Analysis of NFL PLAY60 Campaign

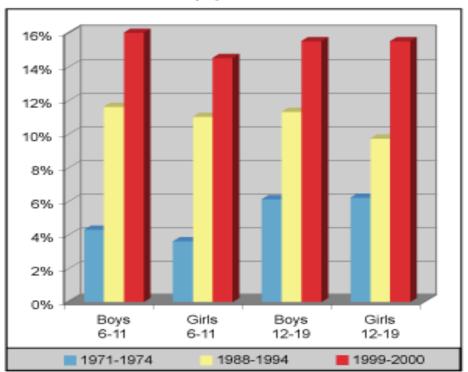
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Context

In the U.S., childhood obesity has been an increasing concern over the past decades. A report from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute in 2006 indicates that childhood overweight and obesity have become a major public health problem in the U.S. and all over the world. "Between 1970 and 2004, the prevalence of overweight almost tripled among U.S. preschoolers and adolescents and quadrupled among children aged 6 to11 years"(Ogden CL, et al. JAMA 2006). The report illustrates this problem in the bar chart below:



Prevalence (%) of Obese Children

Source: CDC, National Center for Health Statistics

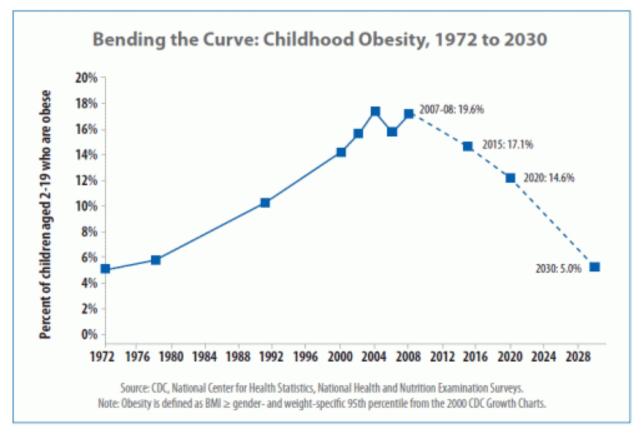
The report then elaborates on potential problems associated with obesity:

Obesity during childhood has been associated with numerous adverse effects including a variety of health complications such as hypertension, dyslipidemia, left ventricular hypertrophy, atherosclerosis, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, sleep disorders, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease as well as psychological effects such as stigmatization, discrimination, depression and emotional trauma. Obesity in childhood also substantially increases the risk of being an obese adult. In addition, adults who were obese during childhood have higher risk of developing hypertension, dyslipidemia, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, and coronary heart disease than those who were not obese during childhood.

These health consequences of childhood overweight and obesity add to the burden of

health-care costs. The annual U.S. obesity-attributable medical expenditures were estimated at \$75 billion in 2003 dollars. Hospital discharges for obesity-associated diseases in youth aged 6 to 17 years increased more than three-fold from 1979-81 to 1997-99 (35 million to 127 million). Hospital charges of obesity-associated comorbidities that required hospitalization of pediatric patients were higher than those that were not obesity-associated (e.g., discharges with obesity as a secondary diagnosis vs. those without for asthma cost \$7,766 vs. \$6,043; p<0.05), providing a financial imperative for obesity prevention initiatives.

In response to this situation, the First Lady launched a comprehensive initiative "Let's Move!" in order to curb childhood obesity within a generation so that kids born today will grow up healthier. As part of this effort, President Barack Obama established the Task Force on Childhood Obesity to "develop and implement an inter-agency plan that details a coordinated strategy, identifies key benchmarks, and outlines an action plan to end the problem of childhood obesity rate to just five percent by 2030 – the same rate before childhood obesity first began to rise in the late 1970s". The action plan is demonstrated in the graph below (Let's Move, 2013).



Against such backdrop, the NFL (National Football League) launched NFL PLAY60 - a national

youth health and fitness campaign – in October 2007, aiming to encourage young fans of football to actively participate in some form of physical activity for at least 60 minutes a day. Since its inception, the NFL has made great efforts to get children involved in exercise through various campaigns. From a social marketing perspective, this paper gives a thorough review of this campaign, aiming to identify what it has done well, and offers recommendations on how to make it even more effective.

NFL PLAY60 Mission & Goals

Mission Statement

The mission of NFL PLAY60 is "To make the next generation of youth the most active and healthy." As Roger Goodell, NFL Commissioner puts it, "Our players recognize the value of staying healthy and it's important that young fans also understand the benefits of exercise. NFL PLAY60 is a significant tool in ensuring children get their necessary, daily physical activity" (NFL, 2013).

Goals

In order to tackle childhood obesity, NFL PLAY60 is working to change each child's behavior by encouraging them to be physically active for at least 60 minutes a day, and to make healthy choices for snacks and drinks. Apart from promoting people's health and wellness in general, and building a young generation of football fans that are strong, healthy and athletic, the NFL also aims to nurture promising players for the future.

Challenges/Barriers

We are living in an era when people of all ages are becoming more sedentary due to the invention of TV, computer and video games. To get young people off their computer or to turn off the TV is not easy; the campaign is faced with several barriers for children to change their sedentary behavior – easy access to sedentary activities, lack of knowledge, time limitation, lack of facilities, and socioeconomic factors – which I will discuss respectively.

Easy Access to Sedentary Activities

With the development of technology – TV, computers, 3D movies, iPads, iPods, smart phones, and video games – access to such has entered almost every household. It is in people's nature to enjoy immediate gratification and comfort. Sitting on the couch watching TV or a movie, or playing video games is easy, relaxing, comfortable and entertaining, so much so that children simply don't want to get out of the house once they finish school.

Lack of Knowledge

While it is common knowledge among adults that exercise and nutritious food are the key to good health, not every child is aware of this. Even if they know the concept, they might not know what active games are out there that they might enjoy, or what snacks and drinks are good for them.

Time Limitation

In modern society, life is getting busier and busier due to increasing competition. Children have to go to school, and their parents have to work. After school, they need to do homework, and parents need to take care of housework. It takes a great deal of planning and determination from the parents' end to put into their schedule certain exercise time for their children, as they often need to take their children to specific places and supervise them.

Lack of Facilities

For people living in the inner city or other poor areas where apartment complexes dominate the neighborhoods, even if they want to do exercise, they might not have the space or facilities.

Socioeconomic factors

For low-income families, it is often a challenge to enroll their children in extra-curricular activities as they cannot afford the costs those activities require.

Marketing Mix

In view of the aforementioned barriers, NFL PLAY60 has carefully designed its marketing mix. In this section, I will describe their 4Ps (Product, Place, Price, and Promotion) in detail, and discuss how strategies are adopted to address the aforementioned barriers.

Product

Overall, the campaign tries to send the message to children that by doing 60 minutes or more of exercise everyday; they will get the following benefits:

- They will have fun participating in the activities;
- They might meet their favorite NFL players;
- They will become strong, healthy and in better shape;
- They will develop skills and abilities to play football or other sports;
- They might even enjoy the life of a famous NFL player as indicated by the Cam Newton Play 60 Commercial.

Committed to promoting kids' health and wellness, NFL PLAY60 works with an impressive

roster of partner organizations, such as the American Heart Association, National Diary Council, Action for Healthy Kids, and has designed many programs to get kids involved. Apart from national outreach and online programs, NFL PLAY60 has also implemented programs at the grassroots level and through various NFL in-school, after-school and team-based programs. *In-school programs* take place, as the name suggests, in school. For example, "Fuel Up to Play 60", founded by the National Dairy Council and NFL, in collaboration with USDA, aims to make sure kids become healthy through nutrition and activity. The interactive program has many fun prizes, such as an NFL player visit or Super Bowl tickets, for choosing good-for-you foods and getting active for at least 60 minutes every day. Kids are motivated to make a difference in their own lives as well as in the community. It is a great in-school program that any teacher or administrator can support (Fuel up to Play 60: http://www.fueluptoplay60.com).

After-school programs can be done either in school, or anywhere else indeed. In order to give kids ideas of fun games, the "Great Play Ideas" program gathers ideas from favorite NFL players, such as "Football Freeze" by Robert Geathers, and "No Hands Race" by Barrett Rund. These games usually require little or no equipment, and can take place anywhere (Great Play Ideas: http://www.nflrush.com/category/greatplayideas).

Online programs include an online site for kids to set personal goals, track their progress and receive tips and encouragement from NFL players. Many high profile NFL players such as Tom Brady, Tony Romo, Reggie Bush, are involved in the program (TBlog, 2008). Other online programs like the Great Play Ideas, which kids are encouraged to sign up and come up with creative ideas for fun games or activities.

Place

There are three major types of places where kids can participate in NFL PLAY60 activities.

- In school
- Local community
- Online

As mentioned earlier, all in-school programs and some after-school programs take place in school, making it easier for kids to participate. Many after-school programs are run by teams of volunteers who help build Youth Fitness Zones in their communities to provide new places for local kids to be active. Online programs are very easy for kids to access; they are designed to encourage kids get involved in various contests, which can enable kids to either acquire ideas

from others (be it other kids or NFL players), or try to figure out creative ideas for fun games. **Price**

The campaign has adopted the price strategies as below:

- Exempting monetary cost for desired behavior
- Increasing monetary and non-monetary reward for desired behavior

No cost is involved in any of the activities, enabling every child to participate as long as he/she is interested. The only thing he/she needs to do is to pledge on NFL PLAY60's website (http://m2.nflrush.com/play60/play60certificate.pdf). Upon pledging, kids are issued a Play 60 certificate. In addition, kids are rewarded for keeping doing exercise. For example, in Panview Middle School (Louisiana), if a kid can keep doing activities for at least an hour every day for 28 days, he/she is entitled to join "Kids' Day", a fun event organized by the school (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yka-xii0TVo). Also, if kids win a certain contest such as Play 60 Invention Contest, they will be able to win prizes as big as \$5,000 or a trip to an NFL Grand Prize Event (http://www.nflrush.com/invent/?icampaign=RUSH_960x150_BKFK13).

Promotion

Means of Communication: TV commercial

The campaign sends its message mainly through TV commercials. The NFL website states that, "The NFL PLAY60 initiative is prominent during the NFL's key calendar events, including Super Bowl, Pro Bowl, Draft, Kickoff and Thanksgiving and is supported by many NFL players and coaches year round" (NFL: http://www.nfl.com/play60). Naturally, these commercials are widely received throughout the nation, some of which are listed below:

- Cam Newton Play 60 Commercial: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKphr02LRZ0
- NFL PLAY60 Bus Commercial: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVERz5D1YEU
- NFL PLAY60 and President Obama Thanksgiving Spot: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=seglEpDRUtM
- United Way and Play 60 TV ad: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCCgYHpeuTQ

Prompts/Nudges

In order to remind kids of its messages – "Get out and play" and "It's fun to be fit!" – the following prompts and nudges are used to complement the commercials (pictures of some prompts are presented following the list):

- Play 60 buses
- T-shirts with NFL PLAY60 related logo
- Photos of famous NFL players interacting with participating kids on website

- Team mascots (such as the Chicago Bears)
- Fliers and posters put in school
- Play 60 certificates (nudge) Play 60 Logo on football field (nudge)















	••
I Pledge to PLAY 600	•••••
(Your Name)	
I pledge to join the NFL PLAY 60 movement today,,	
and aim to get at least 60 minutes of exercise every day!	•
To help make my generation the most active and healthy,	:
I plan to to get my 60 minutes of PLAY every day!	•••
	•••••
NFLRUSH.com/play60	••••
	•••••
	•

Among the above list, the last three items can serve both as prompts and nudges (flier and posters in school, the Play 60 logo painted on the football field, and the pledger's Play 60 certificate).

Analysis of the Campaign

Now that I have given a clear description of NFL PLAY60's marketing mix, in this section, I will analyze how the campaign addresses the barriers, how commitment and social norms are used, and how effective the campaign is in terms of use of prompts, nudges, and design and delivery of message.

Addressing Barriers

In general, the NFL PLAY60 has done a great job in coping with the challenges facing the task of getting kids out to play. In order to have a visual idea, I will put the analysis in one table to see how each barrier is addressed.

Barrier	Countering Strategies	Comments
Easy access to	Emphasizing the message "It's fun to play and be	Effective
sedentary activities	fit!"	
Lack of knowledge	Online contest such as "Great Play Ideas" to educate	Fairly
	kids with fun games; collaboration with school to	effective, need
	educate kids in making healthier choices with food	more efforts
	and snacks	
Time limitation	Kids can play in school, after school, or local	Very Effective
	community, saving time for transportation	
Lack of facilities	Making use of school and local communities,	Very effective
	creating games requiring little space or equipment	
Socioeconomic	No cost is charged to kids or parents, kids can even	Very effective
factors	win big prizes by participating contests	

Table 1: Barriers & Countering Strategies

Recommendations

For the first two barriers in the above table, NFL could do a bit more to make prominent the benefits of its encouraged behavior and the cost of the undesirable behavior – being addicted to sedentary activities. The following actions are recommended:

- Add more photos/videos of kids playing with NFL players having great fun (demonstration of benefits from desirable behavior);
- Design some commercial to show the problems obese children might encounter, and also incorporate such information on website, this is to educate kids on the cost of the undesirable behavior – sedentary activities;
- 3. Establish more programs to collaborate with schools to educate kids about obesity and other health problems.

Use of Commitment and Social Norms

Personal Commitment

The Play 60 Certificate issued when a kid pledges to join the program is a great idea. Once a kid has pledged and obtained this certificate, the parents then put it on the wall of the kid's room, where he/she sees it everyday. It serves as a written proof of the kid's commitment (both to him/herself and to his/her parents) to get at least 60 minutes of exercise every day.

Social Norms

The social norms incorporated in this campaign are:

- Doing exercise at least 60 minutes every day is good for one's health;
- If children stay active and participate in sports, they will become big, strong and healthy;
- Strong and healthy people can become professional athletes, and they are well respected by the society.

Recommendations

To make the campaign even more effective, I have two recommendations. First, the website should give clear instructions to kids who have pledged to print two certificates, one to be put in the wall of their room, and the other to be posted in school where all their classmates and teachers can see, so that it becomes a public commitment. By doing so, those who have their certificates posted will feel honored to have joined a credible cause, and they will more likely stick to their commitment now that it is made public. Meanwhile, the posting of certificates will make those who haven't pledged feel pressure as they are very likely to think, "Well, the other kids have pledged, I should join them too!"

Under the same spirit, the other suggestion is to make better use of the campaign's Facebook webpage. For example, kids from the same school who have pledged to join Play 60 can join the school NFL PLAY60 group on Facebook, this is another way of public commitment, which will

encourage kids to sustain their positive behavior.

Use of Prompts/Nudges

Prompts and nudges are well used in the campaign, as shown in Table 2 below:

Items	Prompt or	Use	Effect
	Nudge?		
Play 60 Buses	Prompt	Transport NFL players' to school, big buses, moving ad	Very effective
T-shirts with NFL	Prompt	For every participant of Play 60,	Very effective
PLAY60 related logo		reminding them of the cause	and practical
Photos of famous NFL	Prompt	To be easily seen every time kids get	Very effective
players with kids		on Play 60 website	
Team mascots	Prompt	For participating teams	Very effective
Fliers and posters put in	Nudge	To be easily seen in school	Very effective
school			
Play 60 Logo on football	Nudge	Whenever kids play on football field,	Very effective
field	_	they'll be reminded	-
Play 60 Certificate	Nudge	Upon kids having pledged to join	Very effective

Table	2:	Prompts	&	Nudges
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I would recommend the following prompts to the above list:

- Caps with Play 60 logo, which I haven't seen in any of its commercials or on its website; but they are very practical, and are the first thing people usually notice.
- Having more pictures/photos of potential health problems with child obesity;
- More pictures like the one below to remind kids to stay away from their computer and go out to play.



Design and Delivery of Message

In general, I think this campaign is very effective in its design and delivery of message. Take the "Cam Newton Play 60 Commercial" as an example, it is a dialogue between a 7 or 8 year old kid and the football quarterback Com Newton for the Carolina Panthers. At the beginning of the conversation, the kid thanks Newton for coming to visit his school. Then he expresses his wishes to grow big and strong, and eventually take over Newton's job as the starting quarterback of the local team. The message is very clear: if a kid plays outdoors for at least 60 minutes a day and keeps up the exercise, he will grow strong, in good shape, and has the potential to become a professional player. The effectiveness of its campaign is because of the following reasons:

- The message is simple, concise and straightforward;
- It is personal, vivid, and humorous (Newton's dramatic change of facial expression is really funny);
- It is delivered in the break time of football games during football season, and it enjoys an even larger audience during Super Bowl, Pro Bowl, Draft, Kickoff and Thanksgiving season;
- It has celebrities in the commercial, including President Obama and famous NFL players such as Cam Newton, which makes it much more appealing and credible;
- Since so many kids idolize professional athletes, having NFL players to visit their school as one of their rewards makes the benefits of the advocated behavior very attractive.

Recommendations

Given that the goal of the campaign is to encourage kids to play outdoors everyday for at least 60 minutes and sustain this behavior, the campaign needs to do a bit more to make it even more influential and powerful. My suggestions are as follows:

• A very important message in the campaign is "It is fun to play, and it is fun to be fit." This is the key to the success of the campaign. Due to people's nature of enjoying immediate gratification and not willing to step out of their comfort zone, the temptation of video games, movies, TV shows are just too big to resist. Therefore, the campaign should design more commercials showing kids having a great time playing outdoors, or featuring a successful story of a kid who has been doing exercise for a few years (since the campaign was launched in 2007, some kids might have followed it for up to six years), thus to set up a positive example;

- In the same vein, more contents should be added to its website. After all, TV commercials are instant, but information on website remains available to everyone. Once kids get to know Play 60 from TV, they are very likely to check out its website;
- The current website is not easy to navigate. It should be more streamlined and userfriendly;
- So far the campaign has only emphasized the benefits of the desired behavior, but has not shown any consequences of the undesirable behavior – sedentary activities. Therefore, Play 60 could add some commercial to show how those activities lead to obesity; and how obesity can result in certain diseases.
- The same information about sedentary activities and obesity should be added to its website, so as to educate kids why it is important for them to go out and play.

Summary

As access to technology has become increasingly easier over the past decades, childhood obesity has become prevalent in the U.S., which not only affects children's health and their quality of life, it has also become a huge financial burden for the government to deal with obesity associated diseases. Therefore, the Obama administration has attached great importance to tackle this problem. Given the magnitude of the challenge, we need many more programs like NFL PLAY60 to pull today's kids away from their computer, TV, or video games, attract them to go out and do exercise everyday, and educate them to make healthy choices for food and drinks. Until such behaviors have been developed nation wide, the goal of President Obama's action plan – to curb childhood obesity to just five percent by 2030 – will be achieved.

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