

Social Norms Marketing for Reducing Alcohol-Related Harm

An Intervention Trial Involving the
University of Akron, Kent State
University and the University of Toledo

The Collaboration

- UA, KSU and UT have agreed to host distinct social norm redefinition interventions
- The trial is supported by a U.S.D.E. grant (\$249,000) for a 27-month period (October, 2000 to December, 2002)
- Supplemental funding comes from the NCAA (\$30,000) and ODADAS (\$38,000)

Purposes of the Trial

- Test the impact of social norm redefinition programming using a control condition
- Determine the relative effectiveness of two distinct social norming approaches for reducing alcohol misuse among student-athletes

Research Questions

- Can social norm redefinition programs reduce alcohol misuse in the general student population as well as in at-risk student groups, such as student-athletes?
- To what extent is student-athlete drinking influenced by team norms versus campus norms?

Knowledge Gaps

- Though social norming is highly touted and widely implemented, few (if any) evaluations have relied on control (or comparison) campuses
- In a non-experimental study, Thombs (2000) found student-athlete drinking may be as closely linked to perceptions of campus norms as it is to team norms

The Design of the Trial

<u>Kent</u>	<u>Toledo</u>	<u>Akron</u>
Campus-Wide Social Norms Marketing	Campus-Wide Social Norms Marketing	Control
Athletic Team Norming	Control	Athletic Team Norming

Assessment Plan

- Campus-wide surveys:
 - 1.) April 2001, 2.) April 2002,
 - 3.) April 2003?
- Student-athlete surveys:
 - 1.) January 2001, 2.) April 2001,
 - 3.) April 2002, 4.) December 2002
 - 5.) April 2003?

What Is Social Norming?

- Is often described as an innovative and “positive” approach to alcohol prevention
- Does not rely coercion or fear arousal
- Relies on data & social marketing principles
- Seeks to redefine campus drinking norms by “selling” the message that most college students are **NOT** routinely involved in alcohol misuse

Traditional Institutional Tactics

- For more than 25 years, colleges have spent (wasted?) considerable time and money on fear arousal tactics
- These tactics have been used to scare students away from alcohol by warning them of the legal, medical, and social consequences of irresponsible drinking

The Failure of Scare Tactics

- In recent years, many campuses have openly acknowledged that they have nothing to show for their efforts
- In fact, evidence suggests that negative, fear-based messages may encourage heavy drinking in some segments of students
- The negative consequences: increased student distrust of university administrators and an erosion of campus civility

Why Do Scare Tactics Fail at the University?

- Though many students are ignorant of the medical and legal consequences of alcohol misuse, these knowledge deficits do not have strong causal connections with drinking behavior
- Instead, alcohol use seems to be strongly influenced by perceived drinking norms

Why Do Scare Tactics Fail at the University?

- Information about consequences is often judged by students to be inconsistent with their personal experience with alcohol
- Drinking is a major source of social enjoyment, and many students trust these personal experiences more than “dry” facts about the dangers of drinking

A Recent Newspaper Example

- Headline from the Ravenna Record Courier (Oct. 11, 2000):
“Chugging the way to coma, death”
- An accompanying photo showed mugs of beer with a “skull and cross bones” image displayed on the glasses

Why Do Scare Tactics Fail at the University?

- Fear-based messages fail to motivate change
- High-risk drinkers often ignore them
- Some students interpret warnings to mean: “these school officials are really harping on this issue, there must be a lot of drinking going on here!”

Why Do Scare Tactics Fail at the University?

- Fear-based approaches also are judged by many students to be “coercive”
- Students are sensitive to institutional efforts that they perceive to be a restriction on their freedom - promoting concealment or provoking rebellion

The Paradigm Shift

- In the mid-1980s, Wes Perkins and Alan Berkowitz at Hobart & William Smith Colleges drew attention to the fact that the majority of college students do not routinely misuse alcohol
- They also noted that a large majority of these students grossly overestimated peers' drinking behavior

The Misperceived Norms Model (MNM)

- Perkins & Berkowitz also found strong, positive correlations between perceived drinking norms and drinking behavior for self
- Higher levels of drinking are associated with perceiving that heavy drinking is prevalent and accepted in one's environment
- This led Perkins & Berkowitz to hypothesize that normative misperceptions are important risk factors

A Critical Distinction

- The MNM should not be confused with conventional notions of “peer pressure”
- The later concept implies that external pressure, applied by peers, influences vulnerable youth to engage in drug use
- In the MNM, the risk factor is a perceptual bias or distortion – within the observer

Nature of the Misperception

- The MNM does not view most alcohol use as “caving-in” to peer pressure
- Instead, heavy drinking is goal-directed behavior - motivated by a desire to “keep-up” or “not miss-out” on the fun peers are judged to be having
- The “everyone at this school gets wasted” misperception is an expression of the competitive chase to keep up

The Tendency to Misperceive

- Humans tend to focus their attention on dramatic and negative events
- Consider news media coverage
- Consider the public health movement and traditional health education (e.g., the YRBSS)
- We tend to not notice ordinary or mundane behavior and events

The Overestimation of Peers' Drinking

- These tendencies affect students' estimations of peers' drinking
- For example - even though only 15 out of 45 students on a residence hall floor may have gotten drunk, the next morning conversation mechanisms may quickly spread word that "everyone was wasted"

Is Everyone Getting Wasted? A Look at Data

- At KSU, the University Advisory Committee on Alcohol Issues conducted the second annual survey of undergraduates in April, 2000
- An anonymous questionnaire was administered in a random sample of classes (main campus)
- 781 students responded to the questionnaire

The Good News at KSU

- 68% have 4 or fewer drinks on typical drinking occasions
- 59% drink less often than once a week
- 76% believe that alcohol use does not adversely affect their academic work
- 83% do not engage in unplanned sex after drinking

And the Bad News.....

- In the prior 12 months, 22% drove a motor vehicle after consuming 5 or more drinks
- 21% had a blackout in the prior 9-month period
- In a typical week, 19% spend 10 hours or more at parties
- 14% had suffered an alcohol-related injury in the prior 9-month period

Secondhand Effects (in light & non-drinkers)

- 65% had sleep or studying interrupted
- 52% had to “babysit” a student who drank too much
- 45% found vomit in their residence
- 35% had a serious quarrel with an intoxicated student
- 31% were insulted by an intoxicated student

Changing the Campus Drinking Culture

- The HEC for Alcohol & Drug Prevention promotes environmental management
 - 1.) Establish effective alcohol policies
 - 2.) Change campus drinking norms
 - 3.) Limit alcohol availability
 - 4.) Consistent enforcement
 - 5.) Offer alcohol-free recreation options

The Thinking About Your Drinking? Campaign

- Launched at KSU in September, 1999
- Campus media venues are used to disseminate messages
- Messages appear in:
 - Daily Kent Stater display ads
 - Inside campus buses/bus shelters
 - Posters (prominent locations)
 - Table tents (dining halls)
 - Website (www.kent.edu/alcohol)

Campaign Posters



46% of KSU students overestimate the amount of alcohol consumed by typical students.

THINKING ABOUT YOUR DRINKING?

Based on survey data collected by the Office of Student Health from the Fall 2009 on-campus survey of undergraduate and postgraduate students on the Kent Campus.

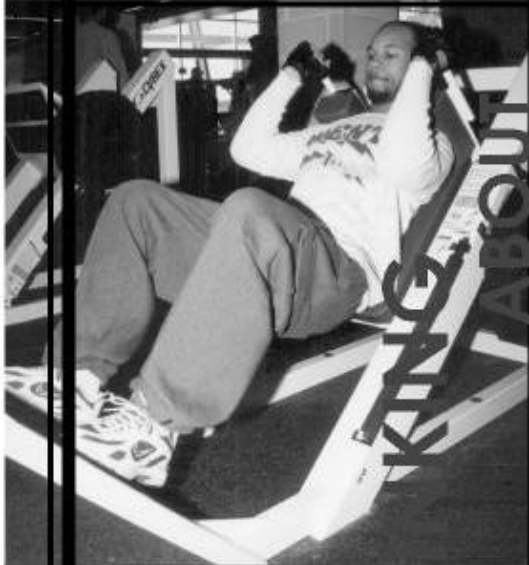
www.kent.edu/alcohol



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ABOUT

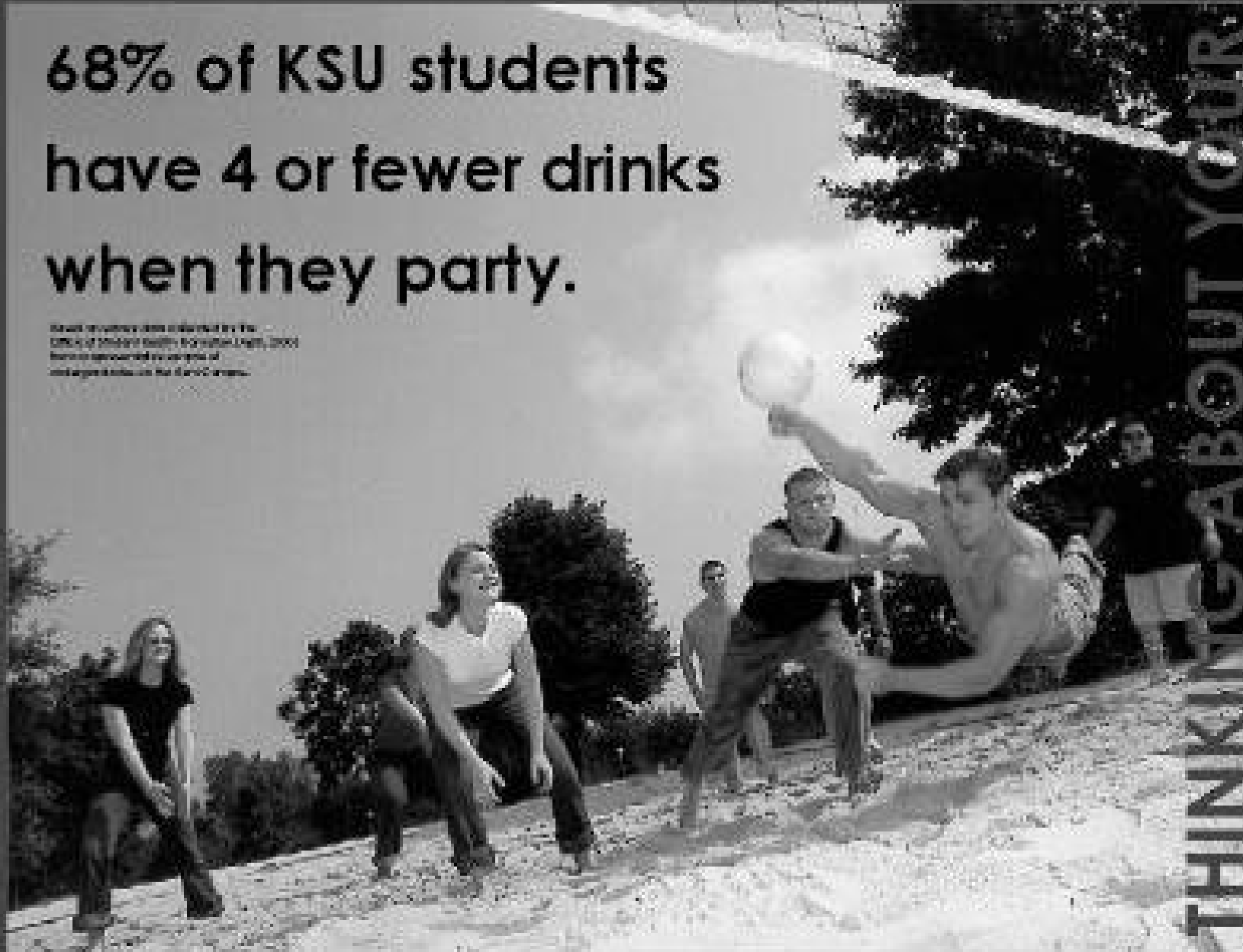
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Based on survey data collected by the
Office of Student Health Promotion (April 2003)
that is representative of a sample of
undergraduates on the Kent Campus.

www.kent.edu/alcohol

68% of KSU students
have 4 or fewer drinks
when they party.

Survey on campus was conducted by the
Office of Student Health Promotion, 2009.
Survey is approved as a program of
intercollegiate sports for 2009-2010.



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www.kent.edu/alcohol

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Executive survey data collected by the Office of
Student Health Promotion (April 2009) is available
online at www.kent.edu/alcohol or the Kent Campus
Council of Undergraduates (or the Kent Campus

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THINKING

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THINKING ABOUT YOUR DRINKING?



59% of KSU students drink less than once a week

Based on survey administered by the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention (OSAP, 2008) and representative of sample characteristics of the First Campus.

www.kent.edu/alcohol

First Year Lessons

- Development of a hi-quality, credible, visible campaign requires much more time and money than we had expected
- Campus contracts/agreements need negotiated, student newspapers need a high level of supervision, work with graphic arts, displaying materials, etc.

More First Year Lessons

- The ads must be visually appealing
- Use photos with smiling, attractive students
- Keep messages simple – few words
- Students look at the visual image before reading the message
- Production quality is extremely important

More First Year Lessons

- Many students will not fully grasp the campaign message because:
 - some poorly interpret % information -
e.g., “68% of students.....” is believed to mean “almost all students”
 - others are so accustomed to traditional messages that they fail to recognize that the ads do not promote abstinence

More First Year Lessons

- Students who support the campaign will not usually speak up to defend it
- Students who are critical of the campaign will tend to be vocal
- The KSU campaign may be generating cognitive dissonance in those who are heavily invested in the alcohol abuse subculture

Typical Comments of Critical Students

- “How can you say the sample was representative? - I wasn’t in the survey!”
- A “random” survey is one done in a careless, haphazard, or disorganized way
- “Everyone lies on surveys”
- “I don’t care what you say about data, I know you’re wrong!”
- “Who gave you permission to do this stuff?”

Message Credibility at KSU

- “65% of KSU Students Have 4 or Fewer Drinks When They Party”

	Percentage
<u>Very Believable</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Believable</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>Uncertain</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>Unbelievable</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Very Unbelievable</u>	<u>8</u>

Initial Evaluation of the Campaign

- A repeated, cross-sectional design
- Anonymous, self-report survey
- Baseline: December, 1998
- Campaign implementation: Sept., 1999
- First follow-up: April, 2000

Changes in Self-Report Measures (Yikes!)

- The so-called “5/4 measure” increased as well as “number of hours at parties”
- Month of data collection? Dec. vs. April
- No change in “frequency of drinking”

Changes in Self-Report Measures (Whew!)

- “Quantity of consumption on typical occasions” decreased 8%
- “Percentage of students contemplating reductions in their drinking” - up 78%
- Among those who were “engaged” by the campaign, the rate of overestimating peers’ drinking fell 23%

Who was Engaged by the Campaign?

- Higher consumption
- More risk behavior
- More consequences
- More secondhand effects
- More likely to be contemplating reduction in use
- Greater intention to reduce drinking in future
- Less likely to over-estimate peers' use
- Greater campaign believability

The New Wrinkle – Team Norming

- Little is known about ways to deliver social norming messages
- The USDE and NCAA grant support an organizational development approach
- The purpose is to help KSU and UA athletic teams to develop “shared drinking norms”

Goals and Objectives for Team Norming

- Goal: To reduce the prevalence of high-risk drinking among KSU and UA student-athletes

Objective: At end of funding period, 80% of “in-season” and 65% of “off-season” athletes will report no hi-risk drinking in prior 2 weeks

Expected Outcome: Drinking lowest at KSU

Goals and Objectives for Team Norming

- Goal: To establish shared drinking norms on KSU and UA athletic teams
 - Objective: At end of funding period, 2/3 of the teams at KSU and UA will have created a written drinking norm statement for their unit
 - Expected Outcome: Legal and disciplinary incidents lower at KSU and UA – than UT

The Team Norming Strategy

- Help student-athletes prepare for change
- Emphasize proactive approach
- Respect ambivalence about the initiative
- Work through SAAC and team captains/leaders

The Team Norming Strategy

- Focus on the “relative advantages” of developing shared drinking norms
 - 1.) increased team competitiveness
 - 2.) prevent suspensions
 - 3.) maintain or improve team image on campus

The Team Norming Strategy

- Stay student-athlete centered:
“follow, don’t push”
- Recognize team differences
- Respect coaches’ authority and policies
- Don’t get between coaches and athletes
- Identify athlete advocates
- Encourage teams to experiment

The Team Norming Strategy

- Feed survey data back to athletes ASAP
- Using the data, focus attention on the majority who do not misuse alcohol
- Develop “in-season” & “off-season” messages