

Freshly Brewed 7-Election Wins the Vote

Ketchum and 7-Eleven, Jan 1, 2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Marketing Consumer Products — Beverages

The 2012 presidential campaign seemed as bitter as bad coffee, with partisan coverage obsessed with turnout algorithms. 7-Eleven sought to change the tone, reinserting fun into the voting process with its own "unabashedly unscientific" poll. Every morning during the 60-day campaign, voters flocked to the 7-Election polls, driven by media coverage (more than one billion impressions).

The coffee poll also brewed up sales for 7-Eleven with more than 7 million "votes" cast, nearly doubling turnout from 2008, and generating caffeinated enthusiasm on the faces of the thousands who posted to Facebook and Twitter proudly supporting their 7-Election cups.

Marketing consumer products includes programs designed to introduce new products or promote existing products to a consumer audience.

Full Text: **SITUATION ANALYSIS**

The 2012 presidential campaign seemed as bitter as bad coffee, with partisan coverage obsessed with polling data and turnout algorithms. 7-Eleven sought to change the tone, reinserting fun and enthusiasm into the voting process. Since 2000, 7-Eleven had held its own "7-Election" during presidential elections, turning coffee counters in thousands of 7-Eleven stores into mock polling booths where millions could "vote" by choosing a blue Democratic cup or a red Republican cup. But the highly contentious 2012 election posed the toughest challenge yet.

With PR leading the 7-Election campaign for the first time, Ketchum ratcheted up the fun factor, kicking things off with a CofFREE day when customers could "vote" for free and then bringing in satirical news leader The Onion and Jimmy Kimmel to boost turnout. Instead of partisanship and scientific polling, 7-Election celebrated its own "unabashedly unscientific" poll, with a hilarious site, www.7election.com, where you could track real-time results, especially in the nine "coffee-ground" swing states. Every morning during the 60-day campaign, voters flocked to the 7-Election polls, driven by enthusiastic media coverage (more than one billion impressions) and sustained by a host of mock election promotions timed around debates, speeches and other campaign moments.

By Election Day, more than 7 million "votes" had been cast, nearly doubling turnout from 2008, and generating caffeinated enthusiasm on the faces of the thousands who posted to Facebook and Twitter proudly supporting their blue or red 7-Election cups. The coffee poll also brewed up real results for 7-Eleven. US coffee sales increased 5% from Sep. – Nov., and overall store sales increased 8% total during the campaign.

RESEARCH

Together, 7-Eleven and Ketchum evaluated prior year coffee sales by market, media

opportunities in key sales markets and Nielsen coffee drinker target analysis data.

As a result of these analyses, the team identified the following priority local markets:

1. New York
2. Los Angeles
3. Washington D.C.
4. Baltimore
5. Dallas/Fort Worth
6. San Francisco
7. San Diego
8. Denver
9. Chicago
10. Norfolk

Ketchum research engaged 2012 MRI data to select the ideal media mix and celebrity partnerships for a national audience of bi-partisan, on-the-go coffee drinkers.

The ultimate selections of Jimmy Kimmel Live and Michael Strahan matched the requisite criteria perfectly. *Jimmy Kimmel Live* is the #1 talk show among 7-Eleven's 18-49 audience (77,000 tune in per episode) and coffee drinkers who work full time are 25% more likely to watch Fox NFL Sunday (hosted by the brand's celeb choice Michael Strahan) with an average viewing audience of 1,346,000.

Research confirmed a national dispersion and roughly 50-50 bi-partisan split among Kimmel & NFL Fox viewers.

PLANNING

Objective 1: Business goals: Increase in-store traffic and sales during a year in which average national coffee sales were trending downward.

Objective 2: Communications goals: Build on the communication success of previous campaigns amidst an increasingly crowded election news cycle.

Target/Audience Analysis:

7-Eleven coffee drinkers represent the majority of the American voting base: men and women aged 18-49 who visit 7-Eleven's 5,700+ US locations coast-to-coast. This audience is college educated. They consume a mix of media across TV, online and social.

The strategy was clear: capitalize on the "fun factor" of the unofficial 7-Election poll to breach a crowded news cycle and drive participation and traffic into the stores.

Drawing on research and key insights, Ketchum saw the greatest opportunity in maintaining a lighthearted tone amidst stormy election coverage. The team crafted their strategy to maximize the "unabashedly, unscientific" poll of 7-Election.

EXECUTION

PHASE I: My voting booth comes with cream and sugar!

To spark anticipation and participation, 7-Election was unveiled through an exclusive with *USA Today*, followed by traditional outreach and b-roll distribution to a bi-partisan media mix in ten target markets and politically charged beltway media. Ketchum drove media contacts to a multimedia press page complete with press releases, images, videos, infographic and a results tracker updated daily at www.7election.com.

Exclusive sponsorship of *The Onion's* "War for the White House" coverage embodied the nexus of online news and fun. In addition to indexing high with the target, the sponsorship drove

significant views: receiving 11MM page visits in the 5 days surrounding the 2012 election, according to Comscore.

PHASE II: Patriotism with a perk!

Ketchum selected a TV integration to match the time when busy professionals focus on fun: outside of working hours. Matching research on target consumption, priority was late night (“*Jimmy Kimmel Live*”).

The night before CoffFREE Day, a celebration of National Coffee Day and an opportunity for anyone to “vote” in 7-Election through a free large coffee from 6-10am on September 28, a live segment during “*Jimmy Kimmel Live*” teased the giveaway. The TV partnership and coffee giveaway drove in-store traffic through a simple, own-able moment-in-time midway through the campaign.

PHASE III: Democracy is brewing!

Building on research supporting bi-partisan, national viewership of “*NFL Fox Sunday*,” Ketchum created a partnership with morning talk show host and NFL Sunday anchor Michael Strahan to be spotted carrying both 7-Election coffee cups around Manhattan. Photos of Strahan quickly hit three out of four weekly entertainment print publications including *US Weekly*, *Star* and *InTouch* along with multiple target-right online outlets.

EVALUATION

The 2012 “7-Election” brewed up a major win for 7-Eleven, driving strong increases in sales and scored big hits across local and national media.

Objective 1: Business goals: Increase in-store traffic and sales during a year in which average national coffee sales were trending downward.

Results:

By Election Day, more than 7 million “votes” had been cast, nearly doubling turnout from 2008.

Objective 2: Communications goals: Build on the communication success of previous campaigns amidst an increasingly crowded election news cycle.

Results: 7-Eleven media coverage perked up dramatically during the 7-Election campaign, driving more than 1 billion media impressions around the country, including:

- 50+ million broadcast impressions.
- 272+ million press release impressions.
- 678+ million online and print impressions.
- 2,231+ earned media placements.

A well-measured, bi-partisan plan allowed the team to reach customers through a mix of bi-partisan, target-right outlets:

- 20 national broadcast programs including *CNN*, *MSNBC*, *FOX News*, *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report* and *Conan*.
- 450 broadcast outlets in all top 50 markets.
- Top-tier national media including *Huffington Post*, *TIME*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes* and *The New York Times*.
- Three out of four weekly entertainment print publications.