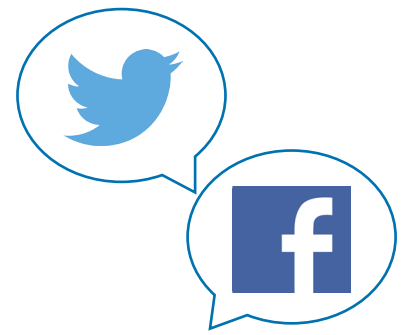


# NINE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUGARY DRINK TAX ADVOCATES



In 2014, residents of Berkeley, California launched an effort to institute the nation's first tax on sugary drinks. We examined the social media activism surrounding the successful 'Berkeley vs. Big Soda' campaign on Twitter and Facebook. Based on an analysis of social media content of 1,731 tweets and 250 Facebook posts, we identified nine recommendations for advocates to refer to when conducting their own social media campaign. Although these recommendations are specific to a sugary drink campaign, many of them likely hold true for other health issues.

For more information, see the full report, "**Soda tax debates: A case study of Berkeley vs. Big Soda's social media campaign,**" available at [www.bmsg.org](http://www.bmsg.org).

## 1 Tailor social media to specific audiences by paying attention to demographics.

In Berkeley, for example, Facebook followers were more likely than Twitter followers to be Berkeley residents. For a more local audience, publish specific information about public events, voting registration, and general logistics. For a broader audience, publish more general information about the initiative.

## 2 Use social media to amplify grassroots advocacy.

The Berkeley campaign used social media to make the public health case for implementing a tax, but also to promote events, drive voters to the polls, etc.

## 3 Adapt social media strategy based on the local context.

As the soda industry became more aggressive and spent increasing dollars on an anti-tax campaign, Berkeley vs. Big Soda reacted by highlighting this "bad behavior." Social media audiences responded with high engagement, showing the benefits of a flexible and timely social strategy.

## 4 Amplify the power of influential voices.

The pro-tax campaign's post with the most lifetime impressions was a video developed by prominent political economist and Berkeley resident Robert Reich in support of the campaign. Consider approaching local and influential spokespersons with unique voices who can raise awareness about the issue, spark new interest, and give a campaign a sense of legitimacy both locally and nationally.

## 5 Interact with health advocates and organizations.

Communicating with like-minded users allowed Berkeley's messages to spread further by leveraging the reach and influence of others. This strategy helped the campaign play an active role in a larger, national conversation around sugary drinks. Do this by retweeting others' messages, replying to tweets, and using the '@' feature to mention others.

## 6 Interact with local news outlets.

Twitter in particular can be a great way to build relationships with journalists covering the topic and affect the larger public dialogue. Follow journalists on Twitter so that you can contact them with information or story ideas, or thank them for thorough coverage.

## 7 Be specific when talking about health impacts.

Posts linking the soda industry to specific chronic diseases or highlighting the economic costs of ill health were more successful than those that more generally talked about chronic disease.

## 8 Celebrate milestones or related victories.

Berkeley vs. Big Soda's celebratory tweets had quadruple the impressions and close to six times the engagement compared to other posts. One of the campaign's most retweeted and most favorited posts was the announcement of the election results.

## 9 Continue the conversation even after the election, whether you win or lose.

Use the audience and community you've built up during the campaign to give updates and support other policy efforts. Framing your campaign as a "next step" in a larger advocacy movement can be helpful.

To find out the messages that resonate most with your audience, monitor your campaign using social media analytics. Some resources include: Facebook Insights, Twitter Analytics, or Twitonomy. These allow you to track followers, assess engagement metrics, and access demographic information, etc. There are also many other free social media analytic tools available online.

## BERKELEY VS. BIG SODA'S SOCIAL MEDIA BY THE NUMBERS

1731

Tweets

250

Facebook Posts

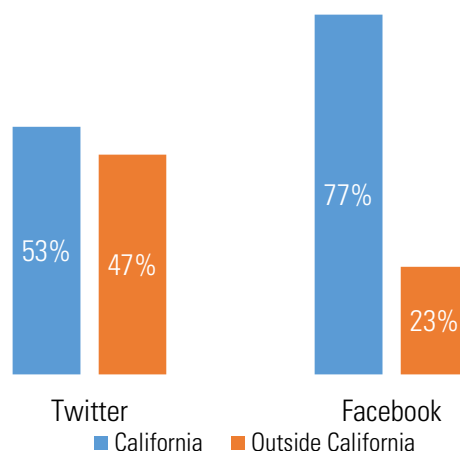
594

Twitter Followers

729

Facebook Fans

Location of Twitter followers and Facebook fans



### Popular Hashtags on Twitter

25% of posts used #YesOnD

18% of posts used #sodatax

2x Engagement on posts using the "Industry Behaves Badly" frame compared to other arguments

Posts about the health harms of sugary drinks were 2x as likely to be retweeted on Twitter compared to other frames

Celebratory tweets resulted in 4x impressions and 6x engagement compared to other posts