

ShowCase

Save the Crabs – Then Eat ‘Em

Topic: Environment

Organisation: Chesapeake Bay Program;
Academy for Educational Development

Location: Chesapeake Bay, District of
Columbia (USA)

Dates: March 2004 to September 2005;
January to September 2006

Budget: US\$855,554

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Overview

The Academy for Educational Development, a non-profit organisation specialising in social change communications, implemented a campaign to reduce nutrient pollution flowing into the Chesapeake Bay from residential sources in the greater Washington D.C. area.

Funded by the Chesapeake Bay Program, the primary campaign goal was to convince area residents not to fertilise their lawns in the spring, when fertiliser runoff to the Bay is most likely, but to do so in the fall, if at all. For the 16 per cent of residents who hire a lawn service, the goal was to convince them to hire a Bay-friendly partner lawn service.

To overcome message fatigue from previous Bay-oriented campaigns and motivate this urban audience with a meaningful connection to the Bay, the campaign message was framed not as an environmental appeal, but as a way to ensure the continued availability of Chesapeake Bay seafood. Television, newspaper and out-of home ads ran for a seven-week period during March and April 2005. A second campaign wave ran during the same month in 2006.

In spite of a small budget and short campaign run, a post-intervention survey showed increased awareness of lawn care behaviours that contribute to Bay pollution and decreased intent to fertilise in the spring.

1. BEHAVIOUR

- To get homeowners with lawns to fertilise their lawns in the fall rather than in the spring
- To get those who hired a lawn service to use Bay-friendly lawn services

2. CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

- Random-digit-dial phone survey of about 600 area homeowners
- Focus groups with homeowners with lawns
- Campaign strategy rooted in what target audience actually value
- TV ads pretested using a virtual focus group of 24 members of the target demographic

3. THEORY

- **Social Learning Theory (Bandura):** People learn to adopt behaviours by observing the consequences of behaviours of others

4. INSIGHT

- An attractive lawn was important to homeowners
- Those who cared for their own lawns most likely to fertilise in the spring only, or in both spring and fall
- Message fatigue – Hundreds of initiatives had been launched to save the Bay since the 1960s
- People in the D.C. area were passionate about their seafood
- Problem of a polluted bay was reframed as a culinary, not an environmental, problem

5. EXCHANGE

Barriers:

- Limited concern for the Bay
- Scepticism about yet another campaign's messages and motives
- Limited fertiliser available in the fall

Benefits:

- Protecting local seafood – 'Saving the crabs', so that they can be eaten
- Conforming to social norms – A sense that 'this is what people like me do' (norm appeals)
- Exposure for companies offering a Bay-friendly service

6. COMPETITION

- Lawn fertilising is a spring ritual for many homeowners
- Resistance from major lawn care providers

Responses:

- Used norm appeals to encourage lawn fertilising in the fall
- Attempted to develop and promote an alternative spring lawn care behaviour by partnering with Scotts (lawn care product manufacturer and marketer)
- Lawn care providers recruited to co-develop and offer customers a Bay-friendly service option
- Promoted specific brands on campaign website (in return for offering a Bay-friendly service option)

7. SEGMENTATION

- Residents of the Chesapeake Bay area who fertilise their lawns primarily in the spring
- Lawn care services
- Lawn care product providers
- Policymakers in Maryland

8. METHODS MIX

- Campaign branded the 'Chesapeake club' – To create a sense of membership, participation and practicing a behaviour that was the accepted social norm
- TV and print ads – Used humour to lighten the message; Featured personalities that target audience could identify with
- Campaign website – Offered information on how to create a healthy lawn using Bay-friendly techniques, suggestions for fun day trips to Bay area, seafood recipes, Bay-friendly lawn care partners
- Restaurant coasters, brochures, decals, door hangers, lawn signs
- Media stories