"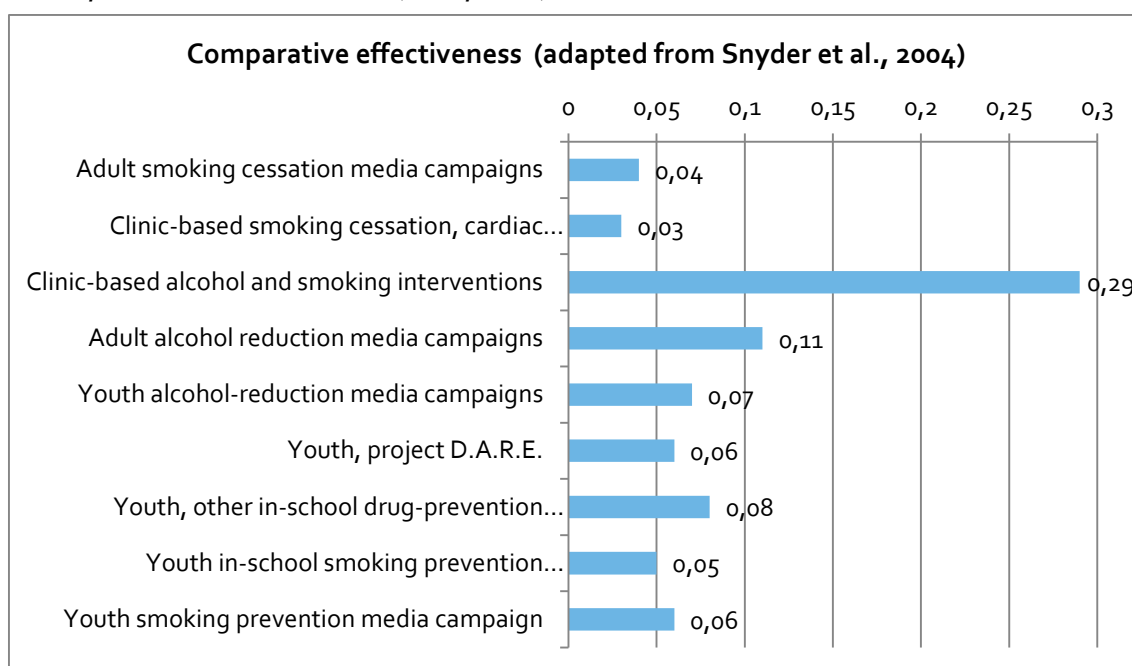Public communication campaigns can be defined as purposive attempts to inform or influence behaviors in large audiences within a specified time period using an organized set of communication activities and featuring an array of mediated messages in multiple channels generally to produce noncommercial benefits to individuums and society" (Rice & Atkin, 2013; Rogers & Storey)

What types of campaigns exist?

Most campaigns aim at **individual behaviour change**. Media advocacy campaigns seek to achieve policy change by exerting influence on **public will** and engagement.

How effective are public communication campaigns?

Targeted and well-executed campaigns can have small-to-moderate effects on knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour (Noar, 2006).

Comparative effectiveness (adapted from Snyder et al., 2004)

Category	Value
Adult smoking cessation media campaigns	0,04
Clinic-based smoking cessation, cardiac...	0,03
Clinic-based alcohol and smoking interventions	0,29
Adult alcohol reduction media campaigns	0,11
Youth alcohol-reduction media campaigns	0,07
Youth, project D.A.R.E.	0,06
Youth, other in-school drug-prevention...	0,08
Youth in-school smoking prevention...	0,05
Youth smoking prevention media campaign	0,06

How (cost-) effective are public communication campaigns?

Meta-analytic studies in the United States have found campaigns without a coercive element (e.g. legal) to yield average effects on target behaviours in the magnitude of 5 percentage points ($r = 0.05$) (Snyder et al., 2007). Larger effect sizes were found for alcohol reduction than for smoking cessation (Snyder et al., 2004).

What factors determine campaign success? (cf. DeJong, 2002)

1. **Launching a strategic planning process**
   The campaign should have a clear objective that is part of an overall strategy.

2. **Selecting a strategic objective**
   The overall strategy should focus on *one* of the following areas: (1) individual behaviour change, (2) changes in interpersonal and social processes, (3) support for institutional or community-based interventions, (4) promotion of public action for environmental change

3. **Selecting the target audience**
   Within the selected focus area, campaign messages should address a well-defined target audience.

4. **Developing a staged approach**
    The target audience should be moved through the persuasion process in a <u>stepwise</u> fashion.

5. **Defining the key promise**
    a. The last step in the persuasion process should consist of the target audience taking a <u>specific action</u>.
    b. People are more likely to attend to and retain a campaign messages that meet their needs or support their values. Therefore, it is crucial to <u>define the single most important benefit</u> the target audience will receive by taking the specified action: the "key promise".
    c. <u>Support statements</u> should explain why the promised benefit is in the target audience's interest, anticipate potential counterarguments and invalidate them.

6. **Avoiding fear appeals**
    Emotionally-charged portrayals of negative consequences associated with behaviours that are discouraged (scare tactics) are <u>rarely effective and sometimes harmful</u>, making the problem behaviour more resistant to change. One reason that fear appeals are still widely used is that focus groups tend to rate them as effective, despite positive reinforcement approaches having been shown to be generally superior.

7. **Selecting the right message source**
    The <u>credibility and trustworthiness</u> of the source determines the persuasiveness of the message. Prominently featuring the logo of the funding organisation may sometimes undermine the target audience's receptivity to the message.

8. **Selecting a mix of media channels**

9. Media channels should be selected according to the target audience's <u>media preferences</u>, the objectives of the campaign and cost.

10. **Maximising media exposure**
    <u>Repetition</u> helps drawing attention to the message, facilitates learning and increases liking, unless it is excessive. Airing spots in <u>high frequency bursts</u> ("flights") is more effective than broadcasting them over a long period.

11. **Conducting formative research**
    Entering into a **dialogue** with the audience throughout campaign development is a prerequisite for an effective campaign. At a minimum, tests with focus groups should be conducted at an early stage.

12. **Conducting process and outcome evaluations**
    Whenever possible, both process and outcome evaluations should be incorporated <u>at an early planning stage</u>.

Regarding alcohol prevention via mass media, the strongest and most robust evidence of effectiveness is available for campaigns reducing alcohol impaired driving. In a systematic review, Elder et al. (2004) found a median decrease in alcohol-related crashes of 13 percent. Estimations of the societal benefits outweighed the campaign costs by far.

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