

Using a Marketing Evaluation Tool to Optimize a Social Marketing Campaign: Insights From a Copy Test of a *You're the Mom* Campaign Ad

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ABSTRACT

A copy test is a business tool for assessing advertisements. This report provides an example of how copy test may be used within nutrition education practice and research. A public health nutrition advertisement for *You're the Mom* was copy tested with a market research firm. Mothers (n = 300) were aged 22–49 years, had a household income <\$50,000 and ≥1 child aged 4–8 years and bought fast food ≥2–3 times/mo. Compared with advertisements for for-profit goods, the advertisement scored high on impact (77th percentile) and moderate on persuasiveness (46th percentile) and communicated 2 key messages at higher rates than norms (51% and 46%) and a third at a lower rate (37%). Copy test results can best inform campaign development when the distinct purpose of the ad (versus the overall campaign) is clear; and when evaluation tools are designed to align directly with that purpose.

Key Words: child nutrition, copy test, quick-serve restaurant food, social marketing (*J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2018; 000:1–11.)

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INTRODUCTION

Leveraging industry best practices can strengthen public health efforts.^{1,2} One business practice, the copy test, is a standard marketing tool used in business settings in which the performance of an advertisement (ad) is compared with a comprehensive database of previously tested ads for impact or breakthrough message communication and persuasiveness.³ Marketers use copy testing to optimize ads for maximum impact and predict performance in the market. Copy tests conducted by market research firms compare performance of campaign messaging materials in 1 of 3 megacategories: fast-moving consumer goods, services, or long-term goods.

The value of the benchmark is that it enables health practitioners to determine likely ad performance relative to other ads in a noisy messaging space.

Pretesting campaign materials has been recommended in public health practice to ensure that campaign materials are effective, understood as intended, and consistent with overall strategy to maximize the return on investment.^{4–8} Pretests could be conducted via focus groups with priority audience members (ie, qualitative) or using control group designs comparing those who are vs are not exposed to campaign materials (ie, quantitative) on things such as intentions for behavior change.^{5,6} These approaches aid practitioners in learning more about how the priority audience perceives campaign

messaging or how motivating it is compared with a control group, but they lack comparison with other advertisements or public health messaging. Because this type of copy testing is not standard practice for public health campaigns, the pool of comparison ads is limited and market research firms have less experience evaluating public service announcements.⁶ Yet public health campaigns must compete in a crowded messaging environment to reach their audience amidst pervasive advertisements for products and services.⁹

The essential difference between the type of copy test public health researchers typically conduct and the one described in this report is the comparison group. Copy tests reported in the public health literature have determined ad performance by comparing effects on attitudes, for example, from those exposed to an ad (ie, intervention) with those unexposed (ie, control). Although instructive, the study design lacks information about whether intended audience members would likely ever see or pay attention to the message in the real world (ie, would the ad have breakthrough power amidst a sea of attractive, attention-grabbing, for-profit marketing?). To the authors' knowledge, there are

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no examples in the literature of market research firm copy testing of public health campaigns detailed in a way that informs those in public health research and practice.

The purposes of this report are to provide a framework for practitioners and researchers who may want to use a copy test in social marketing by (1) reporting the authors' involvement in the copy test process; (2) sharing the copy test results and lessons learned; and (3) describing how campaign decision making was influenced by the output of the copy test, providing a guidepost for others launching nutrition campaigns. The copy test evaluated a campaign ad for *You're the Mom*, a social marketing campaign launched in 2016 to motivate mothers to choose more healthful options for their children in quick-serve restaurants. In 2015, the restaurant industry spent \$1.55 billion on advertising in the US.⁹ Although these ads were not all directed at parents and families, that same year, children aged 2–11 years viewed over 1,600 ads for quick-serve and other restaurant food.¹⁰ Thus, the copy test was a critical tool for comparing breakthrough potential, message communication, and persuasiveness of the campaign ad against this backdrop.

DESCRIPTION OF COPY TEST INPUTS

The *You're the Mom* campaign, which was created by advertising agency Victor & Spoils for ChildObesity180 at Tufts University, was designed to empower and motivate mothers to choose healthier options for their children when eating in quick-serve restaurants. The priority audience for campaign development was lower-income mothers, with an intentional focus on African American and Hispanic/Latina populations. This focus was because of a higher risk for child obesity within these populations¹¹ and the preponderance of fast-food (vs full-service) restaurants in lower-income urban areas.¹² Campaign messages highlighted simple actions mothers could take when ordering food for their children in this setting, such as ordering smaller portions,

choosing water instead of soda, and adding a fruit or vegetable side dish. Messages were disseminated through traditional media outlets (eg, radio, billboards, digital, social) and grass-roots efforts (eg, outdoor murals and community events). One ad (Figure 1) was considered by the authors to capture an important campaign message and was selected for the copy test. ChildObesity180 commissioned Kantar Millward Brown (KMB) to conduct a Link for Print (Kantar Millward Brown, Warwick, UK) copy test online. Kantar Millward Brown's Link copy-testing solution has been demonstrated to provide an accurate assessment of an ad's potential to

generate sales for a brand in a wide range of countries and categories. There are clear relationships between the key Link scores and the likelihood of the brand seeing a sales share rise (or, conversely, a sales share loss). The evidence is especially strong for specific measures performing well together: Persuasion plus Impact shows a compelling relationship between Link scores and sales changes. However, this evidence was not communicated through channels typically accessed by public health audiences (eg, published in peer-reviewed journals). This study used standard validated questions, which are used across all of the Link studies, and custom

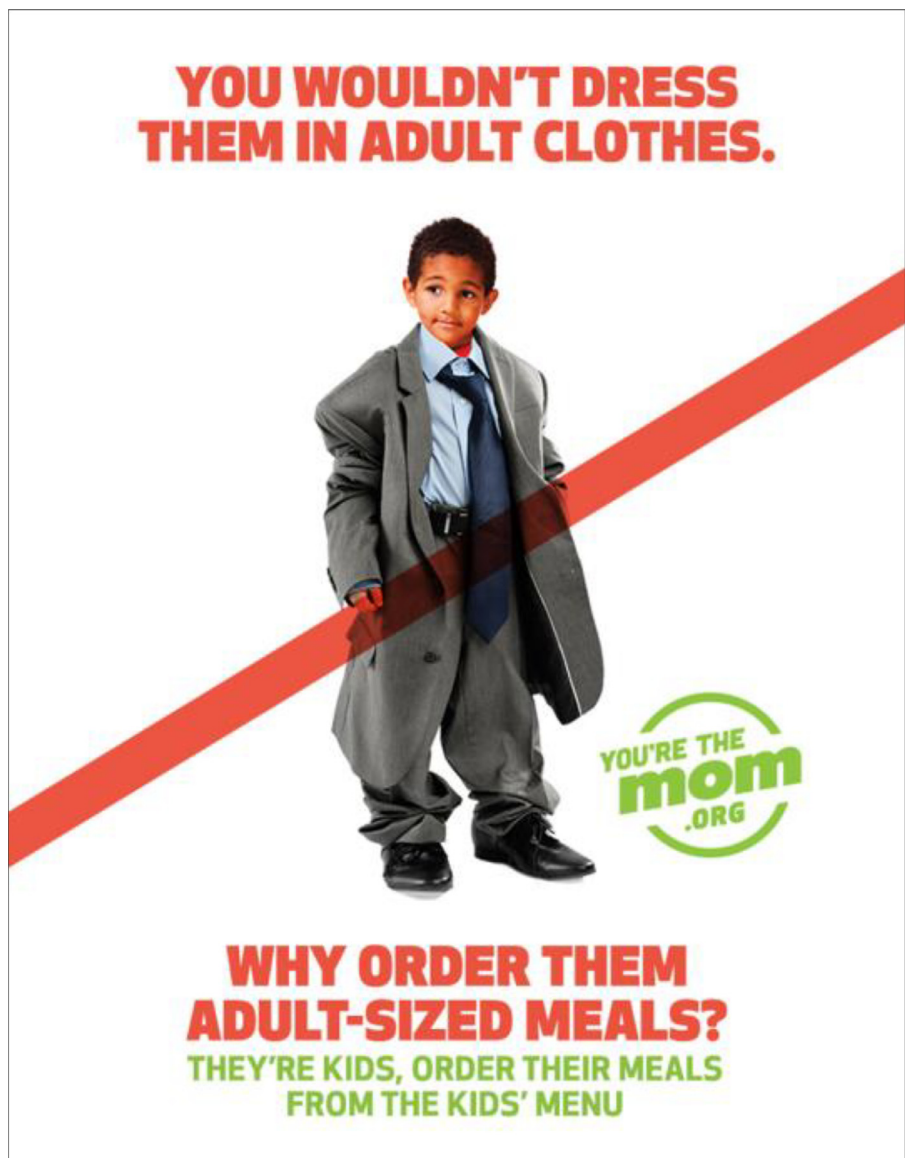


Figure 1. Copy-tested advertisement.

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