

Dry Drivers and Mates Motels – Creating Social Change through Integrated Marketing Communications

Clare Murray, Kerrie Tregenza, Pam Palmer

Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads

Abstract

Drink driving remains a major problem on Queensland roads, accounting for one in five fatal crashes and one in ten serious casualty crashes. A survey of 3,000 Queenslanders found that those who admit to driving after drinking are more likely to be males, aged under 40, in particular 25-39 years¹. Offence and crash data shows that males account for almost eight in ten (79.4%) drink driving offences and 80% of drink driving serious casualties involved male drivers/riders.

This paper will detail the recent Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads strategy of education and engagement initiatives being used to reduce the incidence of drink driving, and bring about social change in this area of road safety.

Introduction

Road safety is a major issue in Queensland with the annual cost of road fatalities and injuries to the Queensland economy estimated to be \$5.4 billion. The emotional costs for the community are immeasurable.

Compounding the problem of the road toll, is the apparent community acceptance of human trauma resulting from road crashes. Complacency presents a real challenge for Queensland. As the state continues to grow, more people use the roads as part of their daily lives, but people are detached from the ever-present consequences of risky driver behaviour.

In 2014, the Queensland Government launched the Join the Drive to Save Lives Social Change Strategy (Join the Drive), a new approach in Australia incorporating Social Change theory into road safety campaigns. This theory suggests communities are more likely to succeed if they are empowered to develop a shared agenda and their own solutions, driven by cohesive values, behaviours and norms.

Drawing on this approach, the Join the Drive strategy is a multi-dimensional program incorporating marketing, advertising and education approaches, as well as communication and mass media campaigns.

The strategy breaks new ground in many ways. It draws together international road safety research with key elements of behavioural and social change theory. Other ground -breaking characteristics include:

- It is a repeatable and outcome-focused model - It increases ownership, engagement and action on road safety issues – and is constructed in a way that will help to make it self-sustaining.
- Community involvement is key and moves activity beyond the ‘marketing’ realm
- The program is holistic - a concerted effort in key areas from infrastructure improvements, vehicular safety, support and action from businesses, strategic and legislative support and direction from government, and importantly,

¹ *Risky Driving Behaviour*, Footprints Research, 2014

- Integration is key – multiple communication disciplines, audiences, channels, and operational activities

Drink Driving Campaigns

The Join the Drive strategy focuses on a number of road user behaviors, however a focus during 2014/15 was drink driving. Two mass media campaigns (“Mates Motel” and “Dry Driver”) were developed with the objectives of encouraging Queensland drivers to plan ahead and avoid drink driving, and to provide practical alternatives to drink driving. Longer term, as part of the overarching Join the Drive strategy, objectives include fewer motorists willing to risk drink driving and maintaining the social unacceptability of drink driving.

The Mates Motel campaign ran over the 2014/2015 Christmas/New Year period, and focused on the idea of providing alternative strategies to drinking and driving as represented by the concept of a ‘Mates Motel’. A second advertising burst coincided with the May long weekend.

The Dry Driver campaign ran over the 2015/2016 Christmas/New year period and focused on the idea of encouraging people to plan their transport needs before they start drinking by designating a ‘dry’ driver. Both campaigns incorporated TV, print, radio and outdoor advertising, whilst Mates Motel also included event specific sponsorship (Big Bash cricket and Brisbane Heat).

Post Campaign Results

A full campaign evaluation of Mates Motel was conducted, showing the campaign had a positive effect on drivers surveyed, including:

- 83% of respondents mentioning at least one of the Mates Motel campaign key messages, with very strong recall of the ‘stay at your Mates Motel rather than drinking and driving’
- 69% of those who had seen the Mates Motel campaign agreed they are more likely to plan ahead to avoid drinking and driving
- 62% of all respondents agreed they are more likely to ask if they can stay at a friend’s place to avoid drinking and driving
- Mates Motel website achieved over 26,000 hits over the initial 3 month period, with the campaign video reaching over 226,600 views via the campaign Facebook page

Initial evaluation results from Dry Driver are equally encouraging, with full campaign evaluation results to be available mid-2016.

Conclusion

The Join the Drive to Save Lives strategy has been a change of direction for the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, with the Queensland community being encouraged to challenge the acceptability of road trauma. The recent campaign approaches to the issue of drink driving has shown significant traction with the target audience. This paper will expand on the evaluation of both campaigns, as well as detail future directions for the wider Join the Drive strategy and the Queensland Government’s commitment to a long-term vision of zero deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

References

- Market Research Findings Post Campaign Evaluation: Mates Motel*, Footprints Market Research, 2015
- Risky Driving Behaviours*, Footprints Market Research, 2014