



BEST PRACTICE #3

Campaign Strategy

The term *campaign* refers to a coordinated set of marketing activities designed to promote a product, service, behavior change, etc. through marketing vehicles (e.g., TV, radio, social media, grassroots outreach, peer educators, etc.). See the [key terms and definitions](#) section for further detail. A brand comes to life through a campaign (for example, the NURHI Get It Together brand came to life through the specific marketing vehicles – social media, TV and videos, community outreach, etc.).

In this section we discuss four highlights from our analysis of the campaign strategy best practice area: (1) insights come to life in campaigns; (2) well-chosen marketing vehicles help campaigns to resonate with the audience; (3) strong campaigns maintain continuity while also launching new ideas; 4) there are many ways to delight the audience and inspire engagement. We discuss each of these highlights in the context of the best practice sub-elements, as outlined below.

COMMUNICATE A BENEFIT / TOUCH THE HEART, OPEN THE MIND

Insights come to life in campaigns:

We discussed insights in the audience focus section of the best practice framework and report, and we discuss them again here because it is in the campaign that insights come to life. Insights, translated into marketing campaigns, work because they reveal something new that inspires the audience to think and feel differently. For example, the Truth Initiative identified an insight about American youth: *they want to be agents for social change and are interested in issues like the environment, income inequality, LGBTQ rights, etc. They don't think of tobacco as one of these issues, and yet it is one area where they could make an important difference.* This insight was translated into the campaign -- #FinishIt – which aimed to inspire youth to be the generation that ends smoking.

However, both insights and campaigns need to be refreshed. Once the audience is familiar with the campaign, it no longer inspires new thinking or new feelings, so that new insights are needed to remind people about the brand and appeal to rejectors. For example, a subsequent Truth Initiative campaign, #LeftSwipeDat, was based on the insight that youth are more likely to “left swipe” (i.e., reject) those who are seen with cigarettes in their dating profile pictures vs. those without cigarettes.

Key take-away: Strong insights have the potential to inspire the audience to think and feel differently, but they must be clearly translated and brought to life in a campaign in order to realize this potential. With time, new insights will be needed to sustain interest in the brand, appeal to rejectors, and introduce initiatives.

SELECT THE RIGHT MARKETING VEHICLES AND ENSURE MESSAGE CONTINUITY

The companies and projects we evaluated made good use of marketing vehicles, selecting those that made sense for both the audience and the message. The Shujaaz approach to marketing vehicles makes this point well. Shujaaz relies on radio to build awareness, but because radio does not provide enough detail to help people digest new information, the Shujaaz comic is used to provide detailed charts and graphs that bring more substance and context to a given topic. Social media is also important, as it helps people to integrate new information by sharing and learning from others.

Well-chosen marketing vehicles enable campaigns to resonate:

A few projects in our series stood out for excellent marketing vehicle selection. These projects went beyond the thoughtful selection of vehicles that make sense for the audience and message, to select vehicles that in fact

strengthened the message. The approaches employed in these examples include: (1) peer to peer marketing; (2) marketing vehicles as marketing message; and (3) opportune marketing moments.

(1) Peer to peer marketing (Obama 2008 Presidential Campaign and Brothers for Life): In developed markets, where brand authenticity is paramount, consumers increasingly trust “people like themselves” for recommendations and referrals. This “peer to peer marketing” approach isn’t new, but merits additional consideration across markets. According to Nielsen’s Global Trust in Advertising Report,²⁴ more than 85% of people in Africa, the Middle East, Asia-Pacific and Latin America completely or somewhat “trust advertising from someone I know.” While many of the projects in our case study series used peer educators or ambassadors, we liked the Obama 2008 Campaign for its use of mobile and digital tools to facilitate peer to peer marketing, and Brothers for Life’s HIV Testing and Counseling (HTC) Campaign which used real people and real stories that resonated with the audience.

The Obama team created an iPhone app which not only enabled users to access Obama content, but also organized a user’s phone contacts by state and prompted users to call contacts in swing states to encourage them to vote for Obama. Similarly, the campaign prompted Facebook users to contact friends in key states and provided suggested messaging. The campaign also provided online tools, e.g., “create your own event” or “create your own Obama group,” to further encourage peer to peer marketing, including a feature called Neighbor to Neighbor, which enabled users to identify and contact people in their own neighborhoods who were campaign targets.

The Brothers for Life HTC campaign included 9 documentary style videos featuring real people (brand ambassadors). The films, which addressed fears about HIV testing and knowledge gaps identified through research, allowed viewers to identify with the ambassadors’ experiences, which were often very similar to their own. For example, in response to a video that featured a man who had been in denial about his positive status but eventually came to both accept and manage his status through support from family and friends, a male Facebook participant commented, “We are one me and Thabo Mofokeng [the ambassador]. I love him a lot.”

(2) Marketing vehicles as marketing message (MTN): MTN sought to expand its business with small and medium sized enterprises, by creating an innovative stunt that garnered attention and demonstrated the marketing message – that MTN understands small business customers and works around the clock to support them. The stunt featured a “live” billboard on a high traffic commuter highway. For 72 hours, a well-dressed man worked in an unbranded office inside the billboard (a shipping container with a large glass window). No one knew who the man was, what company he worked for, or why he was working on display, which inspired curiosity, buzz, and social media conversations. After the third day, MTN revealed that it was the #manninthebox, thereby communicating that MTN works around the clock to support its customers. MTN subsequently showcased 7 different businesses in the live billboard, further demonstrating the company’s commitment to supporting small business customers.

(3) Opportune marketing moments (Mankind Pharmaceuticals’ Prega News): Prega News (an at home pregnancy test brand) launched two norm-challenging campaigns on national days that recognize women – Mother’s Day and Women’s Day. For example, on Mother’s Day in 2019, the brand launched #GoodNewsIsGenderFree, which featured a video that challenged the norm of wishing expectant mothers the birth of a male child -- “boy or girl, good news is always good news.” The launch timing – on Mother’s Day – helped the message to stand out; it’s somewhat unexpected and makes people think differently. It also likely enables strong media coverage, as it gives media outlets an interesting Mother’s Day story. Finally, it helps reinforce Prega News’ connection to motherhood.

Key take-away: Marketing vehicles are expected to deliver the message; an excellent choice of a marketing vehicle is one in which the vehicle not only delivers the message but also strengthens the connection with the audience.

Strong campaigns maintain continuity while also launching new ideas:

Several projects in our case study series lacked continuity, either because they were too new (A360 Kuwa Mjanja launched the year before we initiated our case study analysis), were limited to a specific timeframe (the Obama campaign

²⁴ Global Trust in Advertising, Nielsen, September 2015.

ran during the months prior to the 2008 election), or were limited by available funding (Future Fab, ORS/Zinc). Among those that remained, we noted strong continuity at the overall brand level (Brothers for Life has been advocating for men to take responsibility for their health for over 10 years), which is a positive finding, as messages need to be continuously reinforced. In the words of Byron Sharp, known for evidence-based marketing based on over 40 years of research, “Even Coca-Cola’s marketers have to remind people that it’s a refreshing drink, especially when you are hot.”²⁵ However, it is unlikely that short-term campaigns (six months to two or three years) will have any significant impact beyond the lifetime of the campaign. Below we share two examples of brands that introduce new messages while consistently supporting the overall brand message.

Prega News offers a straight-forward example. Launched in 2007, Prega News is known for celebrity endorsements and the tagline, “pregnancy confirmation in just 5 minutes.” In 2017, the brand launched a new campaign, “Your Second Home,” which encourages employers to find ways to make the workplace more supportive and comfortable for expectant mothers. However, the brand didn’t step away from the benefit-focused messaging: in-store materials, social media posts, and out-of-home media continue to feature the message “pregnancy confirmation in just 5 minutes,” while videos, PR, and social media support the more emotional, thought-provoking message in the new campaign.

We also liked the example provided by MTV Shuga, which uses drama and storytelling to introduce new ideas while maintaining ongoing themes. For example, in episode 5, the show aired for the first time in South Africa (MTV Shuga Down South), where a cast of new characters, including the show’s first gay character – and new theme of homosexuality – were introduced alongside ongoing themes of HIV, relationships, etc.

Key take-away: brands can support multiple messages over time; however, the most important messages need to be consistently repeated – although in new and different ways – to appeal to new audiences (e.g., those who age into the category) and to remind the existing audience about the brand (whether it be a social movement, product, behavior change campaign, etc.).

DELIGHT THE AUDIENCE / INSPIRE AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

“Delight the audience” is the best practice sub-element we debated the most as a team, which is no surprise, as the marketing and business leadership pundits are split on this topic as well. For example, the authors of an HBR article, “Stop Trying to Delight Your Customers,”²⁶ argue that solving customers’ problems with as little effort as possible (on the part of the customer) is more important than seeking to “delight” customers, which they describe as vague and costly. Others, such as leadership guru Steve Denning, argue that customer delight is the most important organizational objective; organizations that focus on delight are more profitable than organizations that focus on profitability; organizations that focus on customer delight secure “free marketing” through word of mouth, and organizations that focus on customer delight are making ethical progress, “*Delighting other people intrinsically appeals to our hearts. Thinking about and helping other people is central to ethics.*”²⁷

In the context of global health and development, where non-profits are the norm and “thinking about and helping people” is a sine qua non, this argument for customer delight at first seems unwarranted. However, feedback from development sector stakeholders indicates that customer delight remains an opportunity, as one resource shared with us during the early phase of this project, “*We can actually change people’s behaviors by delighting them in the process. We don’t always give ourselves permission to delight people. Sometimes we are too earnest or think that education is important even though we know that emotions are what drive behavior.*”

For the purpose of this report, we grouped our analysis of audience delight and audience engagement together, as an audience that is delighted is more likely to engage.

There are many ways to delight the audience and inspire engagement:

The edutainment approach to behavior change makes for an excellent example, as delight is inherent in a successful

25) Sharp, Byron, “How Brands Grow: what marketers don’t know,” Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 207.

26) Dixon, Matthew, et al, “Stop Trying to Delight Your Customers,” Harvard Business Review, July-Aug 2010

27) Denning, Steve, “Is Customer Delight Just Hype?” Forbes, June 29, 2011.

edutainment approach; the program needs to be massively appealing to reach a large audience and keep them coming back to watch each episode. MTV Shuga achieves audience delight through extensive audience research, ensuring highly relevant and authentic content; talented actors; well written drama; and high-quality production. As explained by Biyi Bandele, director of the seasons set for MTV Shuga Naija, *“I felt that it should not be earnest, it should be entertaining. There’s nothing wrong with being entertaining even when you’re trying to educate, and that’s what we’ve done.”*²⁸

MTN provides an example of an organization that is developing innovations to improve customer experience. In spring 2019, MTN South Africa launched a WhatsApp self-service channel, which greatly improves the way customers can buy airtime, check balances and store credit, and perform other tasks that require a phone call. By using WhatsApp, MTN meets the customers where they are (approximately half of South Africans use WhatsApp) and greatly simplifies customer service. MTN also uses customer analytics to proactively identify customer service issues, reach out to customers to acknowledge the issue, and implement a solution – without the customer having to initiate contact with MTN.

Audience engagement, as defined in our best practice standard of excellence, requires not only that the audience participates in the brand (e.g., views the campaign, “likes” or “comments” on social media, or uses the product or services), but also that the audience shares their enthusiasm with others. This standard of excellence is based on the findings of Les Binet and Peter Feld, renowned marketing effectiveness experts, who conclude that “...campaigns that emotionally inspire consumers to the degree that they share their enthusiasm with others ... are the most effective and efficient of all.”²⁹

All the brands and campaigns we reviewed employed programs to inspire audience engagement; for example, the NURHI “Get It Together” project sponsored two of Nigeria’s most popular musical artists to record a song. In the words of the NURHI project director, “we call on the public to listen to the song, pass it along and spread the message...”³⁰ Prega News created a pledge drive online, encouraging the audience to pledge to make life more comfortable for expectant mothers.

Our favorite examples of audience engagement come from MTN and the Obama 2008 campaign, both of which created content that was so relevant that it inspired the audience to engage.

In 2013, MTN Nigeria ran a campaign about “number portability” – the ability to change carriers without having to change one’s phone number. The campaign featured a popular TV character “Saka” who had previously been the celebrity face of Etisalat, MTN’s competitor, but had now decamped to MTN. The ad drove significant buzz for several reasons, including timeliness (it was launched the same day that the communications commission approved mobile number portability); surprise (Saka’s identity was concealed with his back to the camera for most of the ad; when he turned to face the camera, making his identity known, his clothing subtly changed from green, the color for Etisalat, to MTN yellow), and cleverness (if the competition’s celebrity spokesperson switches to MTN, maybe you should too).

Our example from the Obama campaign comes from candidate Obama’s “Yes We Can” speech, which had so moved Wil.i.am, lead singer for the Black Eyed Peas, that he put it to music, recruited his celebrity friends to direct, perform, and film it, and released it to the internet, where it was viewed nearly 1 million times within the first week and became the most popular online video of the 2008 political campaign.³¹ The circumstances behind this viral video were extraordinary: candidate Obama was both charismatic and an excellent orator; Wil.i.am and friends were talented, well-known, and inspired to work for free; and the song was written, recorded, and released within three days – in time to impact

28) Palmer, Tamara, “The Best International Drama You aren’t Watching – Yet,” *Shondaland*, Feb 14, 2019

29) Benet, Les, and Field, Peter, “The Long and Short of It: Balancing Short and Long-Term Marketing Strategies,” IPA, 2013.

30) Kott, Anne, “‘Get It Together’ Family Planning Song is YouTube Sensation,” *Johns Hopkins CCP*

31) Wallsten, Kevin, “‘Yes We Can’: How Online Viewership, Blog Discussion, Campaign Statements, and Mainstream Media Coverage Produced a Viral Video Phenomenon,” *Journal of Information Technology and Politics*, May 2010.

the upcoming primaries. Nonetheless, the underlying lesson – create content that resonates – is something the best marketers will aspire to.

Key take-away: The most effective and efficient campaigns inspire the audience to share their enthusiasm with others. Based on our case studies, elements that inspire audience engagement include delight, an element of surprise, timeliness, and relevance.