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DMG 752-A

June 11th, 2025

Excedrin's Game Over for Headaches Campaign and its use of Viral and Influencer Marketing

At the time of Excedrin's "Game Over for Headaches" Campaign, Excedrin had been a 60-year-old brand, specializing in headache prevention and treatment. The brand specializes in over-the-counter medication for headache and migraine relief. In 2019, Excedrin conducted research that found that 7.3 million people, between the ages of 18-24, engaged in a video game for at least 5 hours per week; this made up 26% of that age group. In 2020, this number only increased. The study revealed that less than half of gamers treated headache symptoms and that 16% of gamers were more likely to use head pain medications as sleep aids (MMAGlobal, n.d.). Excedrin found the perfect white space in the market and launched the campaign "It's Game Over for Headaches", targeting those 18–24-year-olds. This was the first Excedrin campaign targeting this age group (MMAGlobal, n.d.). The campaign resulted in substantial success, including over half a billion media impressions across 190 placements, 47 million paid media impressions on Twitch, 45,000 Excedrin-branded chat interaction on Twitch, over 26 million online video views, over 1 billion total social engagements, 3% increase in site traffic to [Excedrin.com](https://www.excedrin.com), and a display CTR 140% above benchmark (MMAGlobal, n.d.).

The success of Excedrin's "Game Over for Headaches" campaign can be attributed to several key marketing strategies including research, social listening, storytelling, and influencer marketing.

First, they identified a gap in the gamer market and effectively targeted this audience. Additionally, they leveraged social listening to gain insights into how the pandemic had driven an increase in gaming, particularly among their target demographic. Research and social listening help identify trends and insights and reveal gaps, providing a major opportunity for campaign success and increasing likelihood of sentiment with the targeted audience.

Excedrin then conducted further research: they created a brand-owned study to validate the correlation between games and headaches and to prove their methods to reduce the risk of headaches, increase focus, and optimize performance during gaming (MMAGlobal, n.d.). The

methods were broken down into a 6-part process: 1. Positive motivation, 2. Periodic eye rest 3. Ambient music, 4. Draw to relax, 5. Massage hands, 6. Deep breathing (Excedrin US, 2021, 0:32). They partnered with experts in the field, including neuroscientists, expert coaches, clinical psychologists, and professional and amateur gamers to further validate their research (MMAGlobal, n.d.). Extensive research can enhance both authority and trust among users.

Excedrin also introduced the Excedrin Academy, which included 6 “Healer” characters each tied to specific headache triggers. The Healer is a known video game character and Excedrin indicates it is the “only one with the power to keep others in the game” (Excedrin US, 2021, 0:51-1:06). This use of traditional video game storytelling successfully resonated with their target audience.

Additionally, the campaign used the appropriate approach to increase viral potential. In the Ted Talk, “What Makes Something Go Viral?” Dao Nguyen (2014) discusses how for something to go viral, there needs to be a goal in place that benefits the consumer. The “Game Over” campaign helps users with a need: to avoid and reduce headache symptoms when playing video games. Rather than overtly marketing Excedrin by encouraging users to purchase an Excedrin product, the campaign came up with a plan to help gamers with their headaches. The campaign isn’t too promotional and instead provides significant benefit to the consumer. In addition, the campaign build community within live streams, which Nguyen (2014) also indicates as an essential factor for viral marketing.

Excedrin is a fast-moving consumer good, meaning that it sells quickly and is affordable for most people. In 2021, this market saw the highest spending in influencer marketing, highlighting the effectiveness of this strategy for these types of products (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024). Excedrin leveraged influencers successfully to capitalize on this trend.

In doing so, Excedrin partnered with Twitch, employing 12 diverse, influential streamers to promote the campaign to their audience (MMAGlobal, n.d.). They specifically partnered with influential streamer Matthew Haag, otherwise known as “Nadeshot” who shared his personal experiences with headaches during gaming and the implementation of Excedrin’s 6-part gamer method to reduce headaches (MMAGlobal, n.d.). The testimonies of Haag and other influencers humanized Excedrin’s research and tapped into the social proof heuristic. The social proof heuristic or bandwagon effect is described as “our predisposition to do or believe things that we

perceive are popular among others” (Leach 2021, 184). Influencer marketing effectively leverages this theory; consumers observe their favorite influencers using a product or engaging with a service and think, “this must be popular.”

Influencers also broke the barrier between the campaign and the target audience. Influencers act as a bridge between the brand and the customer, targeting the niche, promoting online sales, establishing emotional connection, and adding value to the product (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024). By partnering with influencers on Twitch, a platform popular for gamer streams, Excedrin was able to directly target this niche audience. The campaign resulted in a 3% increase in site traffic to [Excedrin.com](https://www.excedrin.com) (MMAGlobal, n.d.). Online streamers easily translate to online engagement, resulting in an increase in web traffic and providing the opportunity to increase online sales.

The influencers were able to establish an emotional connection with the consumer. Consumers may associate Excedrin with their beloved online streamer, resulting in positive and happy emotions around the brand. Streamers successfully added value to the product by providing real, human testimonies on how the product and Excedrin’s gamer method reduces headaches.

Lastly, Excedrin made it easy for consumers to directly engage with these influencers and the brand. All users had to do was type “Excedrin” in the chat box with the influencer to receive rewards or subscription credits (MMAGlobal, n.d.). This strategy reduced entry barriers and enabled engagement rates to rise seamlessly.

Excedrin’s “Game Over” campaign is well-positioned for long-term success with its target audience, laying a strong foundation for a sustainable future and growth. The marketing strategies the campaign used were proved to be successful. Influencer marketing can translate into user-generated content (UGC), resulting in continued exposure and growth for a successful future. The gaming industry continues to expand, and the campaign has already aligned with several key trends anticipated for 2025. Mobile gaming is expected to reach \$160 billion by the end of 2025 (Amin, 2025). In the partnership with Twitch, the campaign utilizes homepage highlights, sponsored livestreams, and video creatives, all optimized for mobile consumption (MMAGlobal, n.d.).

As of 2025, live streaming accounts for over 20% of global digital video consumptions (Manan, 2025). Excedrin found a market opportunity by using live-streaming influencers; this trend is only on the up, providing more leverage for the campaign's success.

While the campaign is well-positioned for future success, Excedrin must continue to study and follow upcoming trends. For example, generative AI is beginning to make its entry into the gaming industry. 72% of major gaming studios are now using generative AI tools (Amin, 2025). Excedrin can utilize AI to make their "healers" more realistic or personalized for users.

Social gaming continues to grow and is anticipated to reach \$1.9 billion in revenue by the end of 2025 (Amin, 2025). The campaign already capitalizes on social gaming with its partnership with Twitch and by utilizing streaming as part of its promotion. However, it can further engage with social gaming by creating competitions among users and allow players to form group chats around the campaign. This approach will boost engagement, generate buzz, and spark conversations around Excedrin and the campaign, further encouraging UGC. UGC is a powerful tool for increasing the campaign's viral potential, ultimately increasing its chances of long-term success.

Excedrin's strategies can be translated into a different industry; a skincare company like Glow Recipe can implement similar strategies for success. Glow Recipe has various products that they claim to be clinically effective, including moisturizers, face mists, toners, and serums. Glow Recipe can create their own research-based study to increase authority and authenticity in their space. With the results of this study, they could use similar storytelling strategies that the "Game Over" campaign uses. Their "healers" could translate into characters that fit the brand, like estheticians or skin cells. Each character would target a different skin issue, including acne, dryness, oil, and dark spots.

Glow Recipe can also utilize a similar form of influencer marketing. They can employ different influencers to find their niche. This would include influencers that specialize in skincare, like estheticians, dermatologists, or lifestyle influencers. Since livestreaming is such a popular form of media, they can have these influencers livestream their skincare routine, encouraging UGC, conversation around the products, and engagement. Glow Recipe would need

to study their target audience to understand what platform would be most successful. For example, their target audience will likely be found on Instagram or TikTok, rather than Twitch.

Overall, other companies across industries can learn from Excedrin's "Game Over" campaign by implementing research, social listening, storytelling, and influencer marketing. These strategies have proved to be successful for Excedrin and can be easily translated to other companies or industries.

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