

An Evaluation of Advertising Strategies for Anti-Hooning

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Abstract

Hooning or reckless driving accounts for numerous traffic fatalities each year. This exploratory paper evaluates eight advertising strategies previously used to degrees of success for anti-smoking, and empirically determines their likely effectiveness for anti-hooning in Australia. Drawing on tenets of social psychology, the results show that some strategies may apply to anti-hooning, while others may be ineffective. This paper highlights areas that social marketers can focus attention on to combat reckless driving behaviours on Australian roads. In particular, campaigns should target young drivers, highly susceptible to peer influence and who have a sense of invulnerability when behind the wheel.

Keywords: Hooning, social marketing, risk, advertising

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Introduction

Traffic fatalities and automobile accidents are a critical social problem and public safety issue in much of the western world (e.g., McKenna et al. 1991; Milnes, 2009). Analyses of these incidents reveal that many of them could be preventable by reducing high-risk anti-social road behaviour (Taubman - Ben-Ari et al., 2004; Dahlen et al., 2006). Therefore we as a society, and more specifically we as social marketers, should seek to proactively address this behaviour.

In Australia, incidents of “hooning” or reckless driving are a recurring issue in media and police reports. (e.g., see *The Advertiser*, 5 June 2009; Zed et al., 2009). The term hooning refers to a group of illegal driving acts, including street racing, excessive speeding, and burnouts (Gee Kee et al., 2007) that has been causally linked to multiple fatalities on Australian roads (Armstrong et al., 2006). Given the weight of anecdotal and statistical evidence, there is a need to increase the emphasis on countering hooning through effective social advertising campaigns, in similar ways other anti-social behaviours such as smoking have been challenged. Arguably hooning is equally as important, if not more so, than smoking as a preventable anti-social behaviour. Particularly as research shows that human factors explain significantly more variability in accident rates than vehicular or roadway factors (Dahlen et al, 2006), which implies that modifying behaviour on the roads could have a considerable impact on accident rates.

This exploratory study evaluates the degree to which social advertising strategies previously implemented for anti-smoking campaigns, could be applied to anti-hooning and to what extent these strategies may be successful in reducing the social impacts that hooning has on Australian society. Goldman and Glantz (1998) identified and ranked eight advertising strategies designed to prevent people from starting to, or persuading them to stop, smoking. The rationale this study draws on in comparing and contrasting its findings with the Goldman and Glantz, is that peoples’ propensity to smoke, a risky and anti-social behaviour, was able to be successfully modified by effective social advertising campaigns (McVey and Stapleton, 2000, 273). As hooning is similarly an undesirable, anti-social behaviour in Australia, the strategies in the anti-smoking advertisements may apply for combating anti-hooning. To this end, this study uses the five-point ranking system in the Goldman and Glantz study to compare a set of hypothesised rankings against those reported by an undergraduate Marketing class and those reported by Goldman and Glantz for anti-smoking.

Evaluation and Hypotheses

Using a focus group survey, Goldman and Glantz (1998) ranked eight advertising strategies for anti-smoking: industry manipulation, second-hand smoke, addiction, cessation, youth access, short-term effects, long-term health effects, and romantic rejection. In the sections below, we explain these strategies and hypothesise their potential effectiveness for anti-hooning. Annex I reports Goldman and Glantz’s ranks of these eight strategies for anti-smoking versus this paper’s hypothesised ranks for anti-hooning. Similar to Goldman and Glantz, we use a five-point scale anchored on highly not effective and high effective.

Industry Manipulation strategies seek to delegitimise industry by apportioning blame and responsibility on the industry for promoting and profiting from high risk or socially undesirable behaviour. Goldman and Glantz found that industry manipulation was one of the most effective

anti-smoking advertising strategies. By depicting the industry as predatory and profiting from the addictive, but supposedly unintended, nature of its products, these advertising campaigns were able to deglamorise smoking and pit public opinion against the smoking industry and smoking as a socially desirable behaviour.

Unlike with smoking, however, Australia has a strong car culture that ensures strong patriotic support for the automobile industry. Cars, particularly Ford and Holden, hold an iconic position in the Australian psyche and make them a revered rather than reviled entity in many Australians' minds (Cooper, 2006; see also Tranter et al. 2005). In addition, the automobile industry has traditionally been a source of many Australian jobs and an attack on the industry could be perceived as an attack on these jobs (FCAI, 2007). Thus, we hypothesise that the industry manipulation strategy would have little impact on hooning behaviour, as it would not be well supported in the community and would therefore be relatively ineffective. Although the automobile industry has been censured on a number of occasions for advertising campaigns that appear to promote aggressive driving behaviour (Schonfeld et al. 2002, 3), we argue that the weight of public opinion would still not likely be swayed in the same way it is in relation to the smoking industry in the Goldman and Glantz's study. On these grounds we hypothetically rank this strategy = 1.

Second-Hand Smoke strategy seeks to denormalise smoking by convincing smokers that their behaviour endangers people who involuntarily breathe second-hand smoke at home, at work, or in public places. By evoking a "sense of injustice for the little guy" (Goldman and Glantz, 1998, page) response in the audience, this strategy was found to be highly effective in combating smoking.

Such a strategy could also be effective in dissuading people from partaking in risky driving behaviour. Drawing on studies that show the importance of social influence on social behaviour (Lennon et al., 2005; Johnston & White, 2003), we contend that asserting social influence on individuals can influence their propensity to perform a behaviour. Thus, a comprehensive campaign that increases perceptions that hooning is anti-social and endangers the lives of others, including loved ones, could be highly effective in deterring hooning, and certainly more so than industry manipulation. As a result we hypothesise a rank = 5 for this strategy.

Addiction advertisements in the Goldman and Glantz study focused on the fact that nicotine is highly addictive and that the tobacco industry uses it to hook smokers and keep people buying cigarettes. The authors found this strategy was effective in angering smokers, increasing their propensity to quit, and in deterring non-smokers from starting.

To draw comparison for hooning, studies suggest that participating in high-risk activities or seeking an 'adrenalin rush' can also be addictive (Taubman - Ben-Ari, 2004). Although there is an inherent link between hooning and seeking an 'adrenalin rush', there is a lack of empirical support to link hooning directly to addiction (Taubman - Ben-Ari, 2004). On this basis we hypothesise that applying such a strategy would be relatively ineffective for hooning behaviour and rank the strategy = 2.

Cessation strategies work by rationalising the benefits of quitting smoking, such as health, money, and family. These benefits, however, may not be immediately apparent upon quitting smoking. For example, saving money from not buying cigarettes may not amount to much for some youth. Indeed, these youth may even reason to themselves that cigarettes are inexpensive, when compared to other big-ticket items such as fashion and consumer electronics. Similarly, health is unlikely to improve overnight once smoking stops. Despite these shortcomings, Goldman and Glantz reported that cessation may be moderately effective in countering smoking.

With hooning the stakes are perceptively higher and consequences are immediately evident – crash, speeding fine, arrest, car impounded, or even death. Attitude Theory holds that the strength of one's attitude towards an object or a behaviour stems from beliefs about the object or behaviour (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Homer, 2006). Hence, strong (weak) beliefs yield strong (weak) attitude. With hooning, cessation technique may be effective because of the strength or seriousness of the beliefs about hooning. For instance, a cessation campaign can stress the belief that hooning inevitably leads to physical paralysis or death. The immediate and serious nature of such beliefs should accentuate one's attitude towards hooning, thereby making cessation an effective technique. We hypothetically rank this strategy = 4.

Youth Access advertising campaigns depict how easily youth could obtain cigarettes from vending machines, stores, parents, or siblings. The purpose of these advertisements is to counter the tobacco industry's recruitment of underage smokers by convincing adults to reduce youth access to tobacco products. Goldman and Glantz found that this type of advertising was not effective in its aim.

Australian law in some states prohibits P-plate drivers from driving particular types of powerful performance vehicles and nearly all states have enacted anti-hoon legislations. Despite evidence suggesting that these laws may be effective (NSW RTA), young drivers – the main proponents of hooning – are still being caught hooning and behind the wheel of performance vehicles (Armstrong, 2008; Butler et al., 2008). The absence of adequate awareness campaigns about these laws, particularly those targeted at the parents of young drivers who are often the owners of the offending vehicles, could account for the laws' ineffectiveness.

Awareness campaigns about these restrictions may be effective with hooning, particularly in making the parents of hooners aware of the legalities of car ownership/use. We rank this strategy = 3.

Short-Term Effects anti-smoking advertising campaigns focus on the short-term effects of smoking by portraying the behaviour as unattractive or unglamorous. These campaigns highlight the cosmetic effects of smoking such as yellow teeth and unpleasant smell. Associating smoking with negative cosmetic outcomes appeals to a key preoccupation with youth – they want to be socially acceptable. Consequently, Goldman and Glantz found this strategy moderately effective in combating smoking, particularly with youth.

We propose that this technique could be highly effective when applied to anti-hooning as research has shown that youth thrive to win their peers' approval in order to build a sense of belonging (Moschis & Moore, 1979; Park & Lessig, 1977). Likewise, reference group research (e.g., Deutsch & Gerard, 1955) maintains that an effective way to influence or modify youth's behaviour is to reach youth through their social groups. By portraying a behaviour as unacceptable or unattractive to their peers, youth may be deterred from enacting the behaviour in order to maintain a good image with their peers. We rank this strategy = 5.

Long-Term Health Effect strategies, those that highlight the potential future health consequences of smoking, such as lung cancer or emphysema, were some of the least effective strategies, particularly with youth. With warnings clearly printed on cigarette packs, people claimed to already be aware of the potential hazards of smoking and "young people live in the present and believe they are invulnerable" (Goldman and Glantz, 1998, p. 776).

We contend that applying this strategy to anti-hooning would be similarly ineffective. Hooners are predominantly young drivers (Leal et al., 2007) and within this demographic, risky driving behaviours have been found to correlate youth views of invulnerability and taking risk (Dahlen,

2006). As a result, we postulate that it would be an ineffective tool for dissuading hooning in the same way it was for smoking, and for the same reasons. We rank this strategy = 2.

Romantic Rejection (RR) strategies attempt to convince smokers and those contemplating smoking that they will be perceived as undesirable if they smoke as the majority of people do not smoke and find smoking socially unacceptable. However, Goldman and Glantz found for young non-smokers, a person's smoking status is only relevant if that person is unappealing. In contrast, respondents are willing to overlook the smoking if the person is desirable, consequentially rendering the strategy ineffective.

Popular culture films and computer games often portray risky driving behaviour as attractive. The romanticisation of risky car behaviour is not a new phenomenon; however, the Fast and The Furious movie series have recently raised some concerns amongst the police and road safety advocates alike (see The Daily Telegraph, 2006; Vaughan 2009). Despite this concern, there is little statistical evidence to support the notion that these portrayals lead to increased incidents of hooning and we therefore argue that the romantic rejection strategy would be ineffective with anti-hooning. We further suggest that the flippancy observed by Goldman and Glantz regarding peoples' perceived attractiveness irrespective of them participating in socially undesirable activities, would similarly hold for hooning. Consequently, we hypothesize a rank = 2 for this strategy.

Methodology

A survey tapped 26 students in an undergraduate Marketing class (mean age = 27 years; 10 males and 16 females) on their perceived effectiveness of the eight advertising strategies for anti-hooning. After listening to explanations on how each strategy sought to deter honing (as indicated above but without revealing our hypothetical rank) the students rated each strategy's effectiveness on a five-point scale, anchored on highly not-effective and highly effective, in the same manner as Goldman and Glantz and as the hypotheses presented in this paper. Annex I contains the respondents' average ranks for the eight strategies.

Results and Discussions

The Second Hand Smoke strategy ranked the highest across the respondents, confirming our hypothesis that appealing to youth's conscience, specifically that they may be hurting others, is a powerful technique. This trend is also evident with Goldman and Glantz's study on anti-smoking campaigns. This suggests that SHS is a highly transferrable and effective strategy for deterring anti-social behaviours.

Similarly, supporting our hypotheses, the two lowest ranked strategies were Industry Manipulation and Romantic Rejection. Our assumption that the automobile industry may not be vilified or demonised in the same manner as the predatory Tobacco industry seem to be correct. As with the Goldman and Glantz, the flippancy of youth perceptions regarding the attractiveness of other people appear to be far too ingrained to make the idea of romantic rejection effective for hooning. Compounding this, respondents clearly indicated by their results that they were able to separate fiction (movies and games) from reality when assessing whether to engage in risk related behaviours.

Of some surprise in the results, when compared to our hypothetical assumptions, was the place of the Addiction strategy. We contend that this strategy is ineffective with anti-hooning, but the results

indicates that it may be effective. This suggests that, given the iconic place of cars in Australian society, advertising campaigns that focus on car features such as power, acceleration and handling ability may lead to hooning. That is, these campaigns exploit a primal need or addiction in young drivers needing to see themselves as warriors/conquerors, fast, strong, dominant and not bound by the rules of other, weaker, groups (Redshaw, 2005). Unlike our proposition with RR, advertising a real car that can be purchased and perform as depicted in advertisements could certainly be seen to have more influence on behaviour than when there is a clear divide between fiction and reality.

Short Term Effect strategy also ranked highly with the respondents. This confirms our hypothesis on the efficacy of social influences on hooning. As expected, this result might be due to the survey involving youth (mean age = 27), where social influence or peer pressure is pertinent. Finally Second Hand Smoke ranked higher than Long Term Health Effect strategy. This result suggests that it is better to appeal to youth, the main proponents of hooning, by highlighting the hurt they can cause to others, than to highlight the harm they can cause to themselves. By positively confirming our hypothesis that the LTE technique may be ineffective at preventing hooning, we mimic the trend seen with the Goldman and Glantz study, both in terms of individual ranking and in comparison to each of the strategies.

In conclusion, the implications of this paper for Australian governments (both local and federal) as well as industry and community groups, are that social marketers can address the highly anti-social and dangerous phenomenon of hooning through targeted advertising campaigns which support laws that now exist in most states. However, the effectiveness would depend on the campaigns' strategies. To this end, this paper may help guide advertising strategies, which are currently somewhat lacking, or at least not supporting legislation effectively enough.

A key limitation of this study is its small sample and simplistic statistical validations. Future research should involve a larger sample and across age groups in order to validate the hypotheses empirically. Qualitative surveys, similar to Goldman and Glantz, would also help shed light on the reasons underpinning the ranking for the eight strategies. Further to this the addition of an expert panel would strengthen future studies. Such studies will contribute to the social marketing sphere, and help address the problems of hooning at the societal level.

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Annex 1. Rank Comparisons

	Goldman and Glantz's (1998) Ranks	This Study's Hypothesised Ranks	Survey Results
Industry Manipulation	5	1	2.6
Second Hand Smoke	5	5	4.3
Addiction	4	2	3.3
Cessation	0	4	3.2
Youth Access	2	3	3.3
Short Term Effects	3	5	4.1
Long Term Effects	2	2	3.4
Romantic Rejection	2	2	2.8

Scale: 1=highly not effective; 2=not effective; 3=moderately effective; 4= effective 5=highly effective