Changing Attitudes to Vehicle Safety in Australia

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Car safety – some history

- Car manufacturers since the 1930s worked to build safer cars.
- Ralph Nadar (1965-blamed manufacturers for ignoring safety).
- Australia made the wearing of seat belts for drivers and front seat passengers compulsory in 1970. A consumer debate broke out about “people’s right to kill themselves”!
- By the early 1990s there was concern that new cars in Australia were less safe than cars sold in the USA.
Car safety advertising – then

• Safety increased in ranking as a primary advertising message
  – 8th in 1981-82
  – 5th in 1992-93 (ANCAP commenced)
  – 4th in 1993-94

• But, safety as a selling message was only used in 19.2% of advertisements in 1993-94.

• The main messages were performance, speed, racing, power and technology.

• Safety features promoted were braking systems, control/handling, airbag, engineering/crashworthiness.
Early consumer views from polling

1993

- Safety features a consideration for 20% of new car buyers but only 3% consider safety as the main priority. (FORS 1993)

- Main factors for new car buyers were reliability (59%), fuel economy (94%) and safety features (49%); ahead of performance (22%). (AAA 1993)
Attitudes to safer cars-then 1996

- Motorists wanted to know more about crashworthiness.
- Only a few were aware of impact absorption features.
- Research reported majority views that; “Cars that crumple are ‘made of plastic’ and not as safe as older, solid cars.”
- Awareness that new vehicles were crash tested to assess the risk of injury to occupants was extremely high (90%) although:
  - only 14% claimed to have seen brochures relating to crash tests
  - only 36% of that group had used the brochure
Introducing safety – then

1996

• AAA called on the Federal Government to have \textit{airbags exempted from sales tax} (following precedent set earlier for seat belt exemption).

• AAA estimated a \textit{15\% reduction} in road trauma.

• This submission was unsuccessful but the Government did join with ANCAP in a cooperative project to compare crash test results of cars with and without airbags.
Attitudes to car safety features – then 1997

- Continuing misconceptions about what made a car safe.

- 2/3 of motorists mentioned **airbags** and **seat belts** as the top **safety features** however airbags were misunderstood:
  - <50% wanted one in their next car
  - 20% wanted one “a great deal”
  - **40% did not want one at all!**

- Airbag credibility had been undermined by a series of bad news stories from the USA.

- Crumple zones were only recognised as a safety feature by 13% of respondents.
Industry view – then

- From the beginning, manufacturers and importers as a group set out to **discredit ANCAP testing** despite the obvious benefits to consumers.

- This meant selling the ‘safer vehicles’ message was **not even supported by those who made the safe cars** (at least when presenting as a group through the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries).

“The FCAI believes that ANCAP ratings do not meet these criteria and are therefore potentially misleading to consumers.”

FCAI Chief Executive 2001-2003
 Industry breakthrough

• Late 2001 saw a **breakthrough in manufacturer recognition** of ANCAP tests.

• First of many **5 star** ANCAP safety ratings achieved:
  – Renault
  – Mercedes-Benz
  – Saab
  – Subaru

• Renault Laguna and Subaru Forester proudly exhibited the ANCAP logo at the Melbourne Motor Show (February 2002).

• First 5 star ANCAP rated Australian car – **2008 Ford Falcon**.
“The huge investment being made by manufacturers in vehicle safety technology has assisted in cutting the number of road fatalities.”

“Almost 92% of new cars sold in Australia during 2011 were rated 4 or 5 star by ANCAP.”

“FCAI is also working with ANCAP on the rollout of its safety road map.”

FCAI Chief Executive 2012
Summary of Key Trends:

- The mean rating of concern about road and car safety has fallen from 6.3 in 1995 to 5.6 in 1999 and 5.5 in 2003. While the mean rating has dropped, one-third remains "extremely concerned".

- Those most concerned about safety are women, especially those with children.

AAA National Survey of Motorists' Attitudes, 2003
Importance of Safety in Vehicle Choice 2003

Rating of Importance: Among Car Owners

Summary of Key Results:

- 91% of motorists report that they drive their "own" car: 35% bought it new, and 56% second hand.
- The mean rating of importance of safety in their choice of car is 5.5.
- Safety is more important in vehicle choice to women, especially mothers, and those with newer cars.

AAA National Survey of Motorists’ Attitudes, 2003
Car Crashworthiness  
Trends 1997-2004

What helps to make a car safe in a crash? (open-ended question)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety features. Airbags. Seat belts.</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accident prevention features. ABS brakes. Good tyres. Road handling. Roadworthy.</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong body. Sturdiness. Made of strong material. Bigger car safer.</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact absorption. Crumple zone.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make, design</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcing bars</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motorists' Agenda Trends 2000-2005

Motorists' Main Unprompted Issues in 2005

- Other drivers' behaviour: 48%
- Condition of roads: 24%
- Safety, Accidents: 24%
- Motoring costs: 20%
- Traffic congestion: 17%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Other drivers' behaviour</th>
<th>Condition of roads</th>
<th>Safety, Accidents</th>
<th>Motoring costs</th>
<th>Traffic congestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AAA National Survey of Motorists’ Attitudes, 2005

ANCAP
Crash testing for safety
Consumers in the showroom

2006

• General Motors Holden introduced a new model *Barina*.

• The new model scored only **2 stars** compared to **4 stars** for the previous model.

• *Sales dropped* from 18% of the market segment to 8%.

• This issue was not limited to Australia – Euro NCAP’s test results were similar.
Real recognition & results

GM Holden chairman and managing director revealed that he was "concerned" by the bad publicity surrounding the GM Daewoo-sourced Barina’s NCAP performance.

He said the Australian results – which confirmed a Euro NCAP rating conducted in February – had come as a "surprise" to his technical staff and that Holden engineers were now working with Australian NCAP to examine discrepancies between the public test and the company’s own (confidential) internal results.

Nevertheless, he conceded that the poor crash-test publicity the Barina attracted last month when the Australian NCAP results were released had negatively impacted on sales.

GoAuto, June 2006
ANCAP labeling & awareness

- ANCAP encouraged voluntary labeling at dealers
  - Subaru promoted 5 star fleet (2008)
  - Stakeholders assisted dealers to display labels in WA and SA (2008-present)

- Awareness of “BEWARE OF CARS UNDER FOUR STARS” rose from 8% (August 2011) to 38% (December 2011) - (SA).
2011

- Commonwealth Government introduces mandatory requirement for **5 star passenger vehicles** in its fleet and **4 star requirement for light commercial vehicles** announced to take effect from 1 July 2012.

- **92%** of passenger vehicles sold in Australia are rated 4 stars or higher.

- **62%** of these have been awarded the **maximum 5 star rating**.
Attitudes to car safety – now 2012

- Consumers ranking safety as equal first priority (with price).
Attitudes to car safety – now
2012

- 1 in 4 consumers ranking safety as their **first priority**.
  (cf 1 in 5 as a consideration and 1 in 33 as a main priority in 1993)
Recognition of ANCAP – now 2012

• Awareness of ANCAP has risen to 64% of new car buyers – a significant improvement on the 2010 result of 46% and 30% in 2007.
Today

- **Increased visibility of ANCAP logo** in print and TV advertising by manufacturers.

- Consumer openness to receive safety information via manufacturer websites and dealerships.

- Lack of concern for safety by some **commercial customers** – not willing to pay more for additional safety features or a safer vehicle.
Lessons learned for ANCAP

- Credibility and consistency and is essential for ANCAP messages.
- Consumers were ‘turned off’ airbags, following bad international press.
- Consumers were ‘turned off’ manufacturers who downgraded safety specifications.
- Consumers want positive messages of car safety performance to reinforce their purchasing decision.
- Fleet purchasing decisions will deliver rapid new car safety improvements by manufacturers.
Safer Drivers in Safer Cars on Safer Roads.

ancap.com.au