Overview

This ‘for-kids-by-kids’ multicultural campaign aimed to increase and maintain physical activity among ‘tweens’ (children aged 9 to 13). Launched in 2002 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, VERB™ used commercial methods of youth marketing to promote being physically active as cool, fun and a chance to have a good time with friends.

In addition to its strong brand identity and communications presence, the five-year campaign offered opportunities and support for active and rewarding participation, including: community-based activity events; activity start-up kits; innovative teaching materials; ‘street teams’ to engage tweens at events; small grants to support physical activity in schools; and contests, competitions and sweepstakes.

Results:

• After 1 year, effects were found in free-play physical activity in sub-populations, notably younger tweens (9 to 10 years) and girls
• In years two and three, effects were found for the entire target population for free-time physical activity
• Findings from year four (2006) showed that the level of exposure to VERB™ by tweens was significantly associated with physical activity the day before the survey and on each of the psychosocial variables
To increase and maintain physical activity among tweens (youth aged 9 to 13)

**Theory of Planned Behaviour**: Behaviour determined by intention to perform and attitudes towards a behaviour; influenced by social norms and perceived behavioral control

**Social Cognitive Theory**: Emphasises the interplay of intrapersonal factors, environment and behaviour

**Hierarchical steps of information processing**: Impact of persuasive communication is mediated by attention, comprehension and acceptance

**Branding theory**: The target audience will develop brand loyalty when they associate with brand attributes and this affinity to brand attributes is built over time

**Barriers**: Fear of failure; Lack of time; Family responsibilities; Competing interests

**Benefits**: Opportunities to explore their goals, develop their skills and be with friends

VERB showed tweens that physical activity took many forms and was not only about organised sports or athletic competition

VERB was positioned as tweens’ own brand – not imposed by adults

**Primary audience**: Tweens (youth aged 9 to 13)

**Secondary audience**: Parents and adult influencers, including teachers, youth leaders, physical education and health professionals

**2. CUSTOMER ORIENTATION**
- Literature review to understand the target audience and other campaigns reaching them
- Primary research (focus groups, interviews and ethnographic inquiries) with tweens, parents and influencers
- Review of commercial marketers selling products to the target audience
- Pretesting of concepts, advertisements and materials

**3. THEORY**

**4. INSIGHT**
- Pressure to perform, excel and achieve
- Change creates tension
- Self-esteem and self-confidence are vital
- Tweens think short-term
- Setting and achieving goals helps tweens maintain a healthy lifestyle
- Tweens are increasingly independent and self-defining
- Tweens are looking to improve themselves
- Tweens associate the word ‘activity’ with organised sports
- Staying active helps tweens make good choices
- Family and friends are important influencers
- Positive role models encourage tweens to be their best

**5. EXCHANGE**

**6. COMPETITION**
- Complex, crowded media environment – VERB harnessed commercial marketing techniques
- Other activities, lifestyle choices and ideas

**7. SEGMENTATION**

**8. METHODS MIX**
- Four-phase advertising campaign
- Added-value opportunities via media partners
- Contests (e.g. pedometer-based school competition)
- Public relations
- Website, including blog and ‘VERB Recorder’ where tweens recorded physical activity to win prizes
- Customised materials for schools
- Turnkey kits
- Activity promotions within communities, including grants
- Community-based event sponsorship
- Guerrilla, street team and mobile marketing
- Verb Yellowball

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