

Development Department

Creative Development and Evaluation of the SRSC Young Driver Campaign 2005

mruk Ltd

The Scottish Executive commissioned mruk to assess the suitability of a proposed new advertising campaign designed to reduce the number of driving accidents among new, young drivers by increasing awareness of their vulnerability when driving. In February 2005 the SRSC launched a two-week campaign comprising of a 40-second radio advert, 180 outdoor panels, and 30 lenticular bus sides. mruk was subsequently commissioned to evaluate the campaign, test materials for future campaigns, and identify further areas for development.

Creative Development

- Young males were found to be over-confident when discussing their own driving ability. Young females were more cautious, recognising that they had to exercise restraint when driving due to inexperience. Males feared losing a limb through a driving accident, whilst females were more concerned with injuries that resulted in facial disfigurement. Lack of immediate understanding of an advert, or lack of personal empathy, results in the deflection / rejection of the key message. Young female drivers were generally more receptive to the aims of the campaign.
- Adverts that depicted activities with which young people could identify had the greatest potential motivational impact. Potential executions also need to communicate the key message clearly and avoid the use of analogies that require some thought to decipher. The message needs to be easily understood and personalised to ensure likelihood of acceptance – especially amongst young males who were more likely to try and deflect messages aimed at them.

Evaluation Research

- There was little spontaneous awareness of the current Young Driver Campaign. However, more than half recalled the poster when prompted with stimulus material. Young females and provisional drivers were more likely to be motivated by the campaign. Although there was no strong like or dislike of the poster and the message, there was little connection made between the person in the execution and their own driving, due to a lack of identification with both the person and the scenario amongst most respondents.
- There was little recall of the radio ad and, when prompted, many felt it was unrealistic, due to the inability of the script to prove the driver was at fault. In addition an authoritarian tone was identified, which resulted in ridicule and easy dismissal of the storyline and the message.
- The perceived key message from the proposed execution for future campaigns was general anti-speeding. However, the impact was lessened by the lack of personalisation. When exposed to examples of scarred faces, females easily associated with such injuries: for young males, however, the scarring was not serious enough to frighten them and, as the execution was aimed at women, it was easy to deflect the message.
- The current and proposed executions are not strong enough for young male drivers to absorb the message, as cause and effect are not clearly shown. To reduce deflection, the execution must depict people and activities to which young people can relate – using a young person's voice and showing serious injuries that have obviously been caused by careless driving. In addition, the financial and legal consequences of being in a car accident should be emphasised.

Background and Objectives

The Scottish Executive commissioned **mrnk** research to conduct a programme of research on behalf of the Scottish Road Safety Campaign (SRSC) to establish the suitability of a proposed new advertising campaign, designed to reduce the number of driving accidents among new, young drivers by increasing awareness of their vulnerability when driving. Once the campaign had ended, **mrnk** was commissioned to evaluate reaction to it, assess future campaigns, and identify any areas for development. These research findings summarise the creative development research and the subsequent evaluation.

Young / new drivers are disproportionately represented in road crashes and very vulnerable in the early part of their driving career. As many as one-in-five new drivers are involved in an accident in their first year, with the first six months being particularly hazardous.

A new advertising campaign was designed to try and reduce the number of driving accidents amongst this group.

Several creative options were developed and a need for independent research was identified to support the preparation of this new campaign.

After the first stage of the campaign had been launched, research was also necessary to evaluate the campaign. **mrnk** research was again commissioned to conduct this study.

The key objective of the Creative Development research was to examine the ability of the developed creative material to increase young drivers awareness of their vulnerability.

More specific objectives of the project were to:

- explore what each creative route under consideration was communicating
- explore the extent to which each route provided a relevant and motivating message amongst the target group
- consider the potential longevity of each creative route
- help identify further areas in which the campaign approach could be improved to deliver the campaign aims
- explore current perceptions and attitudes towards driving behaviour amongst new, young drivers

The overall aim of the Evaluation research was to evaluate the Young Driver Campaign with a number of specific objectives:

- to explore recall of the key messages of the campaign

- to explore reaction to the campaign
- to test materials currently being developed for future young driver campaigns
- to identify further areas in which the campaign approach could be developed

Methodology and Sample

Both research projects were conducted via a series of focus groups. The construction for these discussions took into account:

- Age
- Gender
- Attitude towards driving
- Location
- Driving experience

A total of ten group discussions were conducted for the Creative Development research and twelve during the Evaluation research. All discussions were conducted by a Senior Researcher from **mrnk** and tape-recorded for further analysis.

Main Findings – Creative Development Research

Attitudes Towards Driving

Overall, there was a distinct difference in attitudes observed between young male and female drivers. Although mainly evident amongst qualified drivers, it was also apparent (to some extent) amongst provisional licence holders.

Young males generally associated driving with power, speed and 'showing off' to their friends. They aspired to owning fast, powerful cars and were more likely to display annoyance at groups of other road users. Female drivers associated driving with freedom, and perceived passing their test as a natural progression in the process of entering adulthood.

Although a minority of female respondents shared their male counterparts' desire for fast, powerful cars, the majority of females aspired to owning 'lifestyle' cars (e.g. VW Beetle, VW Golf, BMW, Mini) and their main annoyances related to aggressive male driving behaviour.

Amongst male drivers, there was strong confidence in their driving ability and a belief that they were already good

drivers. Dangers were perceived to come from other road users, despite admitting they occasionally took risks themselves.

Young females were more reserved about their driving ability, acknowledging that they lacked experience. Overall, females with both full and provisional licences were more astute about the dangers that the road could present, and the need to be cautious and careful until they had sufficient driving experience.

Perceived Consequences of Irresponsible Driving

Young drivers generally displayed a sense of immortality in relation to driving. In addition, males were more likely to mention many of the legal consequences of irresponsible driving, such as higher insurance premiums, fines, re-sitting tests, or being banned from driving.

Amongst female respondents, however, there was a stronger emphasis on the personal impact of bad driving. They cited physical injuries such as disfigurement, broken bones, whiplash and a necessity to visit hospital (e.g. physiotherapy treatment) as the potential aftermath of having been a victim (or the cause) of an accident.

However, it was evident that all these potential outcomes were somewhat remote and not distinctly relevant to most respondents' lives, primarily due to a confidence in their own driving ability, and lack of personal experience of accident and death in such circumstances.

Evaluation of Creative Routes

All respondents were played prospective radio executions and shown poster executions from five alternative creative routes. The order in which the stimulus material was shown was rotated to ensure that all respondents were not exposed to the same executions in the same sequence (thus ensuring that there was no bias due to executions always being shown first, second, etc).

Route A

Route A focused on the principle that certain driving phrases may well be people's last words.

There was generally an awareness and appreciation of the quotes spoken by drivers in this route. However, due to the misunderstanding of the core message, the dull tone of voice, and the perception that it offered no new information, the majority of respondents rejected it. The idea of dying as a result of bad driving was too remote a concept to cause an emotional reaction amongst these young respondents, and thus they found it difficult to relate to this execution.

Route B

Route B's proposition depicted how easy it was to spot the difference between an infirm crash victim and other 18-year-olds, supported by posters and a radio ad depicting young people before and after a crash.

The radio execution received a mostly negative response. It was perceived to be unclear in its target audience and core message.

Opinions were positive regarding the poster's concept of showing a 'before and after' scenario due to its clarity and speed of communication.

Those executions portraying death were received negatively whilst those executions which featured the loss of a limb and facial scarring produced a more positive reaction. It was perceived to communicate the consequences of bad driving clearly, without the need to read the narrative for understanding. The core message was perceived to be 'this could happen to you', and both executions held a strong relevance due to the inclusion of sport and clubbing in the 'before' images with which respondents could identify.

Overall, these latter executions were felt to have a real emotional impact, thus eliciting engagement with the target audience (especially females).

Route C

Route C focused on the injuries sustained by young people who had recently passed their test, reinforcing that the first six months of driving are the most dangerous for this target group.

Although the radio script play on words initially appealed to respondents, once understood, the majority of respondents (and especially drivers) rejected this script.

There was also confusion regarding some of the executions on this route. Respondents were unsure what injury the young man in one image had sustained, and how he had come to suffer it. Overall this route was rejected.

Route D

Route D focused on communicating analogies between injuries sustained in accidents and damaged vehicles.

Overall, reactions to the radio script were mostly negative, with the majority of respondents finding it confusing and slightly 'over dramatic' in its tone. The posters held some appeal amongst males who appreciated the humour in the garage analogies, although females rejected the route outright, perceiving it to be aimed at males. In addition, it was felt to be too long, and the character's tone of voice dull and monotonous (although it was reiterated to respondents

that this was a demonstration radio script, and not the final version), thus lessening the potential shock impact of the injuries being described.

As with the radio script, the posters in this route held greater appeal amongst some males, primarily due to the perceived 'light-hearted' tone, their understanding of the garage analogies, and their discomfort with the prospect of losing a limb.

Route E

Route E's radio script started with the noise of young people getting into a car, talking to friends and turning on the radio as they pull away, with the music fading away to leave the sound of a heart monitor beeping and eventually flat-lining before the message was delivered. This script evoked the most powerful emotional response amongst the vast majority of respondents, engaging their attention and then shocking them with the sound of the heart monitor.

The music at the beginning was a key hook, grabbing respondents' attention unwittingly before revealing the core message. The majority of respondents, especially females, identified with in-car activities such as chatting to friends, playing / changing the radio / CD / Tape and generally not paying attention. Thus this scenario was familiar to them, drawing them into the execution before underlining that this can all change for the worse very quickly. The heart monitor sound at the end was felt to have a particularly chilling impact.

Evaluation of Proposed Support Materials

Another potential campaign support resource was a booklet aimed at drivers who have just passed their test, warning them of the dangers they face. It included a key ring made from the wreckage of a car involved in an accident, and in which a young driver was injured.

Although ultimately thought of as a gimmick, the booklet was felt to communicate the key message strongly; the majority agreed the inclusion of a strong, powerful image within would increase the likelihood of reading.

The majority of respondents, however, felt they were unlikely to use the key ring, predominantly because it was large and fairly 'ugly' in appearance, and did little to remind them to drive carefully.

In order to increase the likelihood of key ring usage, respondents suggested that perhaps it should contain a logo (e.g. a car manufacturer), the campaign strapline or some key facts, such as young driver accident statistics or tips for new drivers. It was important that the key ring was made

more attractive or contained information to draw the target audience's attention and increase the likelihood of usage.

Evaluation of Alternative Campaign Straplines

Six alternative straplines were tested with respondents, with *'Don't make your first six months your last'* holding the strongest appeal. The inclusion of the timescale was felt to make it clear who the advertising was targeting. In addition, it was felt to be relevant to *all* new drivers, not necessarily just young people, thus demonstrating a wider appeal beyond the target audience.

Conclusions – Creative Development Research

Overall, there were distinct gender differences in driving attitudes and behaviour between young males and females. The over-confidence in young males often means they deflect many of the core messages in the campaign routes. The campaign had greater potential to motivate consideration of driving ability amongst young females, who were generally more cautious, nervous about driving, and displayed a stronger fear of the dangers they face on the road.

Executions which portrayed limb loss or facial scarring appeared to be preferred because of fear of such injuries amongst the target audience.

The *'Heart Monitor'* radio script held the most appeal for the same reasons as the favoured poster executions. Respondents were drawn in by activities that were familiar to them (e.g. chatting to friends / changing radio stations / listening to music in the car), engaged their attention, and thus increased the likelihood of hearing and acting on the core message.

The strapline, *'Don't make your first six months your last'* was preferred above all other options. The inclusion of 'six months' was informative, and important in reinforcing that the advertising was aimed at new drivers.

Main Findings – Evaluation Of Campaign

Attitudes Towards Driving

All drivers believed that a lack of motorway driving tuition contributed to a lack of confidence amongst young people regarding driving on motorways. Driving on motorways was also the main concern of provisional drivers.

A number of fears regarding accidents were spontaneously mentioned by males, such as having to resit their test (practical or theory), being banned from driving, and increased insurance costs.

New female drivers tended to drive within speed limits, were scared of motorway driving, and were more likely to use the 'P' plate on their car.

For some young women, young driver accidents were commonplace amongst their peer group, and this had impacted upon their own driving behaviour. However, they were self-critical of their driving ability, acknowledged their inexperience, but were clear that they are in control and accepted that practice makes perfect.

Amongst new male drivers, an 'acceptable' level of speeding was prevalent. Loud music appears to be part of the driving 'experience' and they admit to 'showing off' when peers are in the car. However, driving behaviour is modified if a parent is a passenger.

Generally, male drivers had a confident attitude, with a '*won't happen to me*' bluster. In addition, most refused to use a 'P' plate as they felt it would draw attention to themselves and give a perception of weakness. Overall it was thought of as '*naff*'.

Most young male drivers and their friends had experienced at least 1-2 'bumps', without serious injury. Thus they believed they will not be involved in a serious accident.

Male provisional drivers obtained great enjoyment from their lessons, and felt they were improving constantly, but also refused to use a 'P' plate when they passed as they were scared of peer disapproval / derision and of becoming a target for road rage.

For provisional males, perception of passing was more to do with becoming a confident driver, playing loud music, and driving their friends around in a 'sporty' car. Although underlying feelings of nervousness were identified, bravado when driving is already leading to some carelessness during lessons.

Females also perceived their confidence growing as the number of lessons increased, but not at the same rate as males. They were more likely to be considering 'P' plates as they were less sure of their ability, and had a desire to ensure other road users were aware of them. They were still nervous during lessons and embarrassed about making driver errors.

Attitudes to Speeding

Young male drivers appeared to have 'socially acceptable' speeding levels, with speeding perceived not to be as

dangerous as drink / drug-driving. As they were confident in their own driving ability, they believed they could cope with higher speeds.

In addition, media messages regarding speeding were believed by this group to be authoritarian, judgemental, misinformed and lacking credibility as they emanated from an official source. It was felt that such sources lack understanding of driving conditions in the 21st century.

Many young male drivers knew the locations of speed cameras in their area and did little to reduce their speed levels (which was confirmed by past experiences). In addition, there was little evidence of the consequences of speeding. Few of their peers had been punished for similar behaviour and there was a lack of fatal / serious accidents amongst their peers (to their knowledge). Amongst many young male drivers, speeding was considered to be fine if it was kept to an 'acceptable' level (e.g., 40mph in 30mph limits, 80mph on motorways).

Evaluation of Current Campaign

There was a high awareness of a small number of previous 'driving' campaigns / initiatives. The main reasons given for recall included impact and shock.

There was little spontaneous recall of the current Young Driver Campaign, although we are aware that the overall campaign was relatively small in scale and the fieldwork was conducted three months after the end of the campaign. However, across all groups, around half recalled the poster when prompted with stimulus material. There was no recall of the bus-sides campaign in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Reactions to the current Young Driver poster varied, and were dependent on gender and level of driving experience. Females generally thought the poster worked well. Key messages were communicated clearly, interpreted easily, and most understood that new drivers were more likely to have an accident. The strapline was immediately eye-catching to this group as it posed a relevant and realistic potential outcome, and contributed to a serious tone of voice throughout each element of the communication.

The 'P' plate visual was responsible for clearly communicating that it was aimed at new drivers. However, as mentioned during the creative development research, some issues were raised about the credibility of this plate – especially amongst young male drivers.

The majority of males considered the poster to lack realism and, therefore, felt it was unsuccessful in communicating the relevant messages. This was mainly due to the lack of personalisation of the message. Although they acknowledged the impact of losing a limb (loss of freedom,

football etc), the visual used was only a leg (still driving) with no face to link the person to anyone with whom they could identify. The execution also failed to illustrate any activities common to their age group. In addition, there was no link shown between the cause of the crash and the injuries sustained, allowing young males especially to assume any crash may not have been the depicted person's fault. This deflection was also reinforced by the 'P' plate (which most males claimed they would never use), and the crashed car visual, as it was perceived to be 'girl's' car.

However, both male and female provisional drivers thought the poster impactful, strong and realistic, and the majority of females planned to use a 'P' plate as they want other drivers to know they are inexperienced. Thus the lack of confidence and inexperience in driving results in the message being easily taken on board.

Across all groups there was little recall of the radio advertisement apart from a minority of young female provisional drivers. Most understood the key message, but a number of elements were perceived to lack credibility.

In reality (it was stated) a young male would not ask a passenger prior to turning on music in the car, it would automatically be very loud when the ignition key was turned.

The short length of time between entering the car and the car being fast enough to crash was felt to be unrealistic, and there was no evidence that the accident was the young driver's fault.

Many young males made the comment that one-in-five having an accident also meant four-in-five have no accident – suggesting that the statistic was not powerful enough to resonate with them.

There was also a perception of an authoritarian / Scottish Executive tone of voice on a number of current TV / radio campaigns, which created an impression that the source fails to understand young people, resulting in ridicule and easy dismissal of the storyline and its message.

Reactions to Proposed Campaign

The next proposed stage of the campaign is a further execution within the same proposition only in this scenario it is a woman being viewed in her rear view mirror with facial injuries.

Initial reactions to this execution were held back by the 'drawing' visual which young people found difficult to visualise as a 'real' poster due to it lacking personalisation and realism. Overall, the main criticism was that the drawing was perceived to be someone who had been in a fight or a minor car crash, making it all too easy to deflect the

message. Again the use of the 'P' plate and the drawing of the crashed car instantly gave the sense of a 'cartoon crash' and reduced the credibility of the seriousness of the message. For many, spontaneous take-out was a more general anti-speeding message. However, the strapline provided the clearest link to young drivers in the first six months.

Overall, the impact of young drivers driving carelessly does not appear daunting from this execution, as there was no use of emotive words associated with dangerous / careless driving (e.g. death, disfigurement, loss of job, licence etc), and the consequences were not severe enough to warrant additional thought. In addition, as detailed in the creative development research, it didn't link to any of the activities associated with young people.

The execution was perceived to have a similar tone to the previous campaign - didactic, serious, authoritarian / parental - and targeted all drivers who have just passed their test, although the young driver message seemed recessive and easily deflected. When examples of scarred faces were put to groups, females associated easily, but the majority of young males did not feel it had any impact.

Visually, the advert – in its final form and with serious facial disfigurement - could succeed in attracting attention. However, if only the female visual is produced, only female drivers will absorb the message. If a male visual is used, however, males may also take the message on board – if the visual makes it clear that the disfigurement is serious and permanent.

Parents

All parents had taken their child out driving to supplement 'paid-for' lessons, increase practice time, and / or reduce the cost of lessons. In most cases, however, this was only after pressure from the teenager. Most parents found it an unpleasant experience and found it difficult to remain calm. They noticed gaps in their own knowledge (bad habits) and were terrified of their car being damaged.

Once their teenager had passed their test, parents tended to have basic rules when letting their children borrow the car, such as no smoking, no food, and filling up with petrol. The idea of a 'contract' between parent(s) and child regarding driving held little appeal as it was felt it would reduce / eliminate the element of trust between them regarding the child's driving behaviour. Parents were unaware of any bad / careless driving on the part of their children.

The radio execution was the only part of the campaign recalled by parents – after prompting. Initial reactions across both parent groups were that it was appealing, impactful, and a clear message was communicated. In

particular, for this group, the current 'leg' execution succeeded in attracting their attention and the main message was unambiguous, as they agreed that the first six months was the most vulnerable.

Therefore, they found the execution thought-provoking and dramatic.

Parents automatically stated that the target audience was new young drivers who had just passed their test. All believed their child would easily take on board the message from the campaign but, as their children were all careful drivers, it would just reinforce the need to drive safely, rather than make them modify their behaviour in some way. *"It's just what's needed to stop those boy racers"*.

The proposed 'scarred face' execution elicited similar responses. All felt that a severely scarred woman would do much to underline the seriousness of the issue to new young drivers. However, the majority felt that the example shown did not hold enough impact, as it was too soft, not shocking enough, and did not impact on driving ability. In addition, as it was only females who were portrayed, it would be easy for males to deflect. To ensure males take notice, parents felt the execution would have to be more personalised regarding the consequences for young males.

Older Drivers

All male older drivers acknowledged that, in the first year after passing their test, they were bad drivers due to over- or under-confidence, an inability to 'read the road' and a perception of immortality. However, all now considered themselves safe and careful drivers, due to their experience, confidence and increased road awareness.

There was no spontaneous awareness of the campaign amongst this group. There was a belief that more relevant injuries and activities would reduce deflection. They also thought that emphasising the financial penalties would have resonance, specifically with young males.

Conclusions

As uncovered in the creative development research, gender differences and variations in driving ability affect absorption of the key messages. The poster, however, has engaged many young drivers – especially females and those learning to drive (both male and female). It would appear that a lack of driving experience correlates with the likelihood of the execution having impact.

For many young males, however, the message has been easily deflected due to lack of personality in the poster and the injured party still being able to drive.

The radio execution clearly communicates the key message to all. However, a particular perceived parental /authoritarian tone of voice is being identified which is disliked by this young audience. In addition, the lack of a credible scenario reduces absorption of the key message.

Severe financial penalties or punishments for careless / reckless driving which are visible, and / or would result in peer group embarrassment may also affect future driving behaviour. This should be woven into any future campaigns to underline both the medical and financial implications of careless driving.

However, the proposed execution in its current form is not strong enough for the young male driver audience to absorb the message, due to the female character, the mild injuries, and the lack of any activities to which they can relate. In addition, the cause and effect must be more clearly visible.

The parental tone of the proposed execution will also allow young male drivers to deflect key messages. Therefore, a more friendly and personal tone is required. The 'P' plate also lacks credibility to many and thus adds to the authoritarian tone, although it helps to identify clearly the target audience.

Consequently, any proposed new execution, in order to appeal to the target audience, has to show severe injuries clearly caused through careless driving. In addition the injured party must be someone that the target audience – in particular young males – can both identify with and relate to.

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