

# **“Don’t think of a soda”**

A content analysis of Twitter posts about  
sugar-sweetened beverage tax campaigns  
in California from 2015-2018

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A dark, grainy image showing several microphones in the foreground, with a blurred background of what appears to be a crowd or a stage setting.

## **Disclosures & Acknowledgments**

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## **what we do**

- **Conduct media research**
- **Train advocates**
- **Provide resources for journalists**
- **Program of the Public Health Institute**

# key functions of the media

## Setting the agenda

↳ What we think about

## Shaping the debate

↳ How we think about it

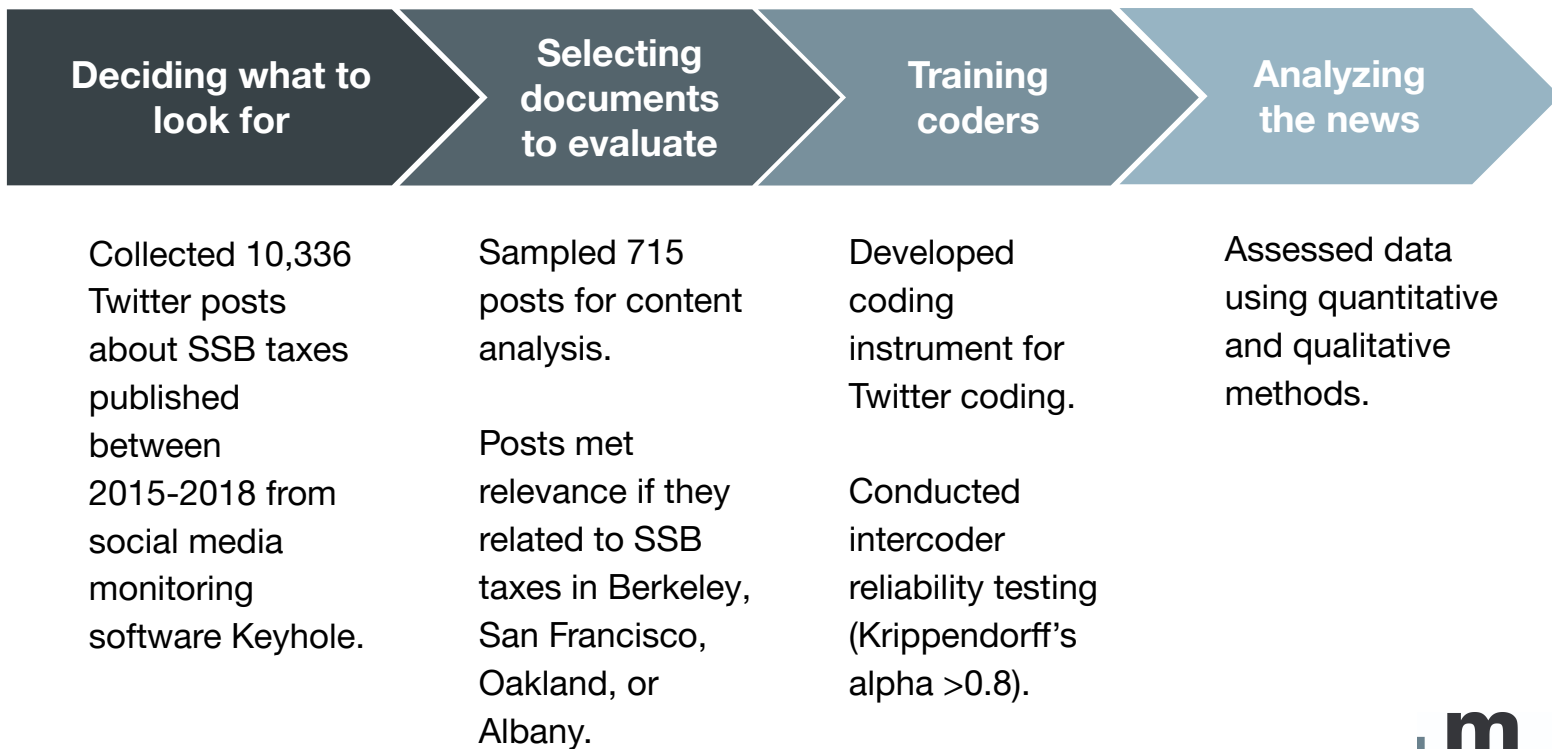
## Reaching decision-makers

↳ What we do about it

# methods

**“Don’t think of a soda”**

*Content analysis of Twitter posts about SSB tax campaigns in CA, 2015-2018*



## research questions

- Who posted about SSB taxes?
- How were SSB taxes portrayed?
- What types of images appeared?

## **key findings**

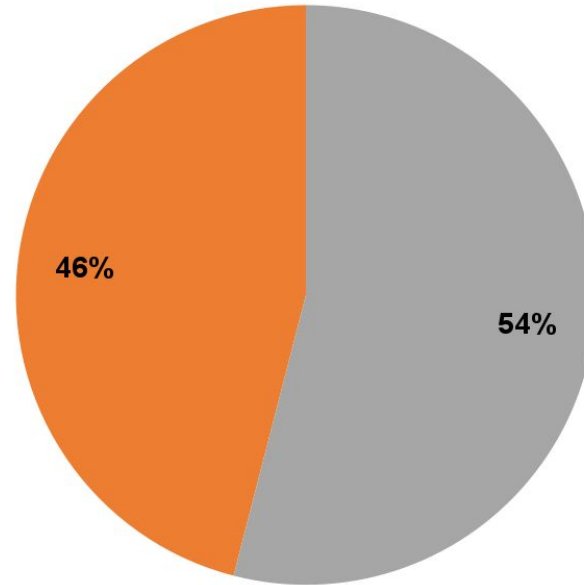
- News outlets were the most frequently cited source.
- Nearly two-thirds of posts portrayed SSB taxes positively.
- About one-third of posts included an image.

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### key findings

Images in Twitter posts

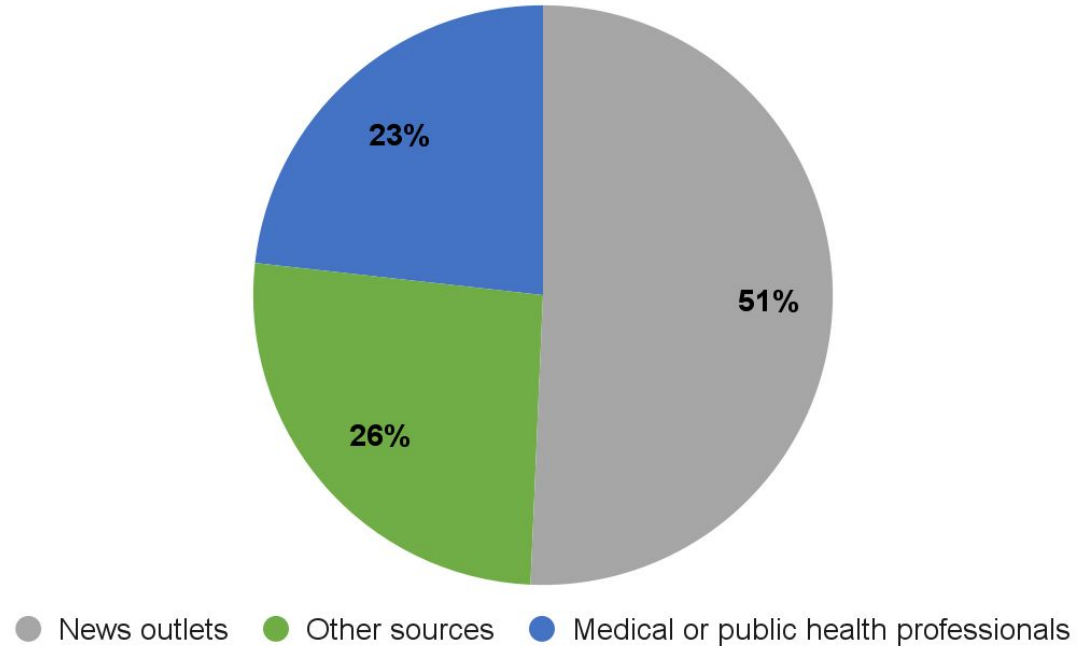


● Other types of images (e.g. people, cartoons) ● Sugar or SSBs



**key  
findings**

Sources that posted images of sugar or SSBs



## “Don’t think of a soda”

Content analysis of Twitter posts about SSB tax campaigns in CA, 2015-2018

Join [@SPUR\\_Urbanist](#) and CUESA for a discussion of how soda tax implementation is moving forward, where revenue could be directed and how San Francisco should focus its energy on this issue in the coming months. [spur.org/events/2018-05...](#)



10:13 AM · Apr 24, 2018

**Example:  
Reinforcing  
opposition  
messages  
(a.k.a. “elephant  
triggers”)**

Big Soda is doubling down on its lies in [#Oakland](#) [#sodatax](#) measure. Toothpaste really?



2:16 PM · Sep 29, 2016

3 Retweets 5 Quote Tweets 7 Likes

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**Example:  
Reinforcing  
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m  
b s g

# Strategic communications tip: Avoid elephant triggers

If you catch yourself  
showing images of...

- ✗ *What this is not about...*
- ✗ *What we don't want...*
- ✗ *What is not true...*

Stop and reframe:

- ✓ *What is this ABOUT?*
- ✓ *What do we WANT to achieve?*
- ✓ *What do we KNOW is true?*

## “Don’t think of a soda”

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**Avoiding elephant  
triggers: Showing  
what SSB taxes  
support and who  
benefits**



A5. Great to see how Berkeley spends [#sodatax](#) revenue to support community health: [healthyfoodamerica.org/berkeley\\_dispr...](https://healthyfoodamerica.org/berkeley_dispr...) [#FoodFri](#)



10:41 AM · May 13, 2016

13 Reposts 7 Likes

## limitations

- Tweets did not include 2014.
- Retrospective data collection may not completely reflect all real-time activity during campaigns.
- Some California-based posts may have been excluded.
- Did not include "grocery tax" in the search string.



## conclusion

- Tax supporters reposted images of SSBs that might have reinforced opposition frames.
- Advocates can avoid elephant triggers on social media and other platforms by reframing text and images to support their overall strategy and goals.
- Better yet, make a more accurate and less triggering image.

# thank you

**stay connected!**



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