

**2004 Seat Belt Safety Campaign
Materials Assessment
Alberta Occupant Restraint Initiative**

- A Qualitative Report -

In April/May 2004, focus groups were held with rural male drivers aged 16 to 34 years to assess the Seat Belt Safety campaign materials for Calder Bateman on behalf of the Alberta Occupant Restraint Initiative.

Presented to: Calder Bateman Communications on behalf
of the Alberta Occupant Restraint Program

Presented by: Criterion Research Corp.

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1. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

In May/June 2004, Criterion Research conducted qualitative research for Calder Bateman on behalf of the Alberta Occupant Restraint Program (AORP.)

Focus group research has been an integral part of the ongoing process for AORP over a number of years. This report details a brief summary of the focus group testing for the 2004 Seat Belt Safety Campaign creative material.

The overall purpose of the creative materials is to encourage consistent seat belt use and to motivate someone to “buckle up” when they hear or see the advertising. The research will assess the effectiveness of the materials in achieving this goal. As well, the research will assess the motivations and barriers to seat belt usage to support both current and future strategic approaches.

Specifically, the objectives for this research include:

- Identify perceptions and reactions to the campaign and materials
- Gauge appropriateness and comprehension of materials for target audience

The assessment of the 2004 Seat Belt Safety Campaign tested materials for use in public campaigns targeting male drivers aged 16 to 34 years. Materials tested in the focus groups included radio and billboards.

Specific recruitment criteria of participants were developed in close consultation with the client and included representation from young male drivers who primarily drive pick-up trucks or Sport Utility Vehicles and live in rural areas.

A total of four (4) focus groups were held across Alberta. Two (2) groups were held in Edmonton and two (2) groups were held in Ponoka. Target groups in each region included:

- Male drivers aged 16 to 21 years; and
- Male drivers aged 22 to 34 years.

All respondents were recruited by experienced Criterion Research recruiters. The focus groups were moderated by Maureen McCaw.

2. SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

The findings presented in this report provide a summary of the opinions and perceptions expressed by participants of focus groups. Focus groups are exploratory in nature and provide rich and valuable insights into people's views and perceptions. This data is, however, qualitative in nature and should not be generalized or quantified.

2.1 OVERVIEW

USEAGE

Exploration of seatbelt use with this younger male audience illustrates a number of motivations and barriers. There are a core of individuals who consistently wear their seat belts in all circumstances. However, there are others who deviate from consistent use. These individuals define themselves as “seat belt users ” as they consistently put their belts on as part of their habit when getting behind the wheel of the car. However, if they are a passenger, especially in the back seat, seat belt usage is not a consistent habit. The use of seat belts is further eroded when “partying” or when a vehicle is “full of a bunch of people.”

As has been demonstrated in the past, there is a tendency to believe that seat belt usage is not necessary when “you are just going a short distance” or “when you are just around town.” The myth persists that “as long as I not doing highway speeds, I can react as quickly as I need to.”

One of the strongest motivators factors in wearing a belt is the requirement to be a role model to children. Enforcing seatbelt usage with their children “forces” Dad to wear his belt and is a strongly positive correlated factor in developing the habit of “always putting on my seatbelt.” For the younger segment, the pressure exerted by girlfriends in the car is a positive factor – “It is easier to put my seatbelt on than to be bugged by my girlfriend.”

ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement, particularly when supported by meaningful fines, is a critical tool in the effort to encourage seatbelt usage. The dollar amount associated with “getting caught” has to be enough to “hurt” or it is clear that the fine is trivialized or dismissed. Further, the manpower to enforce must also be in place. This research demonstrates that getting a fine does not necessarily encourage someone to put their belt on every time they get into the car. Rather, they are motivated to wear their belt when they think they might get “caught,” like “around town” or “on the exit on to the highway.”

There is a strong perception that “the only person I hurt by not wearing a belt is myself.” Therefore, there is a tendency to see potential demerits as “unfair.” “It’s my right to be an idiot if I want to be. How is that connected to points?”

2.2 ASSESSMENT OF RADIO ADVERTISING

A total of four radio spots were tested in this research. This demographic, males 16 to 34 represent the hard core of non-seatbelt wearers. The goal of these ads is not to be “liked” nor to educate, but to motivate someone to reach over and put on their seatbelt.

2.2.1 Apartment

This ad was generally effective in attracting the attention of males. However, the inferential approach made it more challenging to understand or connect with the message. Respondents noted that they had to “listen to it a couple of times” and “really concentrate.” As it was aptly put, “I like to get laid, but I don’t know what that has to do with wearing my seatbelt.”

The fact that the “real reason” for the ad is not evident until the end of the ad makes respondents comment that it is difficult to figure out that the message is about putting on your seatbelt. As a result, respondents tend to say “I wouldn’t work that hard to bother to understand the ad” or “I’d listen to the ad but it wouldn’t make me put my seatbelt on.

While there are currently some challenges because of the more indirect approach and messaging, this ad demonstrates an approach that could be effective with modifications.

2.2.2 Pete’s Prosthetics

This ad was well executed with strong voice talent. The tone, accent and inflections perfectly captures the essence of the message. This strong execution with its satirical message so casually describing stark and horrific actions and consequences was particularly successful in evoking strong reactions. The originality of presenting “brutal consequences” in this graphic but “matter of fact salesman like way” was appreciated by those who “got” this ad and understood its irony.

However, the effectiveness of this ad is diminished by the success of the kind of ad it is mocking - the archetypal used car ad. Real ads sound like this - lots of “salesman-like patter” that “kind of washes over you.” Therefore, there is a tendency to “tune it out” or to listen but accept the message somewhat literally – “I listened long enough to know I didn’t want what they were selling and then I quit listening.” There were also those that “just didn’t get it” and on whom the irony of the message was lost.

This ad is further challenged by the fact that its companion billboard piece is not seen as strong or effective and tends to be misunderstood or rejected.

2.2.3 *Player Down*

Player Down has significant potential for success meaning creating the motivation for someone to lean over and put their seatbelt on. While it currently has some executional issues, these can be addressed and the ad strengthened on re-record. The strength of this ad is the very clear and, seemingly to respondents, logical connection between protecting your self with a jock strap and protecting yourself with a seat belt “Every man out there can identify with getting “sacked” and how you can avoid it by wearing a cup. It just makes sense to think about a seatbelt in the same way.”

The subject of this ad, a man moaning because he has been hit by a puck in his “private parts” is a situation that men suggest they can relate to and further, that they are likely to discuss this ad with others, a further indicator of its potentially positive impact. However, it is likely that this same subject content will raise eyebrows. While it does not evoke a strong response that suggests it is offensive, or even inappropriate, it is referred to as “risqué” or “on the borderline of good taste.”

The message in this ad is clear, well understood and funny without being clever. Executionally, improvements are required to make sure the listener knows that a hockey game is taking place and that someone has gotten hit. The moaning is thought to “go on too long” and “sounds more like someone is having a baby, not someone who has just gotten hit.” Respondents also suggest that, given the target audience for this ad, the buddy is likely to “have a laugh at him before getting all concerned.”

While there are those who say that they don’t like hockey and are not attracted to this ad, it receives a consistently response and evokes the desired response of “checking to see if my belt is on” and “reaching over to do up my belt.”

2.2.4 *Trena*

From the first listen, it is apparent that this ad is effective in capturing the attention of men and that it definitely encourages them to listen. In fact, there is strong comment that, not only will men listen, they will talk to their buddies about this ad, again increasing the impact of the message.

The “phone sex” hooks the listener in, and the very direct male voice, delivers a strong and clear message that challenges the listener to put on their seatbelt. While there are those who say they “would only listen to the sexy part, it is apparent that the ad is effective in delivering its message of challenge about putting on your belt. It is further anticipated that future listening and conversations with buddies will reinforce the message and the action.

While this ad is effective, what makes it effective also garners strong adverse response. There are definitely those that feel this ad is offensive and demeaning to women and inappropriate for children to hear. Even those who like its directness and bawdiness suggest they would switch the station if they were with their families or that their wife or girlfriend would switch the station if it came on. While caution needs to be used in interpreting qualitative research, this research would indicate that the 16 to 24 males, those who have not yet settled into a family life, are more likely to respond positively to this ad and are less likely to take offense, on behalf of themselves or their loved ones. Given the implied sexual content, it is clearly expected that this ad would be air on radio stations like the Bear and at times of the day where “curious kids wouldn’t be likely to hear it.”

2.3 Billboards

A variety of billboards were assessed. As with the radio, the goal is to motivate the viewer to reach over and out on their seatbelt on seeing the billboard.

PETE'S PROSTHETICS

This billboard was less effective in attracting attention and delivering its message. While it was intended to be ironic and reminiscent of an old style ad, the irony tended to be missed. The message tended to be accepted literally and therefore to evoke a "why would I want to buy a prosthetic?"

HANDICAPPED PARKING

The irony tended to be missed and therefore, the effectiveness of the ad was diminished. There were even those that perceive a "mixed message" because "handicapped people always get the best parking."

SURGICAL UTENSILS

This billboard does have a strong impact for a certain type of viewer who fears surgery and who can visualize the situation that would require "bloody surgical tools" to be used. However, in general this billboard is less effective because it is less direct and implies rather than demonstrates its consequence.

BATTERED FACE

While a battered face is a far cry from death or serious injury, it is a consequence that is real and can be easily related to. "Man, nobody wants to look like that." It is also a consequence that is understood to be likely to happen if you don't wear your seatbelt and have an accident while driving.

One of the challenges with this ad is the response that says “How do we know this happened because of a car accident? He just could have gotten beat up.”

AMPUTEE

This billboard is effective in motivating the action of putting on a seatbelt. “I wouldn’t want that to happen to me.” These men identify with the sports they like to play and watch and therefore, this consequence has a “realness” to it that they can relate to.

The facelessness of the figure adds to the power making it more “everyman, ” However, it puts exceptional responsibility on the amputee. There is some suggestion that it would be more powerful to see the “after effects” meaning an amputee in street clothes, rather than in a hospital gown .

One of the “pushbacks” about this billboard is the reaction that says “You don’t get an amputated leg from not wearing your seatbelt.”

3. KEY FINDINGS

All the material that was tested was strong and well aimed at its target market. However, some of the strategic executions were more effective in evoking the desired response of motivating immediate seat belt usage.

RADIO

Player Down and Trena are most effective in motivating the action to lean over and put your seatbelt on.

Player Down creates a logical connection to a logical action - wearing equipment to protect yourself from injury. It delivers its message with humor and power. There are straightforward executional issues to be resolved. It is seen as “out there” but is not overtly offensive or inappropriate.”

Trena garners a strong and repeated listenership and will evoke additional discussion, strengthening its effectiveness. The message is clear with contrast of the strong male narrator being a good foil to the sex kitten hook. The sexual innuendo in this ad will result in adverse reactions particularly that it is demeaning to women and inappropriate for children. It is expected that it would be on select radio stations and in carefully scheduled time slots.

BILLBOARD

Battered Face and Amputee demonstrate real and meaningful consequences that are effective in motivating immediate seatbelt usage. While these consequences are not extreme they are perceived as real, and especially for Battered Face, probable consequences of a car accident without a seatbelt. Surgical Tools is also effective but is more linear and reaches a narrower audience.