INFORMER
research & strategy

Probably Okay, Isn't Okay

A RESEARCH DEBRIEF FOR NHTSA AND THE AD COUNCIL

PREPARED BY INFORMER RESEARCH & STRATEGY

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

WHERE YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO

BACKGROUND

NHTSA, in partnership with the Ad Council and COG, have developed advertising to support the Buzzed Driving Prevention campaign.

The Blank Project, along with Informer Research and Strategy, have designed and executed a round of qualitative research to explore how the ideas are being perceived, and what, if anything, could maximize their clarity and appeal.

INSIGHT

People don't think they DRIVE BUZZED but they do know that they've probably driven when they "may have had" one too many.

ROLE OF ADVERTISING

Plant the seeds of doubt and remove the rational excuses. We need to make people understand PROBABLY OKAY, ISN'T OKAY.

THE IDEAS WE EXPLORED

‘WARNING SIGNS’ TV

‘TAKING CHANCES’ TV

RADIO

PRINT

PARTNERSHIPS

BANNERS

THE PEOPLE WE SPOKE WITH

GENERAL POPULATION: Nine groups of males 21-35 who like to drink socially with friends, and who tend to drive more often than not (to work, to activities with friends, etc.)

EXPERT INTERVIEWS: Six IDIs with males 21-35 who were DUI offenders who were previously arrested for a DUI between .08 and .15

NOTE: All interviews were spread across Austin, TX, Los Angeles, CA, and Paramus, NJ. Each interview was moderated by Mike Ostenson of Informer Research & Strategy

KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS - LANGUAGE

‘Probably Okay, Isn’t Okay’ generally understood and well-received

- Suggests ‘If you have any question about your ability to drive, then you definitely shouldn’t’
- Ultimately helps cast the seeds of doubt the campaign is intending to do, and works in the print and in the television
- Works best when ‘probably’ language is used heavily in copy

“The repetition of probably with the guys with the milk, and then the girls in the store and the mechanic made the whole probably idea really stand out.” – Michael, LA

“You should always be sure. If there’s a question whether you are ok to drive or not, it’s a no.” – Chris, Paramus NJ

“If in doubt, you shouldn’t be driving.” – Jay, Paramus NJ

**Note: This ‘data’ should be directional only. Remember this is qualitative research and not statistically significant.*

KEY FINDINGS - TELEVISION

‘Warning Signs’ creative idea successfully points out the internal thoughts/feelings one has when thinking about driving. *(Note: 29 of 42 chose it as most effective*)*

- Rolling down the windows, taking the back roads, drinking water to ‘sober up’ and gripping the wheel a bit tighter with two hands all recognized as likely behaviors to minimize risks of getting pulled over
- ‘Warning Signs’ feels action-oriented – gives them the tools to look for and/or recognize the warning signs and find an alternative to buzzed driving *“Recognizing the warning signs can really benefit us.” – Michael, LA*

‘Taking Chances’ creative idea helps point out areas in life people routinely avoid to minimize risk, yet somehow fail to acknowledge when having one too many *(however, only 5 of 42 chose it as effective by comparison*)*

- The Montage ad works hardest to establish the idea of ‘Probably Okay’ whereas ‘Nut Allergy’ and ‘Spoiled Milk’ struggled to make a connection back to buzzed driving
- Ultimately, the ‘Taking Chances’ creative idea feels more cerebral and didn’t always connect with viewers and/or link to buzzed driving solution

  “I don’t get how not wanting to drink bad milk is going to prevent me from driving buzzed.” – Roberto, Paramus NJ

**Note: This ‘data’ should be directional only. Remember this is qualitative research and not statistically significant.*

KEY FINDINGS - PRINT

Some print worked harder than others —'PROBABLY' due to the limitations of stock visuals (which we know can and will be improved)

The Courtroom ad tended to be the favorite and delivered the 'fear' some participants felt this campaign needed *(7 of 42 chose it as most effective*)*

- Points out the consequences of their actions – giving them pause for thought and reflection

"Something like this will make you stop and think about it. Makes me never want to be in that situation. Hassle. Expensive." – Sean, Los Angeles CA

All felt a bar/restaurant bathroom placement would be most relevant for all print

- Because being in-situ would deliver a timely message in a buzzed moment
- One more chance to think before they act

"In the bathroom it would kind of be like the last line of defense. One more thing to get you to reconsider that drive home after you've had a few." – Brian, Paramus NJ

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A CLOSER LOOK AT EACH IDEA

‘WARNING SIGNS’

Strategically: It’s delivering the seeds of doubt

Creatively: ‘Warning Signs’ character effectively communicates the thoughts/feelings/actions many experience when they’ve had a bit too much to drink and are preparing to drive a car

Executionally: Rolling down the windows, taking the back roads, drinking water and gripping the wheel a bit tighter with two hands all recognized as likely behaviors when someone tries to minimize the risks of getting pulled over

Ultimately, these spots remind the viewer to pay attention to the warning signs and make a better choice

“If you start acting like you are doing something wrong, you probably are.” – Kristian, Austin TX

“Recognizing the warning signs are a bit of proof to help you think for yourself.” – Dioni, Los Angeles CA

“It’s very relatable. Touches on the idea that you may ‘feel’ sober but the things you are doing are being done to avoid getting into trouble.” – Kristian, Austin TX

“I like the personification of your thoughts and think it is very relatable.” – Clayton, Austin TX

“If you start changing things you wouldn’t normally do when you’re sober then you‘re probably not sober enough or in the right state of mind enough to confidently drive and make good choices.” – Collin, Los Angeles CA

EXECUTIONAL DETAILS THAT ARE WORKING WELL

- The ‘Warning Signs’ character generally understood to be your inner conscious/ guardian angel that cares about you
  - At her best when seen as warm, sympathetic and looking out for you

- The ‘Date Night’ spot was applauded for taking a seemingly innocent situation and spotlighting how ‘buzzed’ moments can happen beyond the bar with the boys

- The ‘Office Party’ spot captured a realistic moment and many liked how it was positioned as ‘a moment of truth’ as someone got behind the wheel

- Thinking about ‘Taking The Back Roads’ was the strongest, most relevant warning sign

- Thinking about ‘Texting an Ex’ also seen as a clear sign you might not have all of your wits
- All liked to see a ‘Ride Share’ solution at the end of the spots to help remind the viewer of what to do next

“I like her. She pops up when you need a reality check.” – Keith, Paramus NJ

“The demonstration of an alternative (UBER) makes it more effective at providing a solution, rather than simply identifying a problem.” – Graham, Austin, TX

“I think this one ‘Date Night’ was most effective because it shows a very relatable and believable situation in which buzzed driving may occur (out on a date at a restaurant).” – Graham, Austin TX

“I’ve been there so many times. I like how it takes place in the car as he’s getting ready to drive and realizes he is compensating for his buzz. This was the best one by far.” – Chris, Los Angeles CA

“I know if I’m thinking about dancing I’ve had one too many… so yeah, I probably shouldn’t drive either.” – Clint, Austin TX

INTERESTINGLY, THE WARNING SIGNS WE DEPICTED PROMPTED THEM TO THINK ABOUT THEIR OWN WARNING SIGNS

Before Driving…

- Texting ahead to see if anyone saw cops
- Contemplating the safest route
- Justifying a short distance
- Getting the 'Beer Sweats' or flushed/red in the face
- Stumbling over words
- Counting the number of drinks before you shouldn't drive
- Talking more than usual/feeling overly animated
- Seeking out salty/greasy food to soak up the booze
- Asking yourself if you're okay to drive

When in the car…

- Greater reluctance to go through a yellow light
- Setting the cruise control and/or checking the odometer more frequently
- Turning down the radio to focus
- Braking earlier than usual
- Waiting for the stop sign to turn green (Doh!)

EXECUTIONAL DETAILS WORKING LESS WELL

- 'Thinking About Dancing' was polarizing – relatable to some, but not universal
  - Some felt it wasn't close enough to an 'about to drive' moment
- Some felt the 'Radio Spot' went on too long and skirted in to 'drunk' behavior
- At her worst, they imagined the 'Warning Signs' character as a nag or an authoritative mom/dad character

Moving Forward:

- Keep the focus on Buzzed moments that are more strongly linked to driving
- When casting/directing the 'Warning Signs' character, try to avoid a nag and look for a concerned/got your back persona
- Explore other warning signs to feature in communications

"I know if I'm thinking about dancing I've had one too many… so yeah, I probably shouldn't drive either." – Clint, Austin TX

"I disagree. I like dancing. How is that a 'drunk thing'?" – Stefane, Los Angeles CA

"I really liked the first half, but when he started crying over cats and calling out to Gina it lost me." Arian, Los Angeles CA

"I hope she's not a nag. No one likes a nag." – Shawn, Los Angeles CA

"It shouldn't be too authoritative… like you're getting in trouble from mom and dad. I'm more likely to listen to a friend who is just looking out for me, or trying to have my back." – Colin, Los Angeles CA

‘TAKING CHANCES’

Strategically: It points out when people heed their sense of doubt, yet cast caution to the wind when they ‘may have had’ one too many

Creatively: Provides recognizable analogies of when people are less willing to take chances yet more willing to drive ‘buzzed’

Executionally: The comparisons to spoiled milk, nut allergies, and organics are recognizable, but many struggled with whether or not they were comparable to the risks of buzzed driving

“It makes you think about your life via the choices you make. Sometimes ‘maybe’ isn’t good enough’.” – Kristian, Austin TX

“There’s all of this stupid stuff we won’t take chances on and what we should really care more about is not driving drunk… or even buzzed.” – Ravi, Austin TX

“You wouldn’t risk your health when there’s a clear risk so why do we do it with drinking and driving?” – Graham, Austin TX

“It makes me think… Why do we avoid small, obvious risks but not others?” – Clayton, Austin, TX

MONTAGE WORKS THE HARDEST

- Casts a wider net to broaden appeal
- Seemed to hold short attention spans interest a bit longer
- Hammered home 'Probably' idea with multiple mentions/scenarios
- Connects it to a moment of truth before someone thinks they're 'probably okay' to drive

Moving Forward:

- If you can only do one spot, the 'Taking Chances' Montage does a very good job of seeding the language of 'Probably Okay, Isn't Okay' and can connect with a wide audience

"I like how they keep repeating 'probably' over and over again. It makes it more clear how 'Probably okay, isn't okay'." – Colin, Los Angeles CA

"The more trivial the moment is when they don't take chances, the more obvious it is to not drive buzzed. I really liked the montage ad because it really hit that idea home." – Graham, Austin TX

BOTH ‘NUT ALLERGY’ AND ‘MILK’ MET WITH MIXED RESPONSE

- For those wanting a stronger comparison to latch on to, ‘Nut Allergy’ felt closer to a life/death situation of drunk driving
  - Others felt scene took too long to develop and felt an allergy restriction, mixed with a caloric intake comment, distracted from the real point of the ad
- The aversion to ‘Spoiled Milk’ was highly relevant, but most felt the characters took a chance most wouldn’t be wiling to take
  - And generally came across as a ‘stoner’ moment, not a buzzed from alcohol moment
- Most felt these spots needed a better ending with a stronger resolution

Moving Forward:

- Consider tightening the scripts, finding an alternative to milk/cereal, and freezing the frame in the moment of ‘Probably’ with an added reference to calling a friend or using a ride share app

“I like the Nut Allergy better in that the gravity of the situation is more comparable to buzzed driving.” – Clayton, Austin TX

“If you’re not willing to play around with your nut allergies, it’s absurd to play around with drunk driving.” – William, Paramus NJ

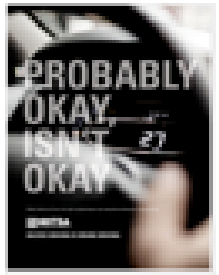
“I would never leave the house to get milk, I’d have something else.” – Shawn, Los Angeles CA

“Seems like a couple of stoners.” – Colin, Los Angeles CA

“We shouldn’t watch them walk out the door. That implies they drove anyway. It should freeze in the moment of ‘probably’ or show them opening up the UBER app like the other ads did.” – Michael, Los Angeles

“They really need to add the Uber app at the end. Otherwise it seems like they just kept on going and ‘probably’ drove.” – Michael, Paramus NJ

SOME PRINT WORKED BETTER THAN OTHERS



PROBABLY OKAY WON'T STAND UP IN COURT seen as a consequence based execution

- Many felt the pain/hassle of this courtroom situation and felt it was extremely effective

PROBABLY OKAY ISN'T OKAY kept focus on an 'about to drive' moment

- But some felt playing with the radio didn't capture a 'warning sign' moment

IF YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT TEXTING YOUR EX was generally well received

- Seen as relevant and attention getting – many expressed how they've 'been there' and that it's a clear sign you're not thinking straight
- Though most felt the image could be strengthened

Moving Forward:

- Consider an image that shows someone about to push the 'Start' button (or turn the keys)
- Consider showing a 'sloppy' text with beer/drink in frame to drive home alcohol induced moment/thought process

"It's the whole notion of 'scaring me straight'. Point out the worst case scenario and I'm more likely to listen." – Michael, Los Angeles CA

"I can see this hanging above a urinal in a bar. Makes you think twice before getting in car." – Clint, Austin TX

"I like the idea of texting your Ex, I just hate the picture." – Keith, Paramus NJ

These executions need improvement

PROBABLY OKAY IS POSSIBLY DISASTROUS generally lacked engagement, as most felt it could/should have more shock value. As a result it came across quite weak/vague

PRETTY SOBER ISN'T SOBER Also lacked engagement as many were confused by the picture, or felt it strayed from the 'probably' idea we've worked so hard to cement

Moving Forward:

- Consider a more arresting picture more in line with 'disastrous' moment
- Consider using 'Probably' instead of 'Pretty' and a different picture that better connects with an 'about to drive' moment

"This reminds me of the 'red asphalt' video they showed me in Drivers Ed. I think showing the deadly consequences can be really impactful." – LaMarcus, Los Angeles CA

'Meh. Seems like they should keep using probably. Like 'Probably Sober' isn't sober." – Shawn, Paramus NJ

"What is that? The Moon?" – Diego, Paramus NJ

Additional Ideas

Everyone loved the UBER FOR BUZZED DRIVING

- Discount on round trip encourages them to make the smart decision

The banner ads generated a laugh, but few felt they would actually click on them

- More were concerned others wouldn't get the joke

'Buzzed or Not' App appeared to miss the mark

#IAMOkay failed to gain any traction

Moving Forward:

- Explore the partnership with Uber as it will help incentivize better decision making and could be a tag at the end of the spots highlighting the option

"I would definitely use that app. That's one thing you think about when leaving your car. It's going to cost you double to come back and get it." – Michael, Los Angeles CA

"They're funny, but I think some people might not get the joke and think breath mints do beat breathalyzers." – Kristian, Austin TX

"The Buzzed or not game seems like a waste of time and a let down." – Roberto, Paramus NJ

Thank you!

To further discuss this debrief & any next steps:

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