The Mexican Soda Tax: How to Win a Campaign

8th EPHA Annual Conference
Brussels · September 2017
Deaths from diabetes in Mexico
The human drama

Ministry of Health of Mexico, Mortality Database.

*Most recent data on deaths from diabetes
Total costs of obesity in Mexico
(in millions of pesos)

SSB consumption in Mexico

70% of added sugars in the Mexican diet come from SSBs

Ultraprocessed food & beverage sales in Latin America

Mexico

Chile
Ultraprocessed food & beverage sales and mean BMI

The Mexican Soda Tax: How to Win a Campaign
Changes in Mexican consumption

(1984-1998)

The strategy to advocate for a soda tax in Mexico
Create and raise a strong, collective voice

alianza por la salud alimentaria
Complementary partners advocating for policy change

Academia
Evidence generation and analysis

Civil society
Public opinion - Political pressure

Lobbying
Engagement with Congress & key stakeholders
Three essential campaign steps

1. Expose the human drama
   - People see: THE VICTIM
   - People feel: INTERESTED

2. Identify the culprits
   - People see: THE ENEMY
   - People feel: ANGRY

3. Present solutions
   - People see: A SOLUTION
   - People feel: ENGAGED
Campaigning in public spaces
“First Came Obesity, Then Diabetes” mass media campaign

1. Human drama

Campaign in Mexico City
November 2012 to February 2013
Subway, billboards and social media
Public demonstrations
“500,000 deaths during the past administration” *media stunt*

1. Human drama
2. Culprits

Event in front of the Ministry of Health in Mexico City, 2012
Campaigning in public spaces
“12 Spoonfuls of Sugar” mass media campaign

2. Culprits

Campaign in Mexico City
May to August 2013
Subway, billboards, buses, radio and social media
Campaigning in public spaces
“For a Healthier Mexico” mass media campaign
“With the soda tax drinking fountains in schools and public spaces”

3. Solutions

Campaign in Mexico City
September to October 2013
Subway, buses, billboards, paid TV, radio, magazines and social media

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The industry playbook

• Pressure on media companies to close airways and advertising to the Alliance: 3 TV stations, 1 radio station and 2 publishing houses

• Messages: “No to the Bloomberg tax,” “We’ll all pay,” “Get active” and no health merit to tax

• Media strategy: Press conferences, OpEds and paid ads in national dailies

• Industry campaigns: Soda industry and sugar cane producers

• Engagement of local store owners and sugar cane producers

• Creation of “consumer associations” with campaigns against the soda tax

• Heavy industry lobby in Congress
Responses to the soda industry

“The soda tax comes from the experts: It’s for health”

“IOTF supports the soda tax”
Responses to the soda industry

“Soda industry lobbyists transmit the obesity epidemic”

“It’s time for a change… Senators, you have the floor”
The debate attracted international media

**The Wall Street Journal**
US national newspaper
Daily circulation: 2,378,827

**The New York Times**
US national newspaper
Daily circulation: 1,865,318

**BBC World**
Weekly audience of 192 million

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**Another soda tax squabble**

**Mexico: Junk food tax is approved**

**Would a tax on sugary drinks make Mexico healthier?**
Industry resistance to regulation

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Fiscal policy
The Mexican SSB tax timeline

- **OCT**: New President took office
- **NOV**: SSB Tax Bill introduced in Senate – “Tabled” til Fiscal Reform
- **DEC**: Collect signatories to SSB Tax Bill
- **JAN**: Congress in Session
- **FEB**: Key dialogue with Ministry of Finance
- **MAR**: Acaemia launched Policy Recom’s
- **APR**: Congress in Session
- **MAY**: Intense lobbying
- **JUNE**: Peña Nieto announced soda tax in fiscal reform
- **JULY**: SSB Tax Passed
- **AUG**: Print Ad Battle in the Press
- **SEPT**: Congress in Session
- **OCT**: Earned Media
- **NOV**: Coalition Building
- **DEC**: Campaigns
- **JAN**: Industry Campaigns
- **FEB**: Expert Forums

*The Mexican Soda Tax: How to Win a Campaign*
The tax is working
Post-tax reduction in purchases

Pre-tax Slope

Post-tax Slope

Per capita consumption (liters)
2011-2015

138.5
139.9
139.4
134
132.9


Euromonitor Data (article in press)
The battle continues

• October 2015. Deputies tried to reduce the soda tax from 10% to 5% for beverages with 5 grams of sugar per 100 mililiters or less (An industry proposal).

• After a two week battle, Senators mantained the soda tax at 10%.

Demonstration in front the Congress against the new epidemic: Big Soda mosquito lobbyist.
Three actors targeted by Pegasus espionage

Academia

Civil society

Lobbying
The need for comprehensive policy
Exemplary front of pack warning labels

CHILE
“Excess in sugar/calories/saturated fats/sodium”

ECUADOR
“Traffic light” label
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Our children’s health is not negotiable
Thank you!

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