

Road safety advertising and social marketing

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Abstract

Traditional road safety advertising via media such as television, print media, radio and static roadside advertising is being overtaken by a transition to broader campaigns that include the internet, digital marketing and direct marketing. This paper discusses several examples of recent road safety advertising campaigns that have used novel approaches, including the Roads and Traffic Authority's anti-speeding public awareness campaign 'Speeding. No one thinks big of you' which featured Myspace webpages and specific internet advertising, the Roads and Traffic Authority's 'Pimp Our Ads' initiative, Land Transport NZ's 'Phone Legends' campaign using SMS messaging to deliver a road safety message to influence the decision of an individual to engage in a risky and illegal behaviour, and VicRoads 'YellowCard' campaign using video messaging to allow people to tell friends that they are disappointed with their dangerous driving. The evidence is that target populations will participate in interactive communications that are centred around safety messages.

Keywords

Advertising, Digital communication, Innovation, Internet, Messaging

Introduction

The advertising industry is in the middle of a digital revolution that is basically about the changing role of the internet. Not only is the world wide web moving from computer screens to mobile phone screens and from fixed cable connections to wireless, it is also moving from being a delivery channel to an interactive one [1]. Websites such as MySpace, YouTube and Facebook and the ever-increasing rise and use of blogs, allow immediate and sustained connection of individuals and online communities beyond defined urban, regional and national boundaries. These individuals and online communities want to be able to generate content as well as receive it, to parody content and to appropriate it. Increasingly, the acceptability of advertising content is reliant on how internet connected individuals and online communities want to receive such content, and in a form they choose and at a time when they choose [2].

In this paper, it is proposed that effective road safety advertising will need to address content through digital marketing, direct marketing, and perhaps even revisions of approaches to public relations and event management. This challenge, and the change of approach, can be seen in an increasing diversification

of traditional advertising firms to include specialist communication companies, as well as the increase in revenue from digital-based advertising as a share of clients' marketing expenditure. It is expected that as access and the user experience become faster, cheaper, easier and better, target groups will respond and participate more in a truly interactive digital environment.

The Roads and Traffic Authority's 'Speeding. No one thinks big of you' anti-speeding public awareness campaign

The Roads and Traffic Authority's 'Pinkie' advertisement – part of an anti-speeding public awareness campaign 'Speeding. No one thinks big of you' – is a significant Australian-based road safety advertising campaign that succeeds in the transition from traditional advertising delivered through traditional media such as television, print media and static roadside advertising, to a broader campaign that integrates a suite of approaches including internet and digital marketing [3, 4, 5, 6, 7]. The campaign included the Pinkie advertisement on television and static advertising (such as billboards, bus shelters and busbacks), the 'Slowdown Notes' advertisement in cinemas only, and an internet advertisement, 'Hectic' [8].

Speeding is the biggest road safety problem in New South Wales and young male drivers are significantly over represented in speed related crashes [6]. The Roads and Traffic Authority sought to use a new approach to make contact with a target audience that has been traditionally difficult to reach and to deliver an anti-speeding message that would have an impact on their attitudes, beliefs and motivate behaviour change. The Pinkie campaign, 'Speeding. No one thinks big of you' launched in June 2007 has not only broken through the youth barrier but has been embraced by popular youth culture. The Pinkie campaign has introduced a new paradigm into road safety marketing, providing an integrated road safety advertising campaign presence in the digital arena as well as through traditional media such as television, cinema and static advertising [8].

The use of Myspace webpages to support the Pinkie advertising campaign provides a ready example of the use of digital media. In a campaign element developed by Fox Interactive Media (a division of News Corporation and owner of MySpace), MySpace Australia provided the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) with free banner ads that linked directly to a new road safety space: www.myspace.com/rta slowdown. This site offered a forum for young people to share their concerns about

dangerous driving [9]. Within a day, more than a thousand hits were registered at the site, with more than 250 users placing comments. It appears that a benefit of the new campaign was to provide a forum for young people to discuss the issues associated with risky and dangerous driving, as opposed to traditional advertising campaigns which they ‘may or may not’ notice. Ferguson [9] noted comments by Rebekah Horne, General Manager, Fox Interactive Media:

It’s really provoked a lot of discussion. It comes back to this audience wanting to have a say rather than being spoken to. The thing it highlights to me is...there’s a lot of people in the youth demographic concerned about social issues like this and probably a stronger way to get the message out is this peer-to-peer approach.

Some visitors to the Roads and Traffic Authority's MySpace website posted their own modifications to the advertisements (see, e.g., Figure 1)



Figure 1. Modification of the Roads and Traffic Authority's ‘Speeding. No one thinks big of you’ campaign, appropriating a screenshot of a driver doing a burnout at a signalised traffic intersection from the television advertisement, with the addition of the RTA logo and a caption – Fully Sik Bro!!!

See website: www.myspace.com/rtaslowdown (image taken from Redshaw et al. 2008 [8])

While the response to use of Myspace webpages to support the Pinkie advertising campaign was positive, it must also be noted that the majority of comments were from young provisionally-licensed drivers who also took the opportunity to indicate their frustration over driving restrictions within the New South Wales graduated driver licensing system (including criticism of current restrictions as well as further restrictions being considered as part of a review of the system). The RTA did not make any statement regarding these comments.

The television and outdoor advertising versions of the Pinkie advertisements of the ‘Speeding. No one thinks big of you’ campaign were the subject of formal complaints to the Advertising Standards Bureau, an industry self-regulatory body in Australia [10]. The television component of the Pinkie advertisement was the subject of complaints to the Advertising Standards Bureau in 2007, and the outdoor advertising component of the Pinkie advertisement was the subject of

complaints to the Advertising Standards Bureau in 2008. These complaints were not upheld. The internet component (the ‘Hectic’ advertisement) and the cinema component (the ‘Slowdown Notes’ advertisement) of the ‘Speeding. No one thinks big of you’ campaign were not the subject of any formal complaints to the Advertising Standards Bureau or to other oversight agencies or organisations.

The Pinkie campaign has been the subject of studies relating to its effectiveness [see, e.g., 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17], including a systematic review of how anti-speeding advertisements are evaluated [18].

The Roads and Traffic Authority's online 'Pimp our ads' competition

New digital technologies also allow new means of interactive communication. In 2007, the RTA ran the ‘Pimp our ads’ competition with partners Toyota, 2DAY FM radio, MMM radio and Free2Go (a partnership between NRMA Motoring and Services and Subaru providing roadside assistance for young drivers, see www.befree2go.com.au). This online competition was inspired by the MTV television show ‘Pimp My Ride’, and was specifically designed to appeal to young drivers, especially those drivers holding provisional licences in New South Wales [8].

A website (pimpourads.com) was established and an online competition was designed to challenge young people to create posters reflecting the road safety issues they thought were the most relevant. The competition ran through an interactive website that provided the tools for creating, submitting and online sharing of posters with a road safety theme. Entries received—there were almost 8,000 entries received over a six week period—were published in a viewable gallery. Participants received an acknowledgement email which contained a web address link to their poster that they could then forward to friends, encouraging viewers to the website and more entrants to the competition. Viewers could also register their vote for the best entry.

Participants were given several practical tips to assist the development of their creative idea, including:

- Keep it simple.
- The 10 metre test: Limit your headline to as few words as possible. Remember, the best posters should get their message across when viewed from a distance. Try taking a few steps away from your computer screen and looking at your work. Are the words big enough to be read from a distance? Do the colours look good together? Is there anything you could improve?
- Is it original?
- What is the impact?
- Is it legible?
- Is it typo-free?

- The criteria used in judging the posters were outlined: 40% Words (Are they hard-hitting and meaningful?); 30% Visual appeal (How well applied are the graphics tools?); and 30% Originality (Have you cracked something no-one's done before?)

The winning entry was 'Should have crashed at a mate's' developed by Samantha Morris, a 23-year old undergraduate Honours student in Visual Communication Design at the University of Newcastle (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. The winning entry in the RTA's online 'Pimp our ads' competition 'Should have crashed at a mate's' by Samantha Morris. See website: pimpourads.com (image taken from Redshaw et al. 2008 [8])

Morris's poster shows a young man lying trapped under an overturned car, with the slogan 'Should have crashed at a mate's'. The judges were impressed with the clever use of language, and that the poster presented novice drivers with both the behavioural problem (unsafe driving due to impairment by fatigue, alcohol or drugs) and a simple behavioural solution (stay overnight at a friend's place rather than risk the unsafe driving) [19].

The winning poster was of such a high commercial standard that it went straight into production and was released as an outdoor poster campaign that was displayed across New South Wales using bus backs, outdoor advertising at bus stops, taxi backs, and in youth and street media. As cited in a report by the University of Newcastle [19, p22], the then New South Wales Minister for Roads, the Hon. Eric Roozendaal MLC, said 'The design was shown to groups of young drivers and was found to be so powerful it is ready to go exactly the way she designed it'.

Other commended entries from the Roads and Traffic Authority's 'Pimp our ads' competition are shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Commended entries in the RTA's online 'Pimp our ads' competition. See website: pimpourads.com (image taken from Redshaw et al. 2008 [8])

The Land Transport NZ 'Stop your mate driving drunk' SMS campaign

Other communications and information technology media are also being used to deliver road safety appeals. In New Zealand, for example, the government agency responsible for road safety, Land Transport NZ, ran an anti-drink driving campaign using advertising promoting anonymous SMS messaging to people whose friends thought they were likely to attempt to drive drunk. It was known that if a young male was drunk and

decided to drive home, his friends would be worried. But it was also known that his friends wouldn't actually say anything to stop him - in the world of young adult peer pressure, this is a very un-cool thing to do. What was needed was a way for friends to express their concerns anonymously [8].

This campaign allowed a direct marketing approach using communications technology to deliver a road safety message at an appropriate time and place to influence the decision of an individual as to whether he or she would engage in a risky and illegal behaviour.

Developed by advertising firm Clemenger BBDO, the campaign 'The Phone Legends' provided people with a tool to be able to send an anonymous telephone message to a friend or colleague to not drink and drive. Posters and bar coasters printed with the motto 'Stop your mate driving drunk' (see Figure 4) were placed in participating licensed premises. People could dial an automated messaging service, supply the mobile phone number of the friend or colleague who is likely to drink and drive, and choose from one of four fictitious voice messages that outline the possible consequences of driving drunk. The voice messages were convincing, allegedly from a plastic surgeon, a nurse, a hotline messaging service, and a home helper. The prospective drink driver then receives a voice message from that character on his mobile phone: a humorous yet timely reminder of the consequences of drink driving. The posters and bar coasters were placed in over 200 licensed premises in New Zealand, and more than 12,500 people made use of the service during the campaign period.



Figure 4. Poster and bar coasters developed for 'The Legends' element of the Land Transport NZ 'Stop your mate driving drunk' SMS campaign (image taken from Redshaw et al. 2008 [8])



Figure 5. Send a YellowCard at <http://yellowcard.tv/> (image taken from Redshaw et al. 2008 [8])

The 'YellowCard' campaign is an initiative of the Victorian government, but rather than following the traditional approach of using road safety agencies, safe driving groups, motorist organisations or police telling people how to drive, the 'YellowCard' campaign concept is designed to allow people to tell their friends that they are disappointed with their dangerous driving.

Discussion

Traditional road safety advertising via media such as television, print media, radio and static roadside advertising is being overtaken by a transition to broader campaigns that include the internet, digital marketing and direct marketing: the RTA's 'Speeding. No one thinks big of you' campaign, with its multiple advertising elements of 'Pinkie', 'Hectic', and 'Slowdown Notes' provides a good example of such evolving practice [5, 6] that has been subject to significant documentation and evaluation. The evidence is that the target populations will respond and participate, but the challenge is to harness the possibilities offered by these new approaches and to deliver effective and timely road safety messages.

The adoption of these new approaches is already occurring in New South Wales [8]. Following the success of online advertising and interactive road safety websites using YouTube and MySpace, in October 2008 the New South Wales government announced that government agencies were being instructed to get smarter in the way they inform the community about government activities and issue public safety and health warnings [20]. Agencies including the RTA (road safety), New South Wales Health (health promotion), and the WorkCover Authority of New South Wales (workplace safety), received a policy directive to use technology rather than traditional means

The Victorian 'YellowCard' campaign using video messaging to mobile phones about risky and dangerous driving

A similar campaign concept was launched in 2009 to enable young people in Victoria to send a yellow card (a device used

to advertise; this means more use of online advertising and less spending on radio, television and outdoor advertising in the delivering of public awareness campaigns. As well, the policy directive requires agencies to seek to share advertising development costs with other Australian jurisdictions where a generic campaign is possible, such as with road safety messaging. It must be noted, however, that while the possibilities offered by new technologies for advertising are to be utilised, a major underlying reason for this policy shift is budgetary—the costs associated with traditional advertising media are much more expensive than online advertising; indeed, another element of the policy directive requires government agencies to publish the cost of advertising campaigns [8].

Already, road safety agencies are using web-based services to promote road safety. To cite two current examples, in Victoria, the Transport Accident Commission publishes a regular email road toll alert and provides links to its main website (the TAC Safety website at www.tacsafety.com.au), while in Queensland, the Department of Transport and Main Roads uses the Here For Life email list to regularly deliver specific road safety messages (see hereforlife@tmr.qld.gov.au).

The rapid adoption and popularity of Facebook, Twitter, and even research-oriented social media such as LinkedIn and ResearchGate, serve to illustrate that the use of these new information technology and communications approaches is likely to increase in the future [21, 22; for an example of a recent analysis and proposal specifically relating to school bus safety, see 23, and for a discussion of the role of social media in disaster response, see 24]. Keegan [21] has provided a brief review of the implications. Already, television soaps are being adapted or routed for web broadcast, and series are being made specifically for internet delivery, including, as examples of this trend, web soaps such as MySpace's Quarterlife and Endemol's The Gap Year, and Chelsea OMG, a soap on the social network Bebo. These soaps are designed for audience interactivity, including intrusions into real lives with the option for viewers to become 'friends' of the stars. They also feature a radically shortened episode length (a full-length episode in this genre is three minutes). Not only is there a trend involving the routing of television through the internet, web television itself is developing rapidly with users creating their own programs and then uploading them to YouTube and vodpod, or moving to sites that provide users with their own global channel on mobile telephones and computers (see, e.g., sites such as Kyte, hulu.com, wi-fitv, magnify.net, and mogulus.com). In the United Kingdom, worldtv.com, when linked to the mobile channel Qik, enables a user to put video from the camera or a smartphone directly on to the user's own global television channel.

The scope for a new genre (or genres) arising from developments in information technology and communications is great, particularly as the capabilities of computer, digital camera and smartphone technologies continue to increase. In an informative review, Heaton [22] has argued that the internet is a new form of advertising that is developing its own methodology, separate from print and other electronic media

(television, cinema, etc.). For Heaton, there are no 'pages' in the internet, and the 'browser view' should be the central focus of design as the only thing that matters online is what the user sees at any given point in the browser window. The scrollbar is a crucial mechanism inherent to the internet, and, unlike the print medium, what is placed down the 'page' can remain relevant if information and advertisements are placed in adjacent locations in a manner that supports both contents. Thus, in an internet environment, every advertisement can, with appropriate design of the webpage, have the same market value regardless of its placement. Heaton argues that what matters for internet advertising is not placement but rather avoidance of clutter: a lack of clutter dramatically increases the effectiveness of the message. Another difference comes from the inherent availability of the internet at any time or day, which enables differential placement and pricings for advertisements. These concepts are already emerging in practice: for instance, Heaton cites a website selling advertisements by the hour on weeknights to movie studios who want to advertise and potentially increase business for new weekend releases [22].

New information technology and communications approaches to road safety advertising and social marketing are exciting and developing fields. For example, these technologies have the potential to enable further research into road safety for young people—an at-risk group for road trauma—and, when the safety determinants are better understood, should facilitate the implementation of new countermeasures during the school years and late adolescence and lead to a reduction in the road trauma incidence and involvement for young drivers and their passengers. These technologies, and the possibilities they offer for data tracking and collection, may enable the better testing of psychosocial influences on youth road safety behaviour, including, for example, the assessment of the relative strength of psychosocial influences within and across gender and ethnicity. Gender and ethnicity factors, and their effect on peer normative attitudes and behaviour, are very poorly understood currently (see, for example, the study reported by Andreeva, Reynolds, Buller, Chou and Yaroch [25] for an account of the influence of psychosocial factors in sun safety behaviours, another area of health risk affecting adolescents).

Concluding comments

The marketing of road safety has, in the past, relied on mass media advertising to highlight risk and illegal or inappropriate behaviour. The development of alternative digital media allows for reconsideration and the recasting of the marketing of road safety. Specific, targeted marketing can be undertaken to highlight the business case for investment in safety technologies [26, 27] at both an individual level [28] and at commercial fleet levels [29]. It seems that much can be learned from marketing initiatives in other areas. For example, it might be useful to use digital road safety marketing campaigns that focus on direct-to-consumer approaches that can support the adoption of what might be called simple 'private-sphere' behaviours that individuals can undertake to minimise risk or to increase

compliance [28]. Crompton and Kasser [30], in a discussion of environmental campaigning, have identified negative aspects and positive aspects of human identity that might serve as general starting points for exploring the importance of individual human identity in responding to social and health problems such as the safety of use of the road transport system. As derived from their analysis, three aspects of human identity that might be negatively associated with people's concern about road safety issues and with their motivation to adopt pro-safety behaviours are:

1. values and life goals that are self-enhancing, materialistic aims for possessions and status and which are known to be associated with negative attitudes and behaviours such as not using public transport and using more resources to support their lifestyles
2. a social identity that treats safety proponents, traffic enforcement officials etc. as out-group members and in denigrating ways
3. coping with anxiety and guilt induced by advertising that uses fear and threats related to illegal or risky behaviours by adopting an array of 'emotional management strategies' such as becoming apathetic about those behaviours, seeking pleasurable diversions, or denying their own complicity [30].

In contrast, three helpful aspects of human identity associated with more positive safety attitudes and behaviours might be:

1. values and goals that are intrinsic, and which might include prioritising the safety of one's family and peers
2. evincing a concern for the safety of members of the broader community (and thus showing behaviours that are consistent with such concern)
3. adopting active behaviours that reduce the likelihood that illegal and risky events will arise (sometimes referred to as 'mindfulness' or as resilience) [31].

The development of digital technologies creates the possibility of new communication strategies that might be more effective in fostering and achieving improved knowledge and understanding of risk and safety for all road user groups, and in promoting positive behaviour change towards safer road use. What is needed, however, is the sponsorship and development of a systematic program of exploration, documentation and evaluation of the use of the internet, digital technologies and direct marketing in road safety advertising and social marketing in order to support the exploitation of these new possibilities for innovation and intervention.

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What can we learn from recent evaluations of road safety mass media campaigns?

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Abstract

Mass media campaigns can play an important role in promoting road safety issues to a large proportion of the population. In order to understand what elements make a road safety mass media campaign effective and how we might enhance future campaigns, a review of the literature published during the last decade was conducted. Any general principles concerning effective mass media campaign design and development were identified within the literature. Following this, recent evaluations of road safety mass media campaigns were examined to determine whether campaigns were adopting these best practice principles and the quality of these evaluations was reviewed. A number of broad principles that can enhance the effectiveness of road safety mass media campaigns were identified. While campaign designers appear to be increasingly

adhering to these principles, there is still much room for improvement. Closer examination of the road safety campaigns revealed that few were subject to thorough scientific evaluation. It is suggested that evaluations may need to be based on 'before and after' comparison of behaviours or variables that can be objectively observed and are closely linked to safety.

Keywords

Campaign evaluation, Mass media, Road safety advertising, Threat appeal

Introduction

Mass media campaigns are used extensively as a means of promoting road safety issues. The use of mass media campaigns