

The role of social media in social marketing campaigns today

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Abstract

The ultimate goal for social marketing campaigns is to change behaviour, and we know we're selling a product that people generally don't want to buy. In an ever changing media environment how can we make the audience take notice? The NZTA has two current road safety advertising campaigns which have utilised social media to engage a widely diverse audience in two very different ways – one has been an unintended internet sensation; and the other a strategically planned social conversation. What is the key to engaging your audience successfully and how do you keep the conversation in motion?

1. Introduction

The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) dedicates funding to a national advertising campaign to influence changes in the behaviour of unsafe driving practices in New Zealand.

The NZTA advertising programme is driven from the New Zealand road safety strategy, 2011 – 2020, *Safer Journeys* (Ministry of Transport, 2010), and has a role to play in ensuring a safe road system which is increasingly free of death and serious injury. The Safe System approach acknowledges that even responsible people sometimes make mistakes when travelling on the roads, and that we need a system to protect people from death and serious injury when this occurs. To do this the Safe System has objectives to:

- make the road transport system more accommodating of human error
- manage the forces that injure people in a crash to a level the human body can tolerate without serious injury
- minimise the level of unsafe road user behaviour.

It is the responsibility of all those involved with the design, management and use of the road system to understand this interaction. The advertising programme has a key role in influencing road user behaviour.

The programme is evidence based and is built off ongoing research. Each campaign is developed to support the Safer Journeys priorities, and works with other parts of the NZTA business, and external stakeholders such as NZ Police, to influence road user behaviour and to ensure alignment across the sector.

Crash data analysis and qualitative research feed the direction of each advertising campaign by identifying the target audience and informing the type of message likely to be relevant to them. This information is all used to develop a detailed advertising brief which defines the specific audience and the core objective for each specific campaign. Detailed analysis of crash data and Police crash reports help to build the brief, along with qualitative research to better understand the target group.

An effective behavioural change advertising campaign needs to have a long term focus and must be well integrated across other national and regional activities. The national road safety advertising campaign addresses a number of road safety issues over the long term, for example high priority areas such speed and young drivers, through to issues such as fatigue and vehicle safety. Two areas of focus over the last year have provided the NZTA with some difficult challenges:

- how to bring the issue of drug-impaired driving into the consciousness of the NZ public
- how to acknowledge that young drinking drivers are not all “bloody idiots” but good people who sometimes make bad choices.

We know the ultimate goal for social marketing campaigns is to change behaviour, and we know we're selling a product that people generally don't want to buy. The NZTA has utilised social media in different ways to engage these widely diverse audiences – one has created an unintended internet success which was completely unplanned; and the other a strategically planned social conversation.

1.1. Social media

Social media describes the online technologies and practices that people use to share content, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives, and media amongst their friends/family/colleagues (either 1-to-1 or 1-to-many) without the assistance

of mainstream/mass/broadcast media. It is not simply placing an ad on a social medium such as Facebook. Rather, it is a set of online tools that let regular people create their own content and share it with others – a practice of using any medium to hold conversations and exchange dialogue rather than broadcasting through it.

The success of using social media channels to deliver a campaign does however require an audience who uses social media. The key to engaging this audience successfully is the ability to keep the conversation in motion and relevant.

In this paper, we describe two advertising campaigns which have utilised social media to engage a widely diverse audience in two very different ways – one has been an unintended internet sensation; and the other a strategically planned social conversation.

It's an open question as to whether using social media is cost effective, which is only partially addressed in this paper.

2. A look at two campaigns

2.1. Drink-driving [*Ghost Chips*]

The first campaign targeted young people. The aim was to encourage young people who drink with our young drink-driver to take some responsibility and speak up when he is about to drive drunk.

Young drinking drivers make up a large part of all drink-driving crashes in New Zealand (NZTA Crash Analysis System). Over 40% of all drink-driving crashes involve drunk drivers under the age of 24 years. In all fatal or serious injury-related crashes in 2009–2011:

- 82% of the drinking drivers in those crashes are male
- 31% of all drinking drivers in those crashes, and 34% of the young drivers, are Maori
- 18% of all drinking drivers in crashes are aged 15–19, another 23% are 20–24

From audience interviews, and concept testing, undertaken as part of the qualitative research in New Zealand's advertising programme, we learned that these young men are good people who make bad choices. They don't set out to drive drunk, they just don't plan ahead. A few beers with the lads can easily morph into a bigger night, poor judgement and fewer options to get home. While the consequences of driving drunk are well-known, it's also widely believed that if you drive drunk, it's likely you'll get away with it. This belief is reinforced by the times they did 'slip up' and got away with it. They lived to tell the tale, which has since become a 'success' story they share with their mates.

The insights uncovered from young Maori males defined the solution that was needed. For them, there is a key barrier that would hold them back from stopping a mate from driving drunk – the fear of killing the mood and feeling like a 'dick' in front of their mates. Consequently the aim was to break through this barrier, offering them a mechanism which gave them the guts to speak up.

The target group doesn't want to hear a message from the Government. They are used to seeing hard-hitting ads about the consequences of drink-driving and the "bloody idiot" message had lost a lot of its original impact.

Something new was required – something that acknowledged their problem but didn't tell them what to do. It was important to be upfront and honest with them and not try to disguise the message.

The use of humour was the key to breaking through the barrier of feeling too awkward to speak up, and a positive slant on the drink-driving message meant the characters were portrayed in an aspirational way. An important goal was to give these guys the tools and catchphrases that could help them speak up, and to create an entertainment piece that they would want to share.

In *Ghost Chips*, a TV advertisement was produced that achieved all of these goals. The campaign was designed to be led by a strong television campaign and to be supported predominantly through radio, outdoor, and moment-of-truth advertising such as in-pub advertising.

The performance of NZTA advertisements is monitored by means of a continuous telephone and on-line survey of New Zealand residents aged 16 – 54 years, with approximately 2,800 interviews per year or on average 55 interviews per week (NZTA, 2012). *Ghost Chips* is still a young campaign but is delivering excellent advertising performance:

- 53% free recall with males 16–29yrs
- 99% free and prompted recall with the total sample
- 60% relevance

Social media was an unintentional channel for this campaign. *Ghost Chips* was a powerful story with strong, engaging content and it became so much more than just a television campaign. After its launch the advertisement was placed on the NZTA website for reference. All NZTA television advertisements are housed on Youtube and accessed via the NZTA website¹. Over 150 Facebook pages were created by independent viewers and users; a music video by a Kiwi rap group was produced; there were ghost chip TradeMe auctions; T-shirts produced by commercial organisations; merchandise created; rugby Sevens costumes etc. People even used the ad as part of their own Facebook pages and promotions.

¹ <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/about/advertising/index.html>

The initial fear was that this attention and use of the images and catch-phrases would dilute the core message of the campaign – that an online audience might distort, interfere, or mock the campaign and damage the core message. On the other hand one of our key principles is to invite the target groups awareness, ownership and enforcement of the problem. We made the decision to not attempt to control the distribution of the advertising and aspects of it.

Ultimately it was this ‘letting go’ of the campaign that helped it become truly effective. Within the first two weeks the campaign had over 1.5 million hits on Youtube, but because people started to pull the story apart and use individual aspects of it, conversation and behaviour triggers were alive. The story gave the audience a way to talk about drink-driving that was no longer awkward.

Compelling advertising such as *Ghost Chips* can take off in the social media world without committing any funding to it at all. The key to this sort of unanticipated ‘viral’ success has everything to do with the content of the ad, and the relevance of that content – it must be engaging for the specific audience being targeted. Thorough preparation and testing are a big part in achieving this, but so too is the willingness to allow the ‘magic’ to happen.

The viral success of the campaign also required us to allocate a person to monitor and respond to the social content and new Facebook pages, and support it with information and new material where necessary.

2.2. Drug-impaired driving

Driving under the influence of drugs is common and widespread, yet only one in 10 New Zealanders perceive it to be an issue. This is well behind drink driving in terms of public concern.

It is a complex issue with multiple substances (both legal and illicit) and different effects on driving. The audience is also potentially very broad and research into key target groups is limited. Unlike drink driving, safe limits cannot be established and it is difficult to enforce.

In comparison to drink driving, less is known about the extent of drugged driving in New Zealand and the impact it has on road safety. Evidence suggests that drugs may be a bigger factor in crashes than reported. In official crash statistics (NZTA Crash Analysis System), approximately 35, or

2% , of reported fatal and serious injury crashes each year (2008 –2011) had “driver with drugs suspected or proven” as a probable contributing cause.

However, results of a study of the blood of deceased drivers (Poulsen, 2010) show a number of trends that are of concern to road safety:

- 48 percent of drivers had used alcohol and/or drugs
- 30 percent of drivers had used cannabis with or without alcohol or other drugs
- 18 percent of drivers used alcohol with another drug(s)
- 14 percent had used drugs other than alcohol or cannabis.

This advertising campaign targeted drugged drivers and people who know them and socialise with them – friends and family who choose to 'turn a blind eye' when someone ignores their prescription drug warning or smokes a joint and then gets behind the wheel.

The objective of this campaign was to capture the attention and intrigue of the audience to evoke the conversation and debate around the issue of driving on drugs. To achieve this, a campaign was produced that captured passengers' real reactions when they perceived their driver is driving while on drugs. In doing this the aim was to spark that intrigue and ensure that the audience understood the ads were real, controlled scenarios, and that the drivers are actors, not taxi drivers or any other drivers.

The strategy with this campaign was specifically to use social media as the lead media channel and to support it with lower levels of traditional media such as television. The key media channels utilised included YouTube; web forums; online ads; a Facebook page; and a stationary digital billboard in a public pedestrian location.

Through all of these channels the audience was able to interact, post comments and opinions, vote on latest poll questions and see live results. The 'national poll' ran for six weeks and gauged how New Zealanders felt about drug driving in real time. Each week posed a different question, inviting the public to feedback what they thought with a simple YES or NO vote. 'U' TV, Z Service Stations and street posters will also be used for the polling component of the campaign.

Each aspect of the campaign was closely monitored to gauge public reactions and news media interest. Ongoing monitoring was critical to inform the next stage of the programme.

Results

Six poll questions were asked across the initial campaign period [six weeks]. These were designed to stimulate conversation – not as a statistic gathering exercise.

Question	Yes	No
Drug driving. Do you think it's a problem?	56% (2,195)	44% (1,754)
Do you think drugs make you a better driver?	17% (3,425)	83% (16,782)
Is it safe to smoke marijuana and then drive?	32% (5,520)	68% (11,692)
Have you driven on prescription medication that recommended you shouldn't?	26% (1,507)	74% (4,184)
Is it safe to drive home after a night out on E?	25% (1060)	75% (3150)
Are Kiwis too "she'll be right" about drug driving?	74% (6238)	26% (2166)

The campaign generated over 60,000 votes across the polling options, with thousands of comments through various social media channels. The reach on Facebook peaked at over 689,000 people. There were clear clashes of opinion on many issues that were raised, and certainly people were aware that driving on drugs was an issue.

The truly engaged audience was more youthful than the general population. We had more success getting people to vocalise their support for some forms of drugs [i.e. marijuana] and driving than in opposing it in detail – while 68% of people expressed the opinion that being stoned and driving is unsafe in our poll, nearly 80% of more detailed comments expressed the opposite view that it is ok.

In general, on either side of the debate we found that people are reasonably blasé with regards to drugs and driving. Very few people were sufficiently concerned to suggest behaviours should change or action should be taken.

Insights

The results revealed varied opinions which extended to the extreme of both ends of the spectrum. Conversations became in-depth and reasoned, and consequently we were able to learn a lot about our audience.

Driving on marijuana is a recreation

Marijuana users consider their behaviour as a recreation, and getting stoned and driving, or getting stoned while driving, is a recreation unto itself. In short, driving while stoned is seen as fun, not simply a consequence of smoking and then needing to get from A to B. Consequently, targeting stoned driving is not simply seen, by those who do it, as merely targeting an unsafe behaviour, but as prohibiting their recreation.

Perception: Everyone else is the problem

As with drink driving and speeding, it is a perception that other people are the ones who are the problem. The typical feeling is that the user knows how they react to a drug and are under control. They trust their mates driving while under the influence of marijuana, because they know how they react, but they believe others might be less reliable.

Perception: There is always something worse

Most of the discussion was around marijuana being perfectly safe, and either suggesting alcohol is worse, or that “real” drugs like P etc are the dangerous drugs to combine with driving.

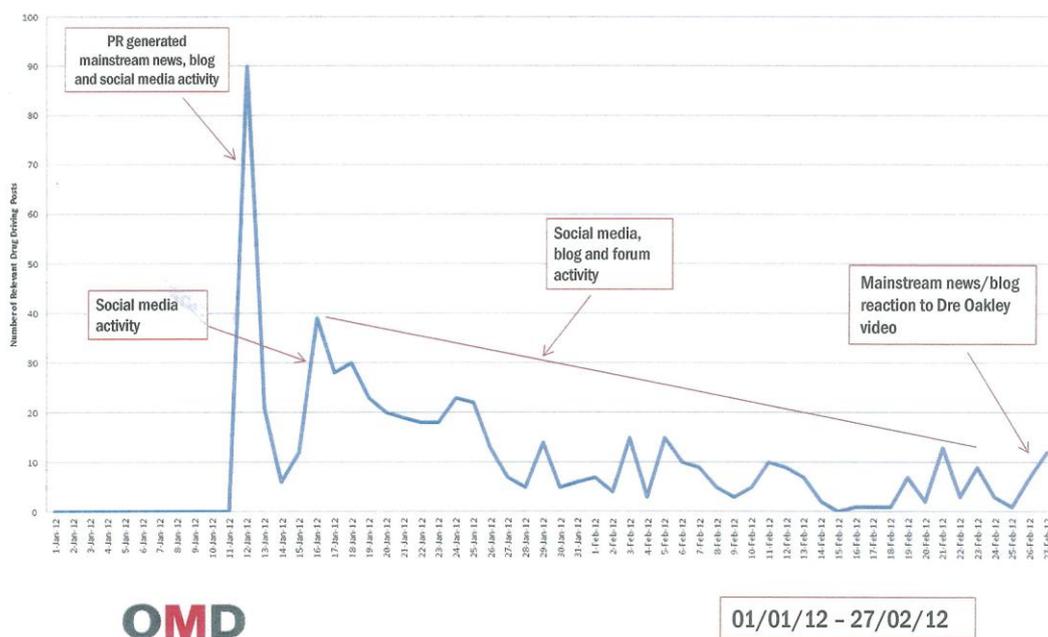
Perception: Cracking down on drug driving will worsen drink driving

Due to anecdotal feedback there is fairly persuasive belief that cracking down on drug driving will increase drink driving on the roads, and drink driving is perceived to be more dangerous than driving stoned.

Figure 1 shows that the engagement with social media during phase one of the drugs-driving campaign peaked

- with relevant targeted advertising
- or when relevant mainstream news articles go to air
- or a particular post evokes a reaction.

Figure 1. Social media activity in response to drug-driving campaign



The drug-driving campaign had a paid television component and a paid social media component.

The television commitment was \$415,000, and this delivered 1+ reach of 88%, and 20% unprompted recall with the target audience [all people 18–49 years].

The social media commitment was \$275,000, and this achieved 17,000 engaged people on Facebook; more than 60,000 votes across the polling options; and 259,000 actively viewed videos of the ads.

Figure 2 is a typical example of how television weight, expressed as targeted audience rating points [TARPs] generates recall within the target audience for road safety advertising. As the recall begins to fade further TARPs revive recall.

Figure 2. Example of audience recall (%) vs weekly TV exposure (TARPs)

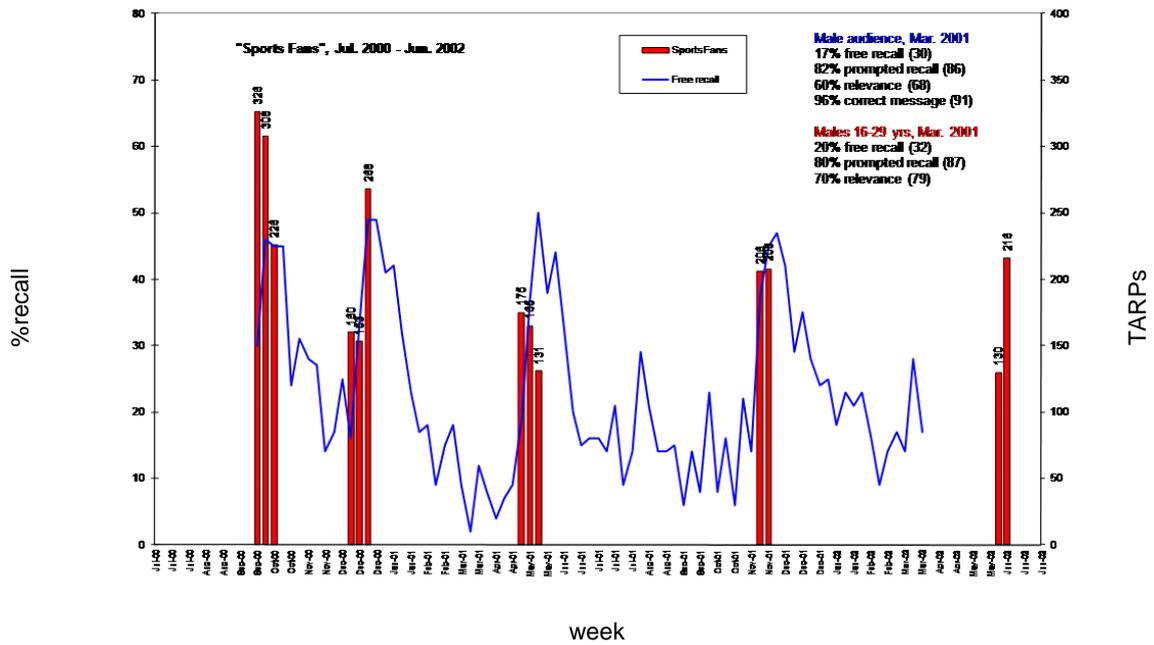
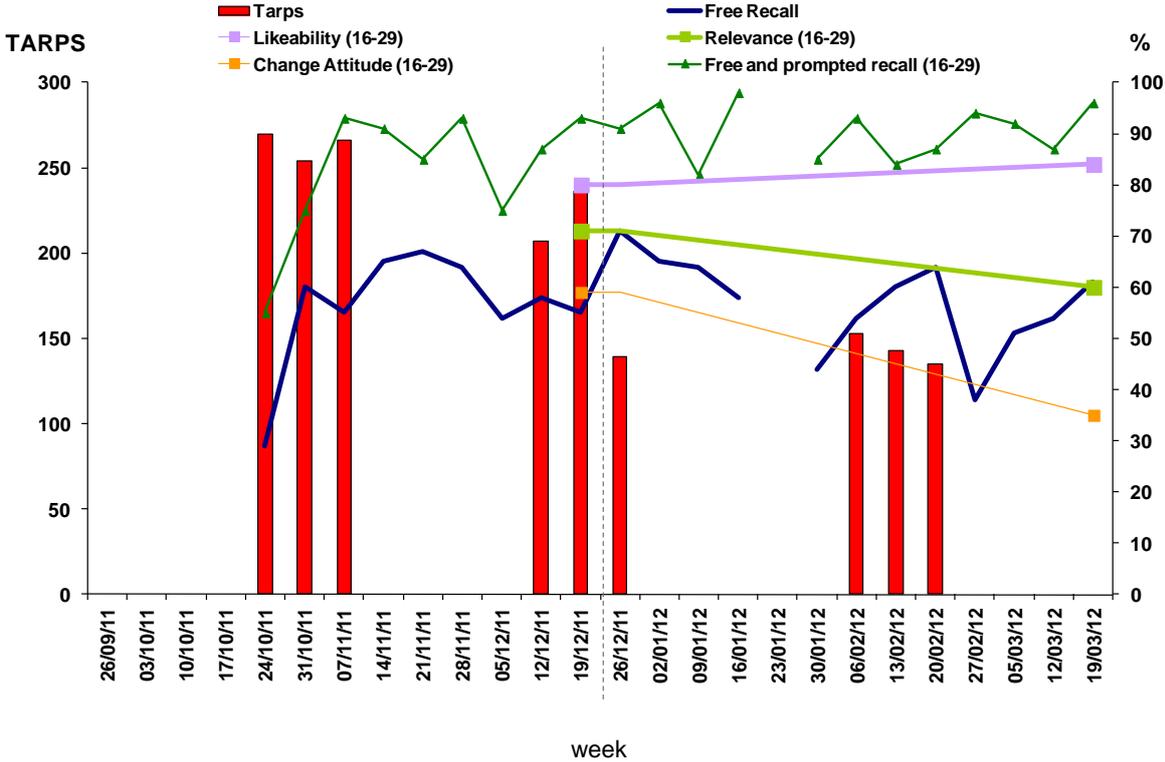


Figure 3 outlines the first three flights of *Ghost Chips*. Unlike most road safety advertisements the recall does not drop away to the same extent between television flights. This effect is potentially linked to the fact that this campaign became so popular through social media that it continued to have a strong presence across its audience when it was not on television, thereby maintaining recall of around 50%.

Figure 3. Audience recall (%) vs TV exposure, Ghost Chips



2.3. Summary

The *Ghost Chips* campaign received unanticipated additional value through uptake via social media, while social media was used in a planned fashion with the drug-driving campaign, delivering outstanding audience participation.

Social media can work just as effectively as traditional forms of media, however it is essential to be clear about what you are trying to achieve with the advertising and to strategically utilise the most appropriate channels to achieve that objective. It will not always be an appropriate media channel for the campaign audience or objectives.

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