

Applying the principles of behaviour change to road safety in South Australia

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Abstract

Since 2008 Colmar Brunton and the Motor Accident Commission have been using the trans theoretical model of behaviour change as the basis for campaign development in relation to road safety in South Australia.

The research program commenced with an intensive qualitative and quantitative research stage. The subsequent development of each campaign uses the information found in this exploratory research as a base and involves concept testing to develop specific campaign ideas. Ongoing monthly tracking enables evaluation of campaign outcomes, both in terms of awareness and progress within the context of the behaviour change model.

For this presentation we will review a case study using the Regional Safety Campaign “Mateamorphosis”. The presentation will tell the story of the problem, the research, the solution, the development and testing of the creative and the subsequent behavioural impact on regional South Australian drivers.

This case study was shortlisted for the Global Research Effectiveness Awards at the 2012 ESOMAR World Congress in Atlanta.

Keywords

Behaviour change, Research, Regional drivers, Campaign development

Introduction

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The project is an excellent example of how to incorporate research findings into every stage of campaign development and evaluation and of maximising the value of research.

In 2008 a significant research program was launched to develop campaigns that result in behaviour change and ultimately reduce the number of deaths and injuries on South Australian roads. The aims and objectives of this project were to:

- Understand the audiences according to the model;
- Identify the benefits, costs, influence of others and self-efficacy issues associated with each of the targeted unsafe driving behaviours;
- Develop communication campaigns that identify credible and desirable alternatives and address myths;
- Monitor incidences of self-reported unsafe driving behaviours over time;
- Assess awareness and impact of the campaigns on the target audiences;
- Track any movements in the behaviour change profile of the driving population in relation to targeted unsafe driving behaviours;
- Set benchmarks and monitor against past performance for behavioural impact of advertising.

The underlying hypothesis for this research is that driver behaviour can be changed for the better to promote active steps that lead to safer driving; thus achieving all the social and financial benefits associated with low road trauma. The objective is to identify messages, strategies and mechanisms of influence that are targeted at the different stages of behaviour (each of which are likely to be different, albeit complementary).

Methodology

Application of the model commenced with an extensive developmental research stage. Initial qualitative research included two-hour depth interviews with 116 people across a range of unsafe behaviours. Importantly interviews were also conducted with those who used to do the unsafe behaviour but who have since changed their behaviour. The depth interviews included projective techniques and story-telling to investigate the benefits and costs of undertaking the unsafe behaviour, identify the viable alternative safe behaviours and the relevant benefits and costs and to look at how people who do the unsafe behaviours view themselves and how they view those who do the alternative behaviours.

Subsequent to this intensive qualitative stage, a large scale quantitative study was undertaken to profile people based on their stage of behaviour within the Behaviour Change Model and quantify the most credible and important benefits of doing the safe behaviour. All of this information was then fed into the marketing plans to develop campaigns that focused on promoting the benefits of the alternative safe behaviour.

Often MAC will identify a key target group or behaviour based on road accident data and trends. Hence, in 2009 MAC determined the need for a regionally focused campaign based on the relatively high incidence of road trauma occurring among regional drivers. 43 depth interviews were conducted across 13 regional and rural South Australian locations in February and April

2010. Interviews were conducted with current and reformed drink drivers, drug drivers, fatigue drivers, seatbelt non-users and speeders.

From this research a series of propositions were developed in the form of mood boards which were then tested with younger and older regional drivers in four online focus groups.

The final concepts were then tested among regional drivers, both younger and older drivers, using an online focus group approach. The resulting campaign was based on response to the concepts and incorporated feedback from the participants in terms of visual standout, appropriateness of terms and clarity of purpose.

Another finding from the developmental research which fed directly into campaign development was that rather than focusing on a specific behaviour such as drink driving or speeding, the campaign should have a broader focus to acknowledge the variety of issues that can contribute to road safety issues for regional drivers. Hence, the resulting campaign covers three of the key driving issues that contribute to road trauma for regional drivers: wearing seatbelts, drink driving and speeding. The overall tagline of the campaign is broad and can reference any form of unsafe driving. This was unique in the area of road safety in that an overall change in attitude was encouraged over the traditional, and somewhat artificial, method of quarantining and targeting of one specific, behavioural variable.

Extensive monthly tracking is undertaken using CATI. Minimum monthly samples of 200 are collected for each target group. Reporting is provided monthly and quarterly as well as campaign-specific reports being provided as the campaigns run.

Results

The regular tracking of behavioural impact undertaken by MAC showed high post-launch awareness of the campaign among young males, and in subsequent months showed a significant improvement in driver behaviour and attitudes among regional drivers for the three target behaviours of wearing seatbelts, not speeding and not drink driving.

Analysis of road trauma statistics for the year the campaign launched showed a 16% reduction in deaths and a 12% reduction in serious injuries. It is unwise to claim that the campaign was the sole cause of the falls, but we believe it made a substantial contribution.

Discussion

The research performed for MAC enables them to understand the different audiences involved in road safety as well as target groups that are of specific interest to MAC because of their likelihood to be involved in road safety accidents and incidents. The research gives MAC insights into what proportions within each of these target groups are within each stage of the behaviour change model. These groups are then tracked to monitor change.

The research provides an integral foundation to the development of campaign direction and to the final content. The influence of the research happens at various stages throughout the creative

process and MAC, the creative agency and the research agency work closely together to formulate the final outcome.

The use of this approach has completely changed the nature of communications from MAC in relation to road safety. This impact is most evident in the regional and youth campaigns released in 2011. Both of these campaigns use a humorous approach to road safety and demonstrate a very different tone from traditional, crash/ consequence based road safety messages. Other examples of this very different approach can be seen in the 2009 drink driving campaign which focused on the positives of using alternatives to driving rather than the potential consequences of drink driving. Similarly, the drug driving campaign “Why trust yourself” uses verbatim excuses for drug driving provided to researchers as part of the developmental research. The current fatigue driving campaign was the first to provide a specific positive behaviour to empower drivers to understand, define and avoid fatigue driving with the explicit instruction “rest every two hours when driving”.

Conclusion

We believe that this approach demonstrates how research is making fundamental and integral contributions to the development of road safety advertising campaigns in South Australia. This example sits within a broader program that provides constant input and monitoring across all targeted road safety behaviours in the state. The link between the research and the campaign outcomes can be seen across fatigue driving, drug driving, seatbelts and drink driving.

From this project we have learned that there are some unique challenges in applying social marketing in particular contexts. The specific example here of road safety raises the potential conflict between a serious issue with significant societal impact and the positive reinforcement of desired behaviours. Following the principles of social marketing and behavioural change required MAC to develop and launch some campaigns in this period that are very different from the traditional “road safety” approach which focuses almost entirely on the negative consequences of unsafe driving behaviours. We believe the results demonstrate how effective applying the principles of social marketing can be in the context of road safety behaviours.