

Resurrected ParticipACTION initiative success underpinned by brand, organizations

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Despite a six-year hiatus, a resurrected national physical activity initiative in Canada, ParticipACTION, still has the potential to succeed thanks to a "sticky" brand fostered over thirty successful years, and support from organizations with health promotion and physical activity as their mandates, University of Alberta researchers have found.

The study, published in the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and [Physical Activity](#)* was led by behavioural epidemiologist Ron Plotnikoff. Researchers recruited 268 Canadian organizations at local, provincial and national levels involved in physical activity and health promotion to determine their capacity to work with ParticipACTION to achieve the goal of making Canada a more active country.

Participating organizations were surveyed with three objectives in mind: to determine brand awareness of the 'old' and 'new' ParticipACTION; to look at the capacity - the ability to adopt, implement and externally promote physical activity initiatives - and to explore differences in capacity relative to the organization's size, sector and primary mandate.

In terms of brand awareness, 96 per cent of responding organizations said they had heard of ParticipACTION; 54.6 per cent had heard of the 'new' ParticipACTION. According to researchers, this indicates a strong cultural memory of the ParticipACTION initiative but considering that most respondents had been existence for 10 years or longer, this was not a surprising finding, according to the paper.

Researchers found two significant differences in organizations' capacity to adopt and implement, with educational organizations, such as school boards, showing greater capacity to implement an initiative than [public health](#) or health care organizations, or sport and sport and recreation organizations.

This might be because the mandates of educational organizations are more closely aligned with the goals of ParticipACTION, and they may have more resources to do so, while sport, recreation and [health promotion](#) organizations might depend on the "fit" between their own organizational vision and values.

While national initiative physical activities do not often succeed for a variety of factors from lack of leadership to lack of resources, ParticipACTION is better positioned for potential success owing to its well-articulated and memorable brand, combined with the capacities of organizations and advances in communications technology.

The baselines established by the research will be used to facilitate the assessment of future campaigns and initiatives.

Provided by University of Alberta

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