NHTSA

NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

2026 Speed Prevention Campaign Concept Testing

4.24.2026

Purpose and Methodology

Purpose

NHTSA is conducting qualitative research to evaluate advertising concepts for two speeding prevention campaigns aimed at discouraging speeding in the target audience.

Research Objectives

1. Evaluate concepts.
2. Identify the most compelling elements.
3. Diagnose potential areas of improvement.
4. Evaluate effectiveness in influencing behavior to drive within the posted speed limit.
5. Evaluate effectiveness at communicating the message.

Methodology

Focus Groups (8 groups)

- 75-minute groups
- 4 groups enforcement campaign; 4 groups social norming campaign
- n=47 participants*

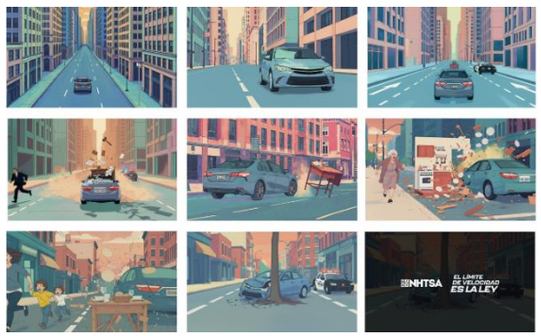
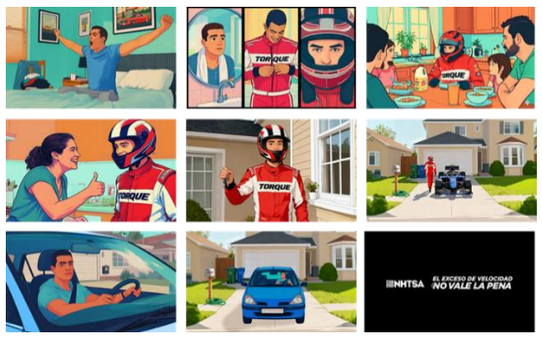
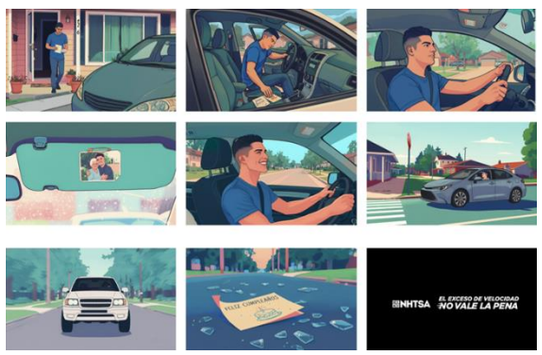
Qualification Criteria

- National audience
- Male
- 18 to 44 years old
- Foreign-born
- Speaks Spanish all or most of the time at home
- Watches TV in Spanish at least as often as in English
- Holds a valid driver's license
- Drives at least once a week
- Exceeds the posted speed limit by at least 10+ mph on local roads or 15+ mph on highways on a regular basis
- Lives in an urban or suburban area

*One participant dropped off due to technical difficulties.

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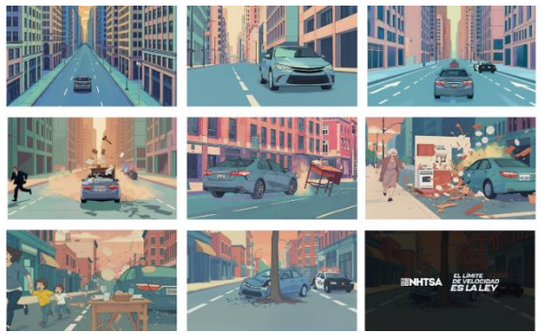
2026 Spanish Speed Concepts

	Enforcement	Social Norming
Concept L	 Feeling Speed	 Race Car Driver
Concept O	 Fragile	 Trophy
Concept P	 Life in the Fast Lane	 With Lots of Love

Key Findings

General Observations

Enforcement



Feeling Speed

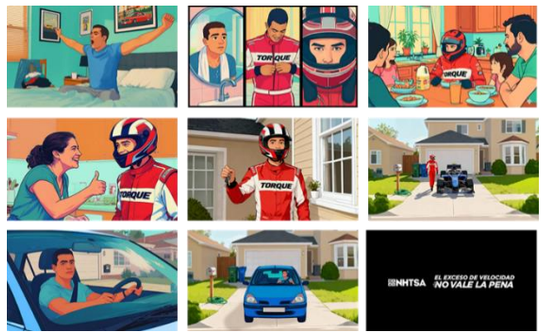


Fragile



Life in the Fast Lane

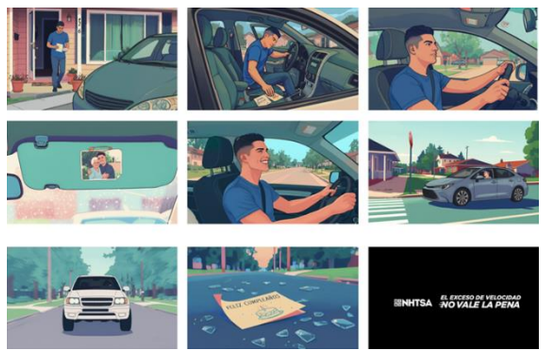
Social Norming



Race Car Driver



Trophy



With Lots of Love

While the primary goal of the research was to assess specific creative concepts, the focus group discussion also produced generalizable findings that may be useful for future speed campaigns:

1. Explicit, real-world consequences are the strongest driver of attention and behavior change. Impactful concepts emphasize unmistakable real outcomes, like court, job loss, injury, death or permanent harm (**Feeling Speed, Trophy**). Abstract warnings or implied danger were not enough to interrupt habitual speeding behavior (**Fragile, Race Car Driver**).

2. Enforcement resonates most when paired with emotional fallout like harm to family, loved ones and community (**Feeling Speed**).

3. Forcing viewers to strain to interpret meaning weakens the message (**Life in the Fast Lane**). Concepts should be direct and immediately understandable (**Feeling Speed**). A visual metaphor can be impactful when it is clearly connected (**Trophy**).

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Enforcement Concepts

Concept Comparison

Scores and Grades

Feeling Speed outperforms **Fragile** and **Life in the Fast Lane** in grades and overwhelmingly exceeds them in influencing behavior and communicating the enforcement message.

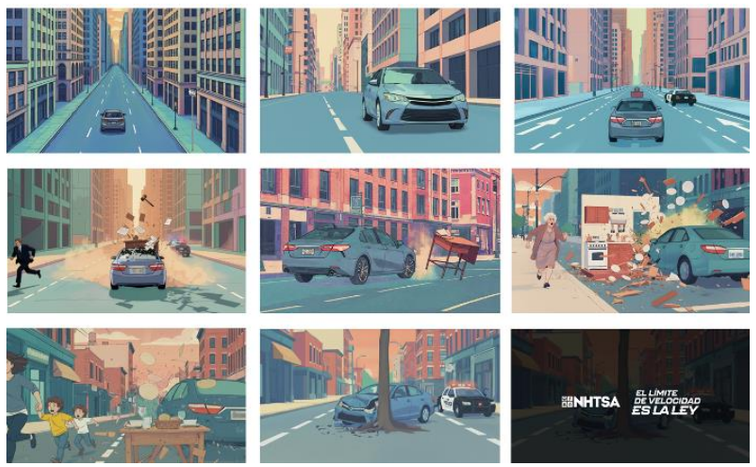
Concept Assessment	Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B	Gets Attention *% Very / Extremely Effective*
 **Feeling Speed** (Concept L)	**78%** (18/23)	**100%** (23/23)	**83%** (19/23)	**78%** (18/23)
 **Fragile** (Concept O)	**17%** (4/23)	**-**	**78%** (18/23)	**61%** (14/23)
 **Life in the Fast Lane** (Concept P)	**4%** (1/23)	**-**	**61%** (14/23)	**70%** (16/23)

NOTE: Blue highlights highest score among concepts; gray highlights lowest score among concepts. Note that percentages are rounded and may not always add up to exactly 100%.

Q3. How effective is this concept at grabbing your attention?
Q4. Assuming the concept's main intent is to motivate you to drive at the posted speed limit every time you drive a vehicle, what grade would you give this concept?
Q6. Which one of these concepts BEST conveys the message: The far-ranging legal consequences of speeding can be very real outcomes. The posted speed limit is the law and driving even a few miles above the speed limit can be life-changing? (Pick one.)
Q7. Which one of these concepts would be most likely change your behavior and motivate you to drive within the posted speed limit every time you drive a vehicle? (Pick one.)

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Recommendation



Feeling Speed

Based on a strong performance on both evaluation questions, we recommend moving forward with **Feeling Speed**. It best delivers on the campaign objective of reinforcing the idea that speed limits are enforceable laws with serious, far-ranging consequences.

Improvements—Feeling Speed

- While this concept was already very effective, dramatizing the consequences could strengthen it further (e.g., showing fatal outcomes or jail).
- Reinforce traffic law cues (e.g., by adding visible speed limit signs, stop signs or traffic signals).
- Consider amplifying the visual effect of the vehicle crashing into the tree by showing greater destruction.
- Workshop the opening to be more immediately engaging, so it captures the attention of those scrolling quickly through social media.

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Social Norming Concepts

Concept Comparison

Scores and Grades

Both **Trophy** and **With Lots of Love** demonstrate high scores and grades, while **Race Car Driver** lags significantly behind. **Trophy** shows greater ability to influence behavior through the depiction of death and its impact on the loved ones left behind, while the more direct portrayal of speeding in **With Lots of Love** gives it the edge in communicating how driving the speed limit shows you care about the people around you.

Concept Assessment	Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B	Gets Attention *% Very / Extremely Effective*
 **Trophy** (Concept O)	**65%** (15/23)	**30%** (7/23)	**83%** (19/23)	**74%** (17/23)
 **With Lots of Love** (Concept P)	**35%** (8/23)	**52%** (12/23)	**87%** (20/23)	**83%** (19/23)
 **Race Car Driver** (Concept L)	**0%** (0/23)	**17%** (4/23)	**65%** (15/23)	**61%** (14/23)

NOTE: Blue highlights highest score among concepts; gray highlights lowest score among concepts. Note that percentages are rounded and may not always add up to exactly 100%.

Q3. How effective is this concept at grabbing your attention?
Q4. Assuming the concept's main intent is to motivate you to drive at the posted speed limit every time you drive a vehicle, what grade would you give this concept?
Q6. Which one of these concepts BEST conveys the message: I should stop driving over the posted speed limit, no matter the road type or how comfortable I feel, because driving at the speed limit shows I care about the people around me? (Pick one.)
Q7. Which one of these concepts would be most likely change your behavior and motivate you to drive within the posted speed limit every time you drive a vehicle? (Pick one.)

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Recommendation



Trophy

Based on its strong grades and dominance in influencing behavior, we recommend moving forward with **Trophy**.

Improvements—Trophy

- Show the actual collision scene to further increase impact, clearly connect speeding behavior and strengthen the deterrent effect.
- Some respondents find the beginning of the story confusing in its current form. Consider incorporating driving in general and speeding in particular at the beginning for clarity.
- Perhaps include a brief driving scene at the beginning for clarity or have the spot show flashes of the driver speeding in a vehicle between trophies to visually reinforce the behavior of speeding and its role in his death.

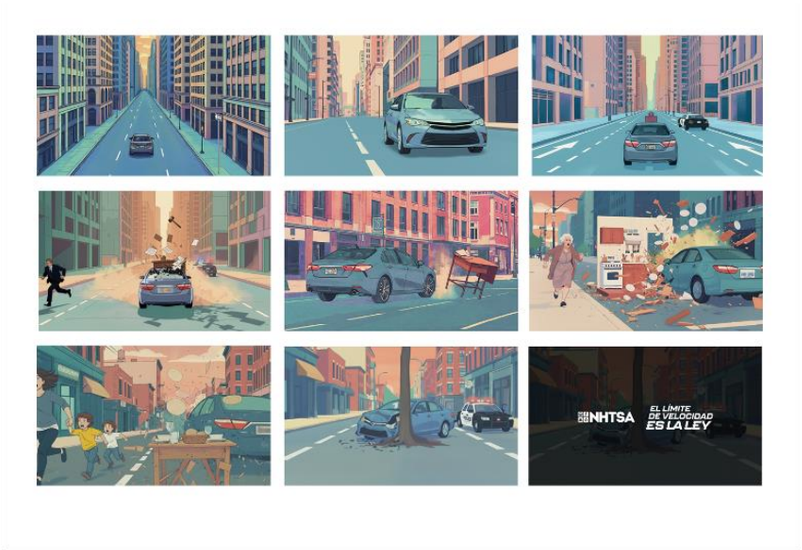
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Appendix A Enforcement Concepts

Feeling Speed

(Concept L)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
1st (78%)	1st (100%)	83% (n=19)



Feeling Speed visually dramatizes the emotional rush of speeding by placing the viewer inside a surreal, slowed-down moment during which adrenaline masks danger. It depicts a false sense of invincibility created by speed. The concept clearly depicts the range of legal, physical, emotional and community consequences of speeding. Respondents understood that respecting the speed limit helps avoid the consequences of breaking the law.

Effective Elements

- Clear, explicit depiction of consequences—legal (court, job loss), physical (crash, injury), emotional (family harm) and community impacts were easy to understand and difficult to ignore.
- There is strong alignment with the enforcement message that respecting the speed limit is the law and there are consequences when it is broken.

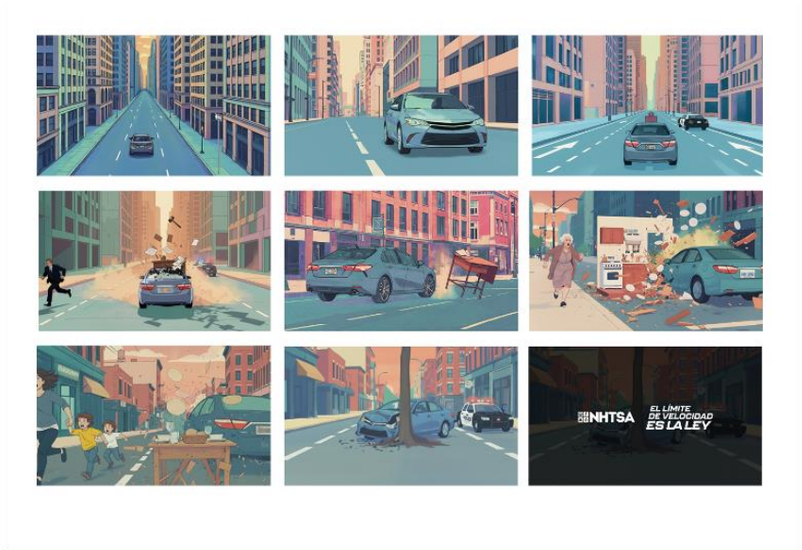
> *Yes, **it is the most effective**, without a doubt, **because it really shows the impact caused by speeding. It shows everything**—literally, it shows a whole domino effect. That's what causes the impact, and that's why I think it's the best of the three.*
>
> *– 18 to 34 years old Spanish-speaking Market*

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Feeling Speed

(Concept L)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
1st (78%)	1st (100%)	83% (n=19)



While **Feeling Speed** as a concept is already very effective, it can be strengthened by adding attention-grabbing elements in the opening scenes and by making traffic law cues more visible. Increasing dramatic intensity by showing definitive consequences of speeding could further strengthen its impact.

Opportunities for Improvement

- While this concept was already very effective, dramatizing the consequences could strengthen it even more (e.g., showing fatal outcomes or jail).
- Reinforce traffic law cues (e.g., by adding visible speed limit signs, stop signs or traffic signals).
- Consider amplifying the visual effect of the vehicle crashing into the tree by showing greater destruction.
- Some said the opening needs more of a “wow” factor to capture viewers’ attention as they scroll quickly through social media.
- Some respondents suggested showing the family seated inside the speeding driver’s vehicle could elevate the stakes; however, we don’t recommend moving forward with this change. Other feedback suggests doing so could decrease realism, as some speeders drive more cautiously when family is present.

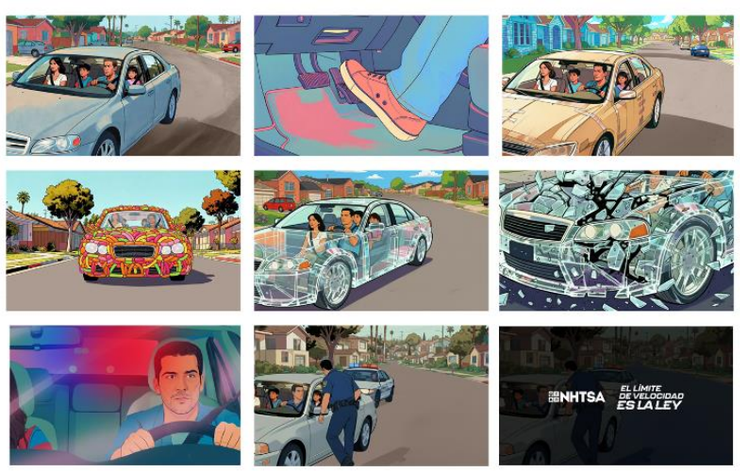
> What happens is that sometimes ***if the opening is too long and you don’t create retention, people leave.*** *Especially if it’s for a social media ad, people scroll very quickly.* But ***if you get to the point faster, you capture people more and they stay.***
>
> *– 35 to 44 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

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Fragile

(Concept O)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
2nd (17%)	-	78% (n=18)



Fragile uses a science-based visual metaphor to show how increased speed makes drivers and passengers physically vulnerable. A family travels in a car that appears normal at first, but as speed increases, the vehicle transforms into increasingly fragile materials, illustrating how kinetic energy grows while protection collapses. Respondents felt the car's transformation into fragile materials was fresh and different, noting that it departs from traditional road safety advertising.

Effective Elements

- The transformation of the car into fragile materials successfully conveyed vulnerability and caught attention.
- The concept felt fresh and different from traditional road safety advertising.
- Including family members in the car helped some participants connect the metaphor to real-life responsibility.

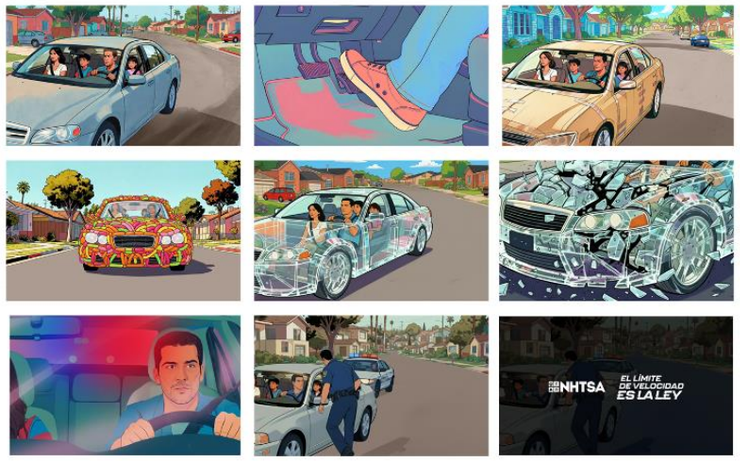
> ***The faster you go, the more likely you are to suffer a very bad accident**. The slower you go, the safer. And beyond that, **it is all tied to the consequences that driving fast has, especially with life, with family.***
>
> *– 18 to 34 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

INTERNAL USE (Client Confidential)

Fragile

(Concept O)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
2nd (17%)	-	78% (n=18)



While **Fragile** was broadly effective in feeling fresh and different, participants suggested simplifying the execution and strengthening the law enforcement message by depicting more explicit and severe consequences. Pairing enforcement with a norming consequence may improve effectiveness of this concept, as the fragility metaphor is weakened by depicting only a pull over.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Simplify the metaphor for clarity. Too many material transitions confused viewers and invited rumination on the logical order of fragility, distracting from the core message.
- Strengthen the law enforcement message. The legal consequences of speeding were often overshadowed by the visual concept.
- Pairing the enforcement message with a norming consequence may make this more effective. The idea of fragility lends itself to showing how fragile speeding makes one in a crash, and the metaphor is somewhat undercut by only showing a pull over.
- For some, the balloons undermined the concept's seriousness.

> *It feels like, I don't know, almost like a clown car. You don't understand it as danger—it seems like magic. Even the balloons, those balloon-animal colors, make it look a little childish.*
>
> *– 35 to 44 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

INTERNAL USE (Client Confidential)

Life in the Fast Lane

(Concept P)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
3rd (4%)	-	61% (n=14)



Life in the Fast Lane depicts how a lifetime shaped by constant pressure to move faster—from childhood through adulthood—pushes a man to speed until a quiet memory with his grandfather reminds him that life is not a race. The grandfather figure was widely liked and remembered as wise and relatable, while scenes of being rushed at work, school and family life resonated on a human level, conveying emotional warmth and nostalgia.

Effective Elements

- The grandfather figure was widely liked and remembered as wise and relatable. It communicates emotional warmth and nostalgia.
- Scenes of being rushed at work, school or family life resonated on a human level.

> ***The grandfather part, that worked well for me…*** *Telling him to take it easy, son. You know how grandparents are.* ***Now that we're heading that way ourselves, I think one or two of us here have some grey hair—we start taking things more step by step. I think that really is important****.*
>
> *– 35 to 44 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

INTERNAL USE (Client Confidential)

Life in the Fast Lane

(Concept P)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
3rd (4%)	-	61% (n=14)



While **Life in the Fast Lane** was highly relatable, participants suggested refocusing the concept tightly on driving and speeding, increasing the urgency, reducing non-driving scenes and clearly showing direct consequences (e.g., crashes, tickets, arrests) to strengthen impact.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Sharpen the message around driving and speeding. Multiple non-driving scenarios diluted the core takeaway and confused the intent.
- Without explicit outcomes (crashes, tickets, arrests), the message felt too soft to change behavior.
- Increase urgency and seriousness. The tone of this concept was perceived as gentle, which undermined the gravity of speeding risks.
- Reduce narrative complexity. Participants suggested fewer scenes and a more direct cause-and-effect structure to improve clarity and impact.

> *I think I liked how they connected everything, but **it is very long. As a consumer I want it to get to the point.** Obviously, **it would need something more serious, like a car accident at the end, besides the police.***
>
> *– 18 to 34 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

INTERNAL USE (Client Confidential)

Appendix B
Social Norming Concepts

Trophy
(Concept O)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
1st (65%)	2nd (30%)	83% (n=19)



Trophy contrasts the meager timesaving benefits of speeding with the dramatic cost it can impose—loss of life and heartbreak for one's family. The concept's originality gets attention, and the funeral scene is emotionally impactful and can influence behavior. Participants say the urn is a powerful and memorable visual.

Effective Elements

- The contrast between the trivial situations at the beginning of the storyline and the fatal consequences of speeding is compelling—saving a little can cost a lot.
- The urn is a powerful visual that starkly depicts the fatal consequences of speeding, creating awareness that saving a few minutes is not worth your life. The transition between the trophies and the urn was particularly effective.
- Seeing the family mourning the death of the young driver has a strong emotional impact and a desire to spare their families from such suffering.

> ***The contrast*** [was effective]. That if you save three seconds, I don't know, on a one-hour trip—***three seconds is nothing.*** And then saying specifically that ***you [lose] 40 years of life by saving three seconds***.
>
> *– 18 to 34 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

INTERNAL USE (Client Confidential)

Trophy
(Concept O)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
1st (65%)	2nd (30%)	83% (n=19)



Trophy could be strengthened by showing the crash directly and adding more direct driving visuals to reinforce the connection to speeding. In its current form, the opening does not make a clear connection to driving or speeding. This connection could be made, for instance, by including a showing flashes of the driver speeding in a vehicle between trophies to visually reinforce the behavior of speeding and its role in his death.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Several participants wanted to see the actual collision scene to further increase impact, clearly connect speeding behavior and strengthen the deterrent effect. Others felt the concept was already impactful as presented but did not necessarily oppose depicting the collision.
- The beginning of the storyline was somewhat confusing for some respondents. Some recommended including a brief driving scene to add clarity at the beginning of the concept. Potentially, the concept could show brief flashes of the driver speeding between each of the initial trophy presentations, reinforcing speeding as the cause of death.

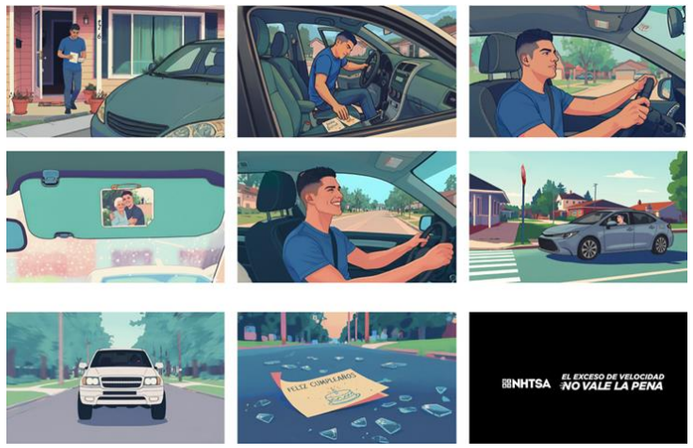
> ***You never saw a car, or a road or anything.*** I mean, nothing. I felt like that was missing… maybe [show] the ashes on top of a crashed car, and the family around it or something. I don't know. ***Since we're focusing on traffic and vehicles… that's what I felt was missing.***
>
> *– 35 to 44 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

INTERNAL USE (Client Confidential)

With Lots of Love

(Concept P)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
2nd (35%)	1st (52%)	87% (n=20)



With Lots of Love portrays the devastating harm that speeding can cause to people in one's community. It creates an emotional connection by showing a grandma's love for her grandson and how speeding can cut life short. Additionally, showing the victim's perspective is different, compelling and clearly communicates the message of slowing down as care for others.

Effective Elements

- Presenting the consequences of speeding from the victim's perspective makes this approach both compelling and distinctive, as it highlights that irresponsible driving affects not only the driver, but also innocent people.
- The notion that exceeding speed limits can cut a life short evokes guilt and makes respondents reflect on their behavior.
- The birthday card strikes a strong emotional chord.

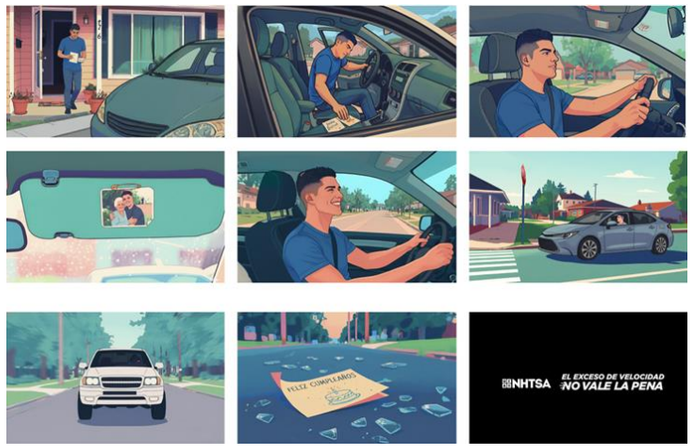
> What impacted me was the way ***the young man was just beginning his life, and his grandmother was wishing him a happy birthday***, and he was just starting out, really, with so much life ahead of him. And ***because of the accident that all ended there***.
>
> *– 18 to 34 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

INTERNAL USE (Client Confidential)

With Lots of Love

(Concept P)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
2nd (35%)	1st (52%)	87% (n=20)



With Lots of Love could be strengthened by showing the collision and being more overt about the loss of life. Beyond this, participants raised the possibility of showing the perpetrator's perspective to make the concept more relatable to speeders. Additionally, some suggested exchanging the character of grandmother for a mother, which may be relatable and compelling to even more people.

Opportunities for Improvement

- The main opportunity to strengthen this concept is to overtly show the collision and the loss of life, as several respondents were uncertain whether the outcome had been fatal.
- Some participants believed the perpetrator's perspective would be more effective at deterring speeding than the victim's. Behavioral change may be more likely when respondents can see themselves in the story, which was difficult when the narrative focused primarily on the victim.
- A few mentioned that replacing the grandmother with the driver's mother would make this concept even more emotional, universal and compelling.

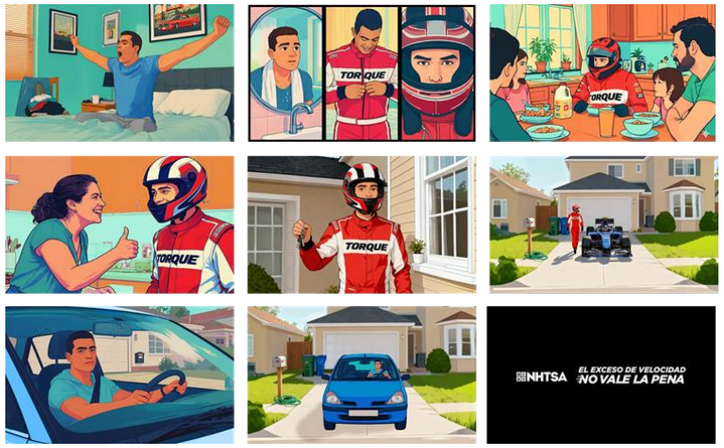
> Don't only focus on the victim but also ***focus on what the other person was doing***. Why was he speeding? What was the reason? Because many times people drive fast for no reason. Sometimes you really are in a hurry, but ***sometimes you're just driving fast because you want to***.
>
> *– 18 to 34 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

INTERNAL USE (Client Confidential)

Race Car Driver

(Concept L)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
3rd (0%)	3rd (17%)	65% (n=15)



Race Car Driver humorously points out that since most of us aren't race car drivers, we shouldn't drive like we are. The concept succeeded for many in conveying the importance of driving within speed limits. Some found the humor effective and the concept relatable in its depiction of the rush of speeding.

Effective Elements

- It conveys the importance of driving within speed limits and prioritizing safety over speed.
- The humor of the concept (e.g., eating cereal while wearing a helmet) connects with some participants.
- Several found the adrenaline rush associated with speeding relatable and responded favorably to the reality check, which reminded them of their vulnerability.

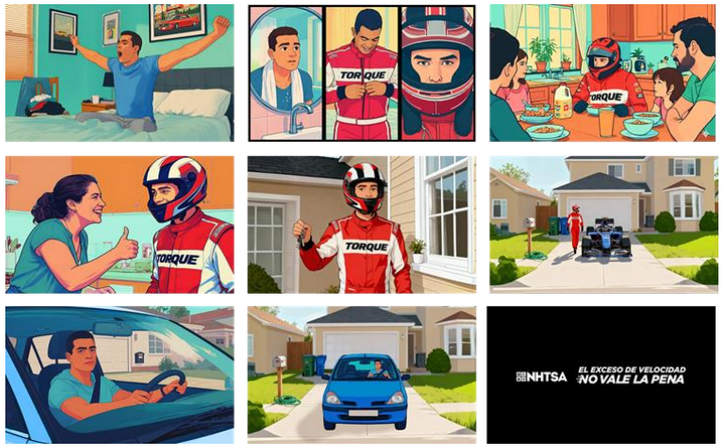
> You're not a professional race driver. You don't have a race car, you're not wearing a helmet or anything, so ***why are you driving at excessive speeds***?
>
> *– 35 to 44 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

INTERNAL USE (Client Confidential)

Race Car Driver

(Concept L)

Influences Behavior	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
3rd (0%)	3rd (17%)	65% (n=15)



Race Car Driver showed limited ability to influence behavior, hindered by its toned-down depiction of consequences. Participants said that depicting a crash or at least a ticket would make the concept more impactful. Additionally, some older participants felt that the concept was aimed at a young audience.

Opportunities for Improvement

- This concept falls short in showcasing the negative consequences of speeding, which limits its potential to motivate drivers to slow down.
- Respondents consistently recommended depicting the driver involved in a crash or receiving a ticket to strengthen the ad's impact and persuasive power.
- Some older consumers inferred from the young protagonist that the concept was aimed at a younger audience.

> The only thing I would add would be to show another part of the reality, what can happen. Like continuing the idea that ***if he races, he could*** **crash**—that's the reality. And not, as some of them said, ***there is nobody to save him or no [safety] equipment***.
>
> *– 35 to 44 years old, Spanish-speaking Market*

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