

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Topline Report of Findings from Ten Focus Groups Regarding Logo Treatments for “Buckle Up. Every Trip. Every Time.”

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INTRODUCTION

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is considering logo treatment ideas for its social norming tag line “Buckle Up. Every Trip. Every Time.”

While focus groups were assembled in late-January/early-February 2015 to assess advertising ideas for its 2015 *Click It or Ticket* campaign, NHTSA also requested brief assessments of these logo treatments among those research participants. The participants were men ages 18-34 who self-reported to be part-time or never-users of seat belts.

Groups were facilitated in four cities:

- Richmond: January 27, 2015 --- two groups
- Phoenix: February 2, 2015 --- two groups
- Houston: February 3, 2015 --- two groups
- Atlanta: February 4 and 5, 2015 --- four groups

In total, 88 people participated.

For all groups, respondents were pre-screened to ensure they met these characteristics:

- Licensed drivers whose primary vehicle is an automobile, SUV, mini-van, pick-up truck or van
- Ages 18-34
- Self-reported that they wear their seat belts just sometimes or never
- Selected groups (at least one in each city) included people who self-reported that they have perceptions of low regard towards local police

Because the primary purpose for the focus group research was to assess the *Click It or Ticket* advertising ideas, the logo assessments were relatively brief. As such, only “first impressions” were asked of the participants, along with a final polling of the one thought to be the best. Six different treatments were shown, as noted in the findings below. Participants were advised (and reminded, when appropriate, during the discussions) that only the logo graphics were being assessed, not the tag line.

The six logos were presented to groups in differing orders to neutralize potential bias.

For this topline report, numbers of respondents are referenced. However, these are reported only to help illustrate the relative degrees differences for findings; they are not intended to be statistical validations, for focus group research (due to small sample sizes and other factors) is qualitative – rather than quantitative/statistical – in nature.

TOPLINE FINDINGS

General observation offered by multiple respondents:

Regarding designs that had stylized illustrations of belts, suggestions were made to consider modifications so the illustration/graphic would be more reflective of “today’s seat belts,” that is, lap belt and shoulder harness. Among comments that were expressed:

- *“Seat belts don’t look like that anymore.”*
- *“Airplane seat belts or car seat belts?”*
- *“That logo must be for just older drivers. They would be the only ones who would recognize that type of belt.”*

Logos in order of most- to least-favorably assessed:

#1: 40 (of 88 total) participants considered this to be the “best”



Groups’ immediate non-verbal responses were noteworthy and positive overall when this design was shown. Frequently-mentioned positive comments centered on ---

- Clarity that it’s about seat belts
- The visible, direct prominence of the call-to-action “BUCKLE UP”

Not many critical/negative remarks were mentioned. Most of them referred to portrayal of only the lap belt.

As an aside, in Atlanta, a local fitness center known as “Knuckle Up” uses red and white letters in a large block style (against a black background) in its

branding. Comparisons to Knuckle Up were voiced in two of the Atlanta groups. However, the fitness center's actual logo is not very similar (www.knuckleupfitness.com).

#2: 26 (of 88 total) participants considered this to be the “best”



In most groups, this logo treatment also generated fast, positive non-verbal reactions when first shown. Frequently-expressed positive remarks related to ---

- Clarity that it's about seat belts
- The senses of movement and sound portrayed by the seat belt graphic
- Prominence of the call-to-action “BUCKLE UP”

Not many critical/negative remarks were mentioned. Most of them referred to the design looking dated and/or “retro.”

In several groups, comparisons were made to Batman and superheroes generally. However, these comparisons were not always expressed as criticisms.

#3: 16 (of 88 total) participants considered this to be the “best”



This design's distant-third place status in polling preference echoed mixed reactions to this logo. Positive remarks mostly related to ---

- Simplicity and straight-forwardness of the design

- Serious and official-looking

Negative comments centered on ---

- Too plain, boring
- Needs color
- Uncertainty about the belt element. Other interpretations of what it was included “computer mouse,” “electronics plug,” and “a car on a road.”

#4: 5 (of 88 total) participants considered this to be the “best”



This treatment spurred spontaneous discussion, mostly around interpretations of shattered glass graphic. Yet, although it appeared to be the most intriguing of the six logos shown, it was criticized more than it was commended. Positive remarks related to ---

- Inference of consequences of not buckling up
- Immediate curiosity of what the graphic element represents

However, the abstraction of the shattered glass was also misinterpreted in various other ways, for example ---

- Bullet going through glass (mentioned in nine of the groups)
- Baseball going through glass
- Paint ball splatter
- Gang-related
- Blood splatter

#5: 1 (of 88 total) participant considered this to be the “best”



Nearly all remarks and impressions of this treatment were either negative or too connected to things other than the theme line's message.

The majority of remarks were similes, e.g., "It looks like..." Further, the similes were varied:

- Boxing/boxer's belt; also wrestling
- Shield/badge
- Sports uniform jersey (football most-often mentioned)
- Sports team
- ESPN Game Day
- Sun
- Fisher-Price
- Children's cereal
- Word-Art

#6: No participants considered this to be the "best"



Nearly all remarks and impressions of this treatment were negative and critical. The primary focus of discussion about the treatment dealt with the stylized belt buckle. Participants interpreted its shape as something other than what was intended, e.g. ---

- Knife/scalpel/shiv/Exactoknife
- Light sabre (Star Wars)
- Cigar
- Taser

- Phallic symbol
- Train
- Weapon
- Sword
- Dustbuster vacuum

Several critical remarks were also mentioned about the tilted words.