and 24%, respectively).

Behavior Change:

On average, respondents reported consuming 1.16 cups of fruits and 1.31 cups of vegetables per day. While falling short of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, more than half (54%) were trying to consume more fruits and nearly half (49%) were trying to consume more vegetables. Spoilage and cost were reported as the primary barriers to fruit and vegetable consumption.

Primary Barriers to Fruit and Vegetable Consumption



Respondents who were exposed to the social marketing campaign were asked whether seeing the healthy eating messages led to behavior changes. Respondents most frequently reported thinking about making healthy food choices (40%), cooking more meals at home (37%), planning healthy meals (29%), buying more fruits and vegetables at the store or farmers market (28%), and eating more fruits and vegetables (25%).

Actions That Respondents Were Prompted to Take After Seeing Campaign Materials (n=338)



Conclusion

In FFY 2017, Purdue Extension successfully launched a new social marketing campaign. An outcome evaluation found that the campaign was recognized by one-third of the target population surveyed. Exposure to the campaign was significantly higher among limited-resource and younger respondents. An assessment of behavior change readiness found that many surveyed were actively trying to increase their intake of fruits and vegetables, making them particularly receptive to campaign messages. Further, many reported that they were encouraged to take action after exposure to messages. These positive results indicate that the social marketing campaign has the potential to encourage behavior change among the target audience.

