

Introduction & Background

In 2009, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gained important new authority to regulate the manufacture, marketing, and distribution of tobacco products to protect the public health generally and to reduce tobacco use by minors. Part of the FDA's responsibility is to inform the public on health-related issues. Rescue was contracted by the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products (CTP) to develop messaging and creative concepts for CTP's Multicultural Youth Tobacco Prevention Campaign (Multicultural Campaign). Rescue is a research and communications company that specializes in developing positive behavior change messages targeted to specific youth peer crowds. Peer crowds are macro-level connections between peer groups with similar interests, lifestyles, influencers, and habits.

This study was designed to assess Hip Hop youth receptivity to creative concepts for the FDA's Multicultural Campaign. This research was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What is youth's understanding of the harms of tobacco use discussed in each concept?
2. What are youth's level of receptivity of and engagement with each concept?
3. Are any of the concepts more or less effective at affecting youth beliefs?

Methodology

Rescue conducted study sessions across multiple metropolitan areas in the United States. Rescue researchers recruited youth during their lunch period and qualified youth were invited to attend an afterschool study session. Youth were randomly assigned to watch either two creative concepts, or no concepts (control group), and answered a series of questions about tobacco use, the concepts they viewed, and their understanding of the health consequences of tobacco and their attitudes about tobacco use. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze data collected.

Results & Conclusions

Questionnaires were completed by 722 youth across the U.S. Fifty-five percent of participants were male. Three-quarters of participants were ages 15-17, and 54% self-reported as being cigarette experimenters. The largest racial/ethnic groups represented were African American (48%) and Hispanic/Latino (37%).

All four creative concepts tested received a perceived effectiveness score above 3.0, on a scale from 1.0 to 5.0, indicating potential for positive changes in attitudes and beliefs targeted by campaign messages. Youth reported that these ads were worth remembering, attention-grabbing, powerful, informative, meaningful, and convincing. Qualitative feedback indicated that youth found the concepts to be relatable and realistic, and that participants could identify with the campaign messages and felt they resonated with themselves and their peers. No negative effects on youth's health beliefs or tobacco attitudes were present for any of the four concepts tested.

Discussion

The creative concepts tested in this study were designed specifically to appeal to the beliefs and values of youth who are influenced by Hip Hop culture. These ads performed well by established measures, supporting modern health communication theory indicating that targeted and relatable communications are more likely to resonate with the audience and affect positive behavior change than efforts created for a general audience. Future education and health campaigns targeted to the Hip Hop peer crowd can utilize messaging related to family, being in control, and gaining and retaining independence in order to appeal to the beliefs and values of this peer crowd. Additionally, messages framed with an aspirational tone can help messaging reach Hip Hop youth effectively. This research provides evidence that identifying and incorporating the beliefs and values of the Hip Hop peer crowd can lead to well-received educational messages for Hip Hop youth.