Taylor & Francis
healthsciences

Learning from truth^sm : Youth Participation in Field Marketing Techniques to Counter Tobacco Advertising

MERRILL EISENBERG

The University of Arizona,
Tucson, Arizona

CHRIS RINGWALT

Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation,
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

DAVID DRISCOLL

Research Triangle Institute, Research Triangle Park,
North Carolina

MANUEL VALLEE

The University of California, Berkeley,
Berkeley, California

GREGORY GULLETTE

The University of Georgia,
Athens, Georgia

In 2000, the American Legacy Foundation (Legacy) launched truth^sm, a national, multi-medium tobacco control social marketing campaign targeting youth age 12–17. This paper provides a brief description of one aspect of that campaign, the truth^sm tour, and compares and contrasts the truth^sm tour with commercial field marketing approaches used by the tobacco industry. The methods used for the tour's process evaluation are also described, and two important lessons learned about using field marketing techniques and using youth to implement field marketing techniques in social marketing campaigns are discussed. Social marketing campaigns that target youth may want to launch field marketing activities. The truth^sm tour experience can inform the development of those efforts.

Address correspondence to Merrill Eisenberg, 3001 E. Drachman Street, Tucson, Arizona 85716, USA. E-mail: merril@u.arizona.edu

Tobacco use is a health risk behavior that is strongly influenced by industry advertising and promotion, especially among youth (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999). Tobacco marketing has brought us icons such as the Marlboro Man and Joe Camel, both of whom are well-recognized by youth and that have enticed millions of teenagers to embrace a positive image of tobacco use, to become experimenters and then established smokers, and to eventually die as a result of tobacco-related diseases (Pierce, Gilpin, & Choi, 1999). In response, many health-related organizations and programs have turned to social marketing as a strategy for providing an alternative message about tobacco to both youth and adults. Social Marketing is a health communication strategy that uses the techniques of commercial marketing to produce behavior change that results in increased health and well-being (Andreasen, 1995, p. 3). Using social marketing techniques to reduce or replace industry marketing activities is referred to as "counter-marketing" and is one tobacco control strategy that is strongly endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999).

The truth[sm] campaign is a unique and broad-scale tobacco counter-marketing initiative targeting youth age 12–17. It is a project of the American Legacy Foundation. As a recipient of funds generated by the Master Settlement Agreement between the tobacco industry and 46 states and five U.S. territories in 1998, Legacy launched truth[sm], an ongoing mass media counter-marketing campaign that utilized many of the standard components of commercial marketing campaigns. Television and youth oriented print media are used to expose the public to the truth[sm] message, and an interactive web site, *www.thetruth.com*, was established. The truth[sm] campaign also included a national field marketing component, the truth[sm] tour.

The message of the truth[sm] campaign differs from other youth oriented tobacco control campaigns in that it does not focus solely on the health effects of tobacco nor warn youth not to smoke. Rather, it provides information about tobacco, the tobacco industry, and the social costs of tobacco use while encouraging teens to take control of their lives and to reject the influence of the industry's advertizing practices.

The techniques utilized by the campaign also differ from past youth oriented tobacco control campaigns. The truth[sm] campaign was intentionally developed as a "brand." Branding is a marketing concept that refers to a name, term, symbol, design, or combination thereof that identifies a seller's products and differentiates them from competitors' products (Lamb, Hair, & McDaniel 2000, p. 323). A brand creates an image in the consumer's mind. The truth[sm] brand was designed to be associated with "edgy" (on the leading edge of popular youth culture) trend-setting youth who are likely to be opinion leaders (Rogers, 1995), especially for youth who are at high risk for tobacco use. The truth[sm] campaign was modeled after an analogous initiative in Florida (Sly, Hopkins, Trapido, & Ray, 2001), which used a similar message and techniques on a smaller scale.

The grassroots component of the truth[sm] campaign was first implemented during the summer of 2000 with the launch of the truth[sm] tour. The tour was conceived as a mechanism for grassroots marketing of the truth[sm] brand, creating visibility for the brand at the local level in order to create a "buzz" about rejecting tobacco among trend-setting youth in local communities. The primary goal of the truth[sm] tour was to "dimensiona-lize," or enhance the richness and depth of public understanding of the truth[sm] brand, to reach out to "non-joiner" (that is, non-mainstream) teens, and to provide a variety of mechanisms for them to participate in and hence identify with the brand. The truth[sm] tour utilized edgy youth, selected to draw the attention of their peers, to travel throughout the United States as ambassadors of the campaign. An ethnographic process evaluation was conducted to document the tour activities, group dynamics, and the impact of tour participation on the riders.

The tour used typical field marketing techniques to plant the truth[sm] message in local communities. Commercial field marketing techniques deliver a message at a grassroots level, through direct interaction with the target audience "in their environment, on their terms" (Promotional Marketing, Inc. 1990). Field marketing campaigns frequently include a regional or national tour with a high profile kick-off, high visibility billboard trucks or trailers carrying the message on the road, themed events and activities that are promoted in the local media, signage at the events, and an associated web site. Field marketing has been used extensively to promote products to youth such as movies (Street Dogs Inc., n.d.), shoes (Street Dogs Inc., n.d.; On Point Marketing and Promotions, n.d.), alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, clothing and robotic toys (The Field Marketers, n.d.) and fast food (On Point Marketing and Promotions, n.d.).

The tobacco industry also utilizes field marketing to promote their product. For example, in 1990 Camel launched a ten-week field marketing campaign based on a live entertainment act for nightclubs, titled "Smooth Moves." To complement the nightclub act, support materials to remind customers about the brand were left behind, cigarettes were given away, and premiums and prizes were provided as audience rewards for participation in programmed activities. The stated purposes of the campaign included the creation of a "pre-emptive high level presence for Camel Brand 'Smooth Character' imagery," to "associate and affiliate the Camel Brand with contemporary images and lifestyles through target-relative executions," and to "provide on-going lower level presence in night clubs and other venues as continuing reinforcement for the Camel Brand message" (Macfarlane, 1990, p. 2).

Field marketing endeavors are costly. The budget for developing and executing Camel's Smooth Moves campaign was $1,544,461 (Promotional Marketing, Inc., 1990). Most public health social marketing campaigns do not have the resources to embark upon extensive field marketing campaigns. However, the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between the tobacco industry and 46 state attorneys general created a substantial resource for countering tobacco industry advertising tactics on a national level, enabling the American Legacy Foundation to launch a full-scale field marketing effort.

The truth[sm] tour was launched during the summer of 2000, when three groups of between 6 and 12 carefully selected and trained youth (referred to as "riders") toured the country, visiting 27 cities to deliver the truth[sm] message. The riders were a diverse group that included Hispanic, African American, Asian, and Anglo individuals who represented hip hop, skater, goth, and mainstream youth subcultures, as well as former gang members.

The truth[sm] tour included many of the elements of a typical commercial field marketing endeavor. For example, the truth[sm] tour distributed a variety of promotional items and clothing, each marked with the truth[sm] logo. The promotional items included t-shirts, hats, visors, car fresheners, frisbees, dog tags, bracelets, friendship beads, bandannas, traveler clocks, messenger bags, magnets, stickers, temporary tattoos, and comic books.

Like typical commercial field marketing campaigns, the truth[sm] tour was built around high visibility trucks emblazoned with the truth[sm] logo. These trucks were equipped with electronic music systems, DVDs, and computer games. The vehicles played a central role in creating visibility for the truth[sm] tour and in attracting local youth to tour events. They were set up in venues such as professional sport events, malls, record shops, teen clubs, parks, or beaches. A crew member or rider would serve as a disc jockey, blow-up chairs would be set up in front of the truth[sm] truck, and locally hired street marketers would circulate in the area around the truth[sm] space and direct local youth to the truck. When local youth arrived at the truth[sm] truck, the riders would engage the youth in individual and group activities aimed at creating rapport and delivering information about tobacco and tobacco industry tactics.

One important aspect of the truth[sm] tour that differed from parallel commercial endeavors was the composition of the traveling crew. While commercial field marketing efforts may target youth, they are staffed by individuals over the age of 18. The truth[sm] tour's inclusion of youth under the age of 18 as the opinion leaders and most visible members of the crew was an important departure from past commercial field marketing methods. The truth[sm] tour was conceived as being "by and for youth" and the involvement of youth was an essential component. As members of the target population, the under-age riders were able to engage, communicate with, and serve as role models for local youth. However, this created situations that commercial field marketing campaigns have not had to address.

In keeping with commercial field marketing techniques, the truth[sm] tour began with a festive kickoff which occurred in Seattle in conjunction with a Legacy sponsored national youth summit that was attended by 1000 youth from every state and five territories of the USA. The three truth[sm] tour caravans visited 27 cities, with multiple stops and events in each market. The final stop for all three tours was the World Conference on Tobacco OR Health that was held in Chicago on August 6–11, 2000.

The truth[sm] tour provided an opportunity not only to bring the truth[sm] message directly to youth in many American communities, but also to identify both facilitating and constraining factors that can inform the planning and implementation of future social marketing campaigns that utilize field marketing techniques. A detailed description of specific lessons learned about tour events, the vehicles, and the gear, is provided elsewhere (Eisenberg et al., 2001). Here we address more general lessons that were learned, including a discussion of issues related to using youth to staff a field marketing endeavor, staff sensitivity to working with youth who represent a wide range of backgrounds and lifestyles, and a discussion of how one common aspect of commercial field marketing, leaving a lasting presence in the community, was not fully utilized by the truth[sm] tour.

Methods

The truth[sm] tour was designed to encourage direct youth-to-youth contact to facilitate the transmission of tobacco counter-marketing information. This approach posed several challenges for evaluation design. Not only did the nature of the target audience of teens preclude formal or follow-up interviews without parental permission, but even the presence of adult field interviewers could potentially have vitiated the youth-to-youth spirit that guided the brand's and the tour's development. This spirit is a key component of the grassroots marketing approach.

Since a traditional outcome evaluation approach was not feasible, an ethnographic approach was used to provide process evaluation data. The truth[sm] tour created three small, close-knit, mobile communities that lived and worked together for a six-week period. Ethnographic methods were used to describe these communities and provide evaluation data, resulting in a narrative account of what occurred on the tour, largely from the riders' point of view. Methods consisted of observation, participant observation, informal conversations, and semi-structured and unstructured open-ended interviews with the tour riders, staff, and adults from the community.

Qualitative data have, by nature, limitations related to filtering human experience through the eyes of the observer. Indeed, the ethnographers each had a unique worldview that influenced how they perceived the individuals, social interactions, and tour activities that they were meant to record. In designing the evaluation process we took steps to bound the data collection process so that the focus of the ethnographic record was uniform regardless of ethnographer. Bounding is a concept developed by the first author

to assist qualitative field workers to capture the rich ethnographic context while maintaining a focus on specific research or evaluation questions. The evaluation questions and all data collection instruments and forms were cross-referenced to facilitate the connection between the observed and lived experience and the focus of the evaluation.

Training for the ethnographers took place over three days at the Seattle Summit, which provided a perfect training laboratory since over 1000 youth were attending the summit and participating in truth^{sm} activities. The ethnographers observed activities and interviewed youth at the Summit, and the data collected were compared and critiqued in training exercises. By bounding the data collection process and providing data collection protocols, consistency of focus was achieved. Operating within this framework, the diversity of the ethnographers then became a strength rather than a limitation because it provided an opportunity for triangulation of data (Janesick, 1994) and testing of individual ethnographers' interpretations across sites.

The ethnographic record provided a detailed understanding of (1) lessons learned about implementing various aspects of the campaign, such as different types of events, gear giveaways, and utilization of the truth^{sm} trucks, (2) the social dynamics of the tour, including descriptions of conflict and how conflict was resolved, and (3) what participation on the tour meant to the riders who were selected to embody the image of the truth^{sm}, and (4) what the riders learned. The findings reported here relate to general implementation lessons learned and the social dynamics of the tour.

Five ethnographers were hired for the three tours, although one left the project after the first week. The remaining four ethnographers traveled with the tours and participated in all tour activities. While all of the ethnographers were adults (ranging in age from 22–45) two could easily have been mistaken for riders and were readily accepted by the riders as part of the group. After a short period of time all of the ethnographers became part of the camaraderie of the road. Because of their unique position as recorders of the experience who were not formally affiliated with the adult tour staff, the ethnographers came to play an important role as confidantes for the riders.

Although parental permission had been given for the riders to participate in the evaluation interviews, the ethnographers were precluded from interviewing the youth encountered in the communities visited because of the parental consent issue specified above. Also, because two of the ethnographers were clearly adults, it was feared that they might pollute the brand with their adult presence. The ethnographers were instructed to maintain a low profile during all public engagements.

The ethnographers were supervised by the first author while they were in the field. Data were transmitted to the supervisor via e-mail daily so that information from the three tours could be continually compared and reconciled. The process was grounded (Strauss & Corbin, 1994), in that areas of inquiry were identified from the field notes and pursued as they arose. The supervisor read through the materials from the three tours on a daily basis. She identified emerging themes and issues and asked the ethnographers to collect information on these in a more structured manner by issuing "Methods Alerts" via e-mail. The ethnographers and the supervisor also maintained daily contact by telephone. The supervisor spent five days with the West coast tour when it visited Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Tucson and also met with all three tour groups at the tours' end to conduct a formal debriefing.

Findings

Social marketing campaigns that target youth may want to utilize youth in field marketing endeavors, and the lessons learned from the truth^{sm} tour can inform the development of

those efforts. Some of the general lessons learned from the 2000 truth[sm] tour, including issues that arose regarding using underage and edgy youth as full-time tour staff, the need for sensitivity training for the entire tour staff, and the way in which tours articulate with local advocates for a shared cause, are discussed below.

Managing Edgy Youth

The truth[sm] campaign was conceptualized to be "by and for youth." Therefore, the tour riders were predominantly under the age of 18. The riders took the by and for youth philosophy of the truth[sm] campaign very seriously and had high expectations regarding the amount of control they would have while on tour. But since the riders were underage, one aspect of staff-rider relationships was staff's role *in loco parentis*. While the riders' youth and energy were very important in creating appealing role models for youth in the local markets, the responsibility for dealing with underage riders for six weeks on the road was very challenging.

Prior to embarking, all riders were required to sign a Code of Conduct which, among other things, stipulated that minors must be supervised by adults and forbids such risk-taking behaviors as alcohol or drug use or sexual activity. However, once they got on the road, the riders greatly resented the behavioral restrictions and curfews that were imposed on them. They pointed out that in keeping with the by and for youth philosophy and the truth[sm] brand's edgy image, they had been chosen specifically because of their alternative lifestyles, rebelliousness, and willingness to take risks. They believed that the Code of Conduct was a contradiction of the truth[sm] tour's philosophy and image. As one rider remarked "they want these groups of young, alternative kids reaching out to other young, alternative kids, but they want to dictate and pretty much watch [us] like a hawk."

In contrast to the resentment of staff taking on a parental role, at some times riders themselves invited the staff to assume parental roles, sometimes quite explicitly. For example, crew on the west tour told an ethnographer that one of the hip hop riders asked her if he could call her "auntie" because he missed his family and wanted to think of her as someone who would look out for him. The crew member was surprised that this particular rider, who was usually full of bravado, would feel that he needed this kind of attention, but she was happy to provide it. In discussing this incident some of the supervisory staff talked about wishing that their jobs had been defined more along the lines of "camp counselor" because that would have given them a better understanding of the kind of support and encouragement the riders needed from them.

A field marketing tour that requires constant supervision of edgy and underage youth for an extended period of time is an endeavor that should be carefully considered before it is undertaken. It is not easy to balance the degree of youth control with the legal responsibility for ensuring their health and safety and their developmental need for nurturing. Field marketing approaches to social marketing for youth may want to consider utilizing youth in capacities other than as full time riders.

Sensitivity Training

Another issue that arose within the groups with regard to the involvement of edgy youth was the need for sensitivity to a broad range of lifestyles. The riders represented a wide range of geographic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, as well as individual styles and sexual preferences. Legacy anticipated the need to provide explicit training to sensitize the riders for dealing with their lifestyle differences prior to embarking on the truth[sm] tour. The members of the supervisory staff were also briefed on this issue as well.

However, the technical staff (e.g., drivers), many of whom had considerable experience in commercial field marketing contexts, were not briefed or prepared to deal with cultural sensitivity issues.

The everyday reality was that the entire traveling group — riders, supervisory staff, and technical staff—interacted as a close-knit social unit. Problems related to cultural, ethnic, and lifestyle differences arose across all crew membership categories, including those who had received the sensitivity training. These issues were amicably settled, but it was hardest for the technical staff to deal with them. Further, while some of the technical staff had had a good deal of experience with commercial field marketing tours, these tours had always been staffed by adults. The technical staff was not well prepared to deal with youth in general, and particularly not with edgy youth. The supervisory staff abided by rules that protect underage workers, such as not working more than eight hours in a day. Some members of the technical staff perceived the youth as being "pampered" in comparison to adults with whom they had worked on commercial field marketing tours. Although it was the exception rather than the rule, some technical staff members were ill prepared to deal with riders who have different sexual orientations. When youth are involved with field marketing, and especially when they embody a variety of backgrounds, lifestyles, and subcultures, all staff members should receive training to address the unique needs of teenagers as well as diversity issues.

Local Market Linkages and Sustainability

In keeping with the marketing approach to this campaign, Legacy contracted with marketing organizations to identify where members of the target population were likely to congregate and to arrange appropriate tour stops. Local youth tobacco control advocates had hoped that the truth^{sm} tour would complement and strengthen their local efforts to reduce teen tobacco use and that they could be involved in maintaining the presence of the truth^{sm} brand after the tour had left town by continuing to stage truth^{sm}–style events. Local tobacco control organizations were advised that the tour was coming to their town, but were not involved in planning tour activities at the local level or in maintaining a long-term truth^{sm} presence in the community.

While there were many successful events, there were also many events at which the target audience was not present, either because the venue was not appropriate for attracting youth or because the tour was present on a day or time of day that was not appropriate. For example, many events were scheduled to take place in shopping malls because youth frequently "hang out" in malls. However, many mall events had been scheduled for mornings, when teens are not yet congregating there. Further, the tour was sometimes scheduled for an event at a mall that does not attract teens. This was very frustrating for the riders and for local youth tobacco control advocates who know which malls attract teens and at what time teens are likely to be congregating there and who could have provided that information to the tour had they been involved in the planning.

Another consequence of minimal coordination with local tobacco control groups was that when the tour left town, there was no way for local youth to carry on the truth^{sm} message or activities. By contrast, one common field marketing strategy that was used in Camel's Smooth Moves field marketing campaign was to "provide on-going lower level presence in night clubs and other venues as continuing reinforcement for the Camel Brand message" (Promotional Marketing, Inc., p. 2). Camel accomplished this by creating a "Camel Club Network" of night-clubs catering to their target market (males aged 21–24). These clubs not only served as venues for the tour, but also received

materials such as LED message signs, posters, banners, prizes, advertising support, promotional items for distribution to smokers, and other ongoing support. Camel's objective was to develop "…a long term relationship with club owners, managers, and patrons that provide a platform for product continuity stimulating market development" (Promotional Marketing, Inc., p. 8).

The only way local youth could sustain a connection with the truth[sm] brand was through the web site. In effect, Legacy used a grassroots marketing approach, which is by nature a local strategy, to market a national brand that is not available in the local market. The riders suggested that Legacy establish an 800 number so that local youth could call in to get advice and encouragement for carrying out truth[sm] style activities. Closer coordination with local tobacco prevention and control allies would also ensure that the brand maintains a local presence. However, closer affiliation with local tobacco control projects may compromise the truth[sm] brand image by associating it with formal community structures that advertise the ill-effects of tobacco use rather than with edgy trend setting youth whose target is tobacco companies and their advertising campaigns. While this can be viewed as a trade-off that should be considered carefully in the planning stages of a field marketing component of a social marketing campaign, it might also provide an opportunity for local tobacco advocacy programs to develop programs and networks that are an alternative to their current youth efforts.

Conclusion

The truth[sm] campaign is a milestone social marketing undertaking that rivals routine commercial marketing activities in terms of the national scope of the project, the resources committed to the project, and the types of activities that were conducted. The truth[sm] tour provided an opportunity to test the field marketing approach to reaching teens with a public health message. While most public health campaigns do not have the resources to launch a comprehensive, multi-faceted national social marketing campaign with a field marketing component, the truth[sm] tour experience can inform smaller field marketing projects, particularly those that are conceptualized as being for and by youth.

The difficulties created by utilizing underage riders, especially edgy ones, suggest that an alternative approach would be to hire young adults who do not need to be supervised as closely while on the road and to involve youth from local markets more closely in planning and implementing tour activities. This would provide an opportunity for local youth to participate in the tour while eliminating the supervisory problems related to taking underage youth on the road. Further, if local youth were involved in identifying opportunities for activities and venues, it would be more likely that the venues chosen for tour activities are more appropriate for attracting the target audience. However, the need for all adult staff to receive sensitivity training around issues of race, ethnicity, sexual preference, and youth culture would remain.

With regard to using field marketing techniques for a social marketing campaign, our experience suggests that the marketing analogy must include a local distribution system for the product or message. Commercial field marketing efforts create linkages with local venues to sustain brand visibility and product availability in the community. Social marketing campaigns should also create linkages at the local level to ensure that the brand and message are sustained in the community after the tour leaves town. In the case of the truth[sm] campaign, closer ties with local level tobacco control allies would facilitate this, but partners should be carefully chosen to ensure that they embody the image of the campaign.

References

Andreasen, A. R. (1995). *Marketing Social Change: Changing Behavior to Promote Health, Social Development, and the Environment*. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1999, August). *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs-August 1999*. Atlanta GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health. Reprinter, with corrections.

Eisenberg, M., Ringwalt, C., Driscoll, D., Valle, M., & Gullette, G. (2001). *Ethnographic Evaluation of the truth^{sm} Tour 2000*. American Legacy Foundation, Washington, DC.

Janesick, V. J. (1994). "The Dance of Qualitative Research Design, Metaphor, Methodolatry, and Meaning." In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

Lamb, C. W., Hair, J. F., & McDaniel, C. (2000). *Marketing* Australia: South-Western College Publishing.

MacFarlane, H. B. (1990). 1990 *Camel Field Marketing (Memo)* Retrieved April 15, 2002. http://www.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/mangini/html/d/100/

On Point Marketing and Promotions. (n.d.) Retrieved April 15, 2002 from www.onpointhq.com/clientroster.html.

Promotional Marketing, Inc. (1990). *Camel 1990 Field Marketing Plan*. Retrieved April 15, 2002. http://www.library.ucsf/tobacco/mangini/html/d/099/otherpages/allpages.html

Pierce, J. P., Gilpin, E. A., & Choi, W. S. (1999). "Sharing the Blame: Smoking Experimentation and Future Smoking-Attributable Mortality Due to Joe Camel and Marlboro Advertising and Promotions." *Tobacco Control* 8(1): 37–44.

Rogers, E. M. *Diffusion of Innovations* (1995). New York: Free Press.

Sly, D. F., Hopkins, R. S., Trapido, E., & Ray, S. (2001). "Influence of a Counteradvertising Media Campaign on Initiation of Smoking: The Florida "truth" Campaign." *American Journal of Public Health* 91(2): 233–238.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. "Grounded Theory Methodology: An Overview." In. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) (1994). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

Street Dogs Inc. (n.d.) Retrieved April 15, 2002 from www.streetdogsinc.com.

The Field Marketers. (n.d.) Retrieved April 15, 2002 from www.fieldmarketers.com/fm_splash.html.