

Objective/brief

The *Annual Update of Key Results 2014/15: New Zealand Health Survey* found that both adult and child obesity rates in New Zealand are increasing: 31% of adults and 11% of children (aged 2-14 years) are now obese. New Zealand's Health Minister and Sport and Recreation Minister Jonathan Coleman declared that "being overweight or obese is expected to overtake tobacco as the leading preventable risk to health in New Zealand within the next 12 months" (NZ Government press release, 19 October), and while the child obesity rate has not changed significantly since 2011/12, it has increased by 3% since 2006/7.

The Childhood Obesity Plan, launched by the NZ Government on 19 October 2015, aims to prevent and manage obesity in children and young people up to 18 years of age. The plan comprised 22 initiatives involving multiple government and private sector agencies, communities, schools and families, and is focused on three areas:

1. Targeted interventions for those who are obese;
2. Increased support for those at risk of becoming obese; and
3. Broad approaches to make healthier choices easier for all New Zealanders.

One of the first initiatives is Big Change Starts Small, a multi-media advertising campaign spearheaded by the Health Promotions Agency (HPA) to raise awareness and generate conversations about childhood obesity. Launched on 12 November 2015 and running until 31 December 2015, the campaign consisted of television, radio, digital, and outdoor advertisements, a website, and was supported by five high-profile athletes. The advertisements were focused on the role of food in families (encouraging parents and families to think about the quantity and quality of food they are providing to their children) and inactivity (suggesting that children are spending too much time on sedentary activities, such as playing video games), while the website provides information on affordable meals and ideas for family activities (see [Appendix A](#)).

Isentia was approached by the HPA's creative agency, Y&R New Zealand, to:

- > Analyse how obesity, particularly childhood obesity, was discussed in traditional and social media;
- > Measure the effectiveness of the campaign in increasing discussions on obesity; and
- > Identify the key commentators and influencers in discussions about obesity.



Y&R New Zealand

Big Change Starts Small

Category: Plain English award for simplicity

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Highlights

- > The project analysed how traditional and social media discussed childhood obesity after the launch of the Childhood Obesity Plan by the New Zealand Government.
- > The announcement and subsequent multi-media campaign markedly increased the volume of conversations regarding obesity and the impact that it has on New Zealand. It also determined that the topic was highly politicised.
- > The specific paid campaign from Y&R was able to help continue the discussion about obesity well after the announcement. They were also able to gather key insights about where the campaign should go next.
- > The findings of this project have directly contributed to a post campaign analysis by the HPA that will consider more funding for further campaigns.
- > Y&R, a creative agency that have not used this type of research before, are now keen advocates for the role that it plays in evaluating a campaign that deals with complex issues.

Strategy

Given that the Big Change Starts Small campaign is part of larger government strategy, the length of the report period covered both the Minister's announcement of the Childhood Obesity Plan and the launch and the duration of the campaign. Initially, Y&R were primarily interested in demonstrating to their client (HPA) that their campaign had increased the volume of social media mentions of obesity.

Our recommendation was that they utilise a full qualitative analysis of both traditional and social media, as we have found that social and traditional media interact significantly when there is a ministerial or government policy announcement launching a campaign.

Given the complex issue, and the overarching objective to create social change, it was important that the project evaluate how obesity is discussed in traditional and social media generally. As behaviour change takes time, this project was designed to assess the impact of the campaign in creating conversations about obesity, rather than the campaign itself. The most effective way to evaluate any change in conversations and potential change in behaviour, is to use qualitative media analysis techniques.

Isentia analysed both traditional and social media coverage (including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and forums) to assess their reception to the announcement, the campaign, as well as to evaluate the campaign's impact on discussions of childhood obesity and its effectiveness in increasing awareness of the issue.

Execution/implementation

Content Selection

Editorial and social media coverage was gathered from two proprietary databases, using both Isentia's standard approach of collecting content through keyword matching and the selection of media reports from within a pool of wider content using set criteria. This included mentions of:

- > The campaign by name;
- > The campaign's assets, including the ambassadors (by name) and the website www.eatmovelive.co.nz
- > The Childhood Obesity Plan;

- > Obesity and/or related health issues, particularly affecting children;
- > Exercise and/or lifestyle-related activities, particularly involving children or in a family context; and
- > Food and food consumption, particularly involving children or in a family context.

This ensured that coverage was not limited to Big Change Start Small-specific mentions and discussions, as the campaign is focused on increasing awareness and conversations on childhood obesity in general. The campaign announcement was made on October 19 2015. Coverage was analysed from 1 October – 31 December 2015.

Research Framework

Once the relevant media reports had been identified, all content was subjected to an in-depth qualitative media analysis using the CARMA methodology (see [Appendix B](#)). A customised coding framework was developed and tracked appearances of:

- > The campaign and associated aspects (including campaign advertisements, ambassadors and messages);
- > The Childhood Obesity Plan;
- > Key stakeholders; and
- > General comments or discussion about obesity and obesity-related issues.

The project tracked messages communicated by the campaign, messages about the campaign and the government's approach to childhood obesity, as well as more general messages about obesity.

Messages were also used to consider how social media commentators and journalists positioned the **responsibility** of childhood obesity (with the government, communities, parents, extended families).

Additionally, Isentia also requested Y&R to supply its schedule of campaign activities. The project's breakdown of coverage was subsequently aligned with this schedule, enabling Isentia to directly track and assess the impact of and reaction to each of the activities.



Effectiveness of Assignment

Isentia's analysis showed a marked increase in conversation and discussion about obesity in the reporting period compared to the three months prior (see [Appendix C, Example 1](#)). While a large proportion of traditional media coverage and social media conversations occurred in October (and therefore could be attributed to the announcement of the Childhood Obesity Plan), these fell away swiftly in the subsequent days. However, the campaign appeared to be successful in regenerating this discussion, as evidenced by a significant increase in the volume of media reporting and social media activity following its launch (See [Example 3](#)).

The analysis also showed that **the significance of obesity as an issue was widely recognised**, as "obesity is a critical issue" was found to be the leading message overall ([Example 2](#)). Although the government's efforts to tackle childhood obesity was regularly acknowledged, the remainder of the project's leading messages consisted of either praise or criticism of the government's approach to the issue. This indicates that for many media outlets and social media users, **childhood obesity is an issue that is closely tied to government policy and political debate**.

Notably, however, an increase in the prevalence of the message "the government's approach to childhood obesity is effective" could be observed in November and December, coinciding with the launch of the Big Change Starts

Small campaign ([Example 2](#)). More importantly, this was also accompanied by a sharp decline in the mentions of unfavourable messages, including "the government is not doing enough to improve childhood obesity rates" and "the government's approach to tackle childhood obesity is ineffective/misguided" ([Example 2](#)), **indicating that the campaign was recognised as an effective measure, or, at the very least, successful in shifting the discourse away from politics**.

The leading obesity issues for traditional media were largely consistent with those discussed on social media channels, demonstrating a high level of interaction between the two. **However, social media posts were markedly less favourable compared to traditional media reports. Social media users were often more critical of the government's approach to childhood obesity and while it was rarely aimed directly at the campaign** ([Example 4](#)).

Traditional media reports and social media posts that mentioned the campaign's assets and ambassadors achieved remarkably high favourability ratings – significantly higher than those which discussed any other obesity-related topics and issues ([Example 5](#) and [Example 6](#)). Overall, the campaign was almost universally positively received; its advertisements and ambassadors were frequently praised and, most importantly, it was directly credited for encouraging and increasing conversations about obesity ([Example 7](#)).

For Y&R it was also important that the impact of their paid campaign efforts was clear to their end client (HPA). Results were presented with contextual data that showed the impact that paid content had on generating discussion in social media, and if the content was discussed or syndicated by traditional media. ([Example 3](#))

Secondary data from a similar government announcement on changes to the tax system, that was followed up by a paid advertising campaign was used to demonstrate the typical media cycle of this kind of announcement. This secondary data also further demonstrated that the paid campaign from Y&R was **more effective at keeping momentum than similar announcements**.

Actions

- > Isentia's analysis report has been presented to Y&R senior managers and campaign team.
- > The report has provided core content to Y&R's post-campaign review and analysis, and was presented directly to HPA.
- > HPA plans to use the report to demonstrate the success of the campaign to its stakeholders. This success will help HPA attract further funding to continue the campaign.
- > The report will play an important role in the next stages of the campaign. Now that the nature of the conversations have been established, the next stage will be to evaluate how those conversations change and evolve and if they demonstrate changes in behaviour.
- > The report has provided a benchmark of the beginning of the campaign, future campaigns will be evaluated in a similar fashion so that there can be clear comparisons and expectations.
- > Y&R have started to plan for the next stages of the campaign using the report as guide for key social influencers that they can target for paid content.
- > The evaluation has directly contributed to a number of award entries that Y&R have submitted for their work on the campaign.
- > Y&R as an agency are new to this type of evaluation, and are used to using traditional advertising metrics. This process has demonstrated the value of qualitative analysis of traditional and social media as an extension of those metrics, especially when dealing with complex social issues.

Client Testimonial

Isentia's analysis of the Big Change Starts Small campaign is an instrumental piece of research which will not only help inform the running of subsequent initiatives under the Childhood Obesity Plan, but also help us direct other social change campaigns in the future. This is the first time that we have done any evaluation of this nature, and the findings of this report gave us a great insight into the interaction between a campaign, traditional media news, and social media conversations. One of the major challenges of running a publicly-funded social change campaign is to show that money has been well spent, and this report enabled to demonstrate that we have achieved the desired outcome from an awareness point of view.

Grant Maxwell, General Manager, Y&R Media New Zealand