

A tool to measure health policy implementation at recreational venues: sponsorships valued at \$5000 or less

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Background

Healthway

The Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation (Healthway) was established under the Tobacco Control Act 1990, the main purpose of this act being the active discouragement of tobacco smoking (Corti et al 1995). Healthway is an independent statutory body with a mandate to promote good health for all Western Australians (Healthway 2008). Healthway provides grants for health promotion research and programs, as well as support sponsorship for sport, arts, racing and community projects. Since 1991, Healthway has provided sponsorship funding to sports, arts and racing organisations in return for the promotion of health messages, the introduction of healthy policies and the implementation of environmental/structural change at venues. These health promotion opportunities include the promotion of an appropriate health message (e.g. Smarter than Smoking, Sun Smart, Drug Aware, Be Active, Go for 2 fruit & 5 veg, etc), via a range of sponsorship strategies. These strategies include signage, naming/presentation rights, celebrity endorsements, healthy product sampling and logos printed on clothing, tickets or equipment.

\$5000 or less Sponsorship Program

Healthway's sponsorship program is a key initiative to achieve good health for all Western Australians. Sponsorship applications are divided into two groups, \$5000 or more and \$5000 or less. The \$5000 or less sponsorship program is available to organisations seeking support for a project or event involving recognised sport/arts/racing initiatives. In exchange for sponsorship, organisations commit to actively promote a health message and address a variety of healthy environmental changes relating to smoking, healthy food choices, sun protection, injury prevention and alcohol/drugs.

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of sport, art and racing sponsorships valued at \$5000 or less, in raising awareness of sponsored health messages and implementation of healthy environments. Specifically, sponsorships were evaluated via an environmental audit and respondent survey. The respondent survey looked at the cognitive impact of the health message in relation to message awareness, comprehension, acceptance, intention and action (McGuire 1984).

Methods

Data was collected at Healthway sponsored events between December 2005 and March 2006. Overall, 15 events were evaluated of which 11 were metropolitan and 4 country events.

An environmental audit was conducted by the field team at each event to assess the presence of sponsorship strategies (e.g. signage, promotional clothing, leaflets etc), as well as the implementation of healthy policy/structural supports (e.g. smoke free areas, health food options, non/low alcohol alternative if alcohol was available, provision of shaded areas etc). A self-complete survey was also administered to event participants. The survey asked questions about respondent recognition of

health messages at the event as well as comprehension, acceptance, intention and action in relation to the health message. The survey also asks demographic and health behaviour questions.

Results

A total of 447 respondents participated in the study and environmental audits were conducted at all 15 events (Table 1).

Table 1: Event Summary

Event Type	Location	Health Message	N (Survey)
Sport	Metropolitan	Sun Smart	35
Sport	Metropolitan	Sun Smart	16
Sport	Metropolitan	Smarter than Smoking	35
Sport	Metropolitan	Drug Aware	24
Sport	Metropolitan	Be Active	30
Sport	Country	Be Active	30
Sport	Country	Be Active	30
Racing	Country	Smoke Free WA	28
Racing	Country	Go for 2 'n' 5	30
Art	Metropolitan	Drug Aware	30
Art	Metropolitan	Smoke Free WA	30
Art	Metropolitan	Smoke Free WA	34
Art	Metropolitan	Smoke Free WA	30
Art	Metropolitan	Go for 2 'n' 5	34
Art	Metropolitan	Smoke Free WA	31
Total respondents			447

Audit

A variety of strategies to promote a health message were observed at the sponsored events (Table 2). The most popular strategies included the use of announcements, endorsements, signage and promotional clothing.

Table 2: Promotional strategies at events (n=15 events)

Promotional Activity	% Events with Activity
Public Announcement	80
Role model endorsement	73
Perimeter signage	66
Caps/hat/clothing	60
Naming rights	47
Performance endorsement	47
Flags	47
Posters/banners/ billboards	47
Leaflets	40
Program/booklet	33
Displays	33
Tickets	20
Campaign material	20
Competitions	20
Interactive activities	20

As shown in Table 3, the following healthy environmental supports were observed at sponsored events.

Table 3: Healthy Environmental Supports

	N events evaluated	% Events with supports
Smoking		
No smoking signage	15	86.7
Cigarette smoke smelt	15	33.3
Cigarette smoke seen	15	60.0
Smoker areas enforced	15	0.0
Alcohol		
Alcohol available	15	20.0
Low alcohol alternatives offered	3	33.3
Water available free at the bar	3	66.6
Nutrition		
Food available	15	80
Low fat foods offered	12	66.7
Low fat foods advertised	12	26.7
Fresh fruit offered	12	53.3
Fresh fruit advertised	12	33.3
Fresh fruit inviting in appearance	12	40.4
Sun Protection		
Provision of shade for participants	15	60.0
Provision of shade for spectators	9	66.3
Event held before peak UV	9	33.3
Sun protective clothing worn by officials	9	73.3
Role models using sun protective behaviour	9	46.7
Provision of sun screen for participants	9	40.0

Survey

The demographic characteristics of respondents to the survey are shown in Table 4. Approximately half of all respondents were female. A range of age group and occupations were represented.

Table 4: Respondent demographics

	%
Sex	
Male	45.6
Female	53
No response	1.3
Age Group	
15-19 years	13.9
20-29 years	18.1
30-39 years	16.6
40-49 years	21.3
50+ years	28
No response	2.2
Occupation	
Manager	9.4
Professionals	16.1
Para-professionals	8.3
Tradespersons	8.9
Clerks	6.9
Salespersons	8.9
Plant/Machine operators	9.4
Retired, student, homemaker	26.4
Unemployed	1.6
No response	4

Overall, 65.5% of respondents were aware of the health message being promoted at the sponsored event. Comprehension of the health message was high at 81.3%, with a similarly high level of message acceptance (86.9%) amongst those who comprehended the message. While intention as a result of exposure to the message was 32.1%, 24.8% of this group took some behavioural action. Multiplying the proportions down the hierarchy of cognitive impact provides an estimate of the percentage of respondents surveyed who were sufficiently stimulated to take some relevant actions as a result of exposure to a health message. Overall, 3.7% of respondents surveyed took some relevant action as a result of exposure to a health message (total action).

In terms of health behaviours, the majority of respondents (83.6%) had not smoked a cigarette in the last week, while 40.0% had not consumed any alcohol in the last week. Only one third of respondents reported eating at least two pieces of fruit daily (31.4%) and only 26.9% ate enough vegetables daily to fill two tea cups. Few respondents (27%) exercised for recreation, sport, health or fitness on five or more days of the week. Most respondents (65.3%) had been sunburnt at least once in the last twelve months. Problems encountered while conducting this study included events being cancelled at short notice, event participation being unpredictable in size and events occurring in country areas that were difficult to evaluate because of distance.

Discussion

Evidence of a variety of healthy environmental supports were observed at sponsored venues the most prominent being no smoking signage. However, despite venues being well signed, cigarette smoking was still seen (60%) or smelt (33%) at venues. Difficulties in the implementation and enforcement of healthy policies/structural supports have been identified in a previous evaluation of organisations receiving healthy clubs sponsorship (Rosenberg et al 2005). The results of this and previous studies reinforce the difficulty faced by both Healthway and sponsored organisations in achieving health reform.

The results of this study also suggest that sponsorship of sport, arts and racing events to the value of \$5000 or less, are effective in raising health message awareness. According to the cognitive impact hierarchy, the higher the level of awareness that can be achieved, the greater the likelihood of achieving behaviour changes in the target group. Overall, total action amongst respondents was found to be 3.7%.

References

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