Evaluation of Drunk Driving Campaign among Young People - Attitudes and Accident Trend

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Summary

The vital message of this campaign was to persuade, primarily young girls, to try to prevent drunk driving, especially among young men. New questionnaire results indicate a quite clear attitude: It is up to each individual to try to prevent drunk driving, not only among family members and friends, but also among people you do not know. Actually, about 60 per cent of the respondents have tried to prevent others from drunk driving by various methods, e.g. persuade them from driving, offer to stay overnight, try to get their keys or even physically block their passage. Among these, about 70 per cent have been successful in their efforts.

Introduction

Results of the nation-wide Danish roadside survey (1985-87) on drinking and driving demonstrated that male drivers aged 18-24 years had the lowest frequency of drunk driving, but an accident risk considerably higher than other age groups. This fact forms the background of various publicity campaigns during recent years against drunk driving, especially directed towards young people. This paper deals with some evaluation results of a drunk driving campaign conducted in 1991 among young adults aged 17-20 years.

Campaign message

In addition to the usual campaign message: "don't drive after drinking", this campaign introduced a new message: "prevent drunk driving - also among your fellows." Thus, the main theme of the campaign was to persuade young adults, mainly young girls to try to prevent drunk driving, especially among young men.

Campaign means

The campaign ran during the months of May and June, 1991. Local initiatives supported in some parts of the country the nation-wide campaign. A leaflet entitled "Prevent drunk driving" was addressed to all girls and boys at the age of 17-20 years. The leaflet described various methods to prevent drunk driving and gave examples of successful DUI prevention efforts. Further, it contained much useful information: e.g. young drivers' accident risk, guidelines for alcohol levels for small and large persons after consumption of certain amounts of
alcohol, breath testing and police enforcement. Posters, cinema and TV-spots, were also vital elements to highlight the campaign message.

Evaluation phases

The evaluation had three phases. One: collection of accident data for the preceding three years, before, during and after the campaign period. Two: A pilot questionnaire study among passengers during special bus transportation to open air rock concerts. Three: A questionnaire study among a representative sample within the target group. This paper concentrates on the results of phase three. Unfortunately, conditions did not allow a trial questionnaire before the campaign.

Questionnaire study

The Council of Road Safety (Danish agency responsible for road safety campaigns) handled mailing of questionnaire forms, while the Danish Council of Road Safety Research was in charge of selection of random sample, collection and analysis of data, including publication of results. Questionnaire contents and accompanying letters were produced in co-operation.

The questionnaire study was conducted among a sample of 1300 girls and boys in the target group in October-November, 1991 - about four months after the campaign.

Respondents

Almost 1000 - more girls than boys - filled in the questionnaire. After one reminder, response rate attained 78 per cent.

About two thirds of the respondents had a car driver licence - the vast majority also opportunities to drive. No difference was found in replies from licence-holders and non-licence-holders.

RESULTS

59 per cent of the young adults indicate that they have actually tried to prevent drunk driving by various methods after the campaign. Among these about 70 per cent report that they have been successful in their efforts.

DUI prevention efforts

Most girls and boys have tried - to persuade someone from drunk driving (90 per cent) - offered someone to stay overnight (68 per cent) - tried to get the car keys (52 per cent) or physically blocked the passage (15 per cent). A few, 12 per cent of the boys and three per cent of the girls, have fiddled with the car, so it could not drive.

Transportation habits

Young adults' solution of the problem: how to come home after a party, if you have had too much to drink, is also illustrated. A number of options could be
crossed. A majority (75 per cent) generally choose to stay overnight or walk home (63 per cent). About 60 per cent either go by bus or by car with someone who can legally drive. Only very few state that they drive their own car.

Change of behaviour

However, about 50 per cent indicate that at one time they have been driving with someone despite a suspicion of drunk driving. Besides, a great many claim that during the last six months they have been to parties, where someone drove home under the influence. Further, 11 per cent of the girls and 24 per cent of the boys (with licence) admit drunk driving on a previous occasion. This information should be related to the replies from seven per cent of the girls and nine per cent of the boys, who maintain that after the campaign they have changed their usual transportation habits after a party - primarily by going home by bus or taxi, walk home or call for someone to take them home. Or in advance by designating one person who, as the driver, is responsible for legal driving.

Attitudes

The question "What is your attitude to prevent drunk driving" was open for ticking off a number of options. Practically all girls and boys are of the opinion that they will try to prevent drunk driving - primarily among friends (97 per cent), among family members (96 per cent), but also among persons unknown to them (38 per cent). Only about 12 per cent state that drunk driving is only a matter for the police.

Attention to campaign

The campaign message has reached the age group to a very high degree through the medias used. The majority have noticed the message in more than one medium. About 25 per cent have caught sight of the message in two medias and more than 50 per cent in 3 or 4 medias. Only two per cent have not noticed the message at all.

Posters have caught attention remarkably well. About 85 per cent have noticed them, but the majority - 69% - have also paid attention to the leaflet. Surprisingly for this age group, TV seems to be a stronger medium than cinemas. About 80 per cent have noticed the campaign spots on TV, against about 45 per cent in cinemas.

Accident trend

In Denmark, accidents involving impaired road users have shown a significant fall (31 per cent) from 1984-1991. Especially young drivers contribute to this development. Thus, drivers aged 18-24 years account for the largest relative decrease (41 per cent) over the period. Reliable DUI accident data are not yet available for 1991, but preliminary figures involving young drunken drivers tend towards a steadily favourable development.
Conclusion

It may be concluded that the message of this "prevent-drunk-driving" campaign has caught the attention of the target group to a very high degree.

Accidents involving young, especially male drunken drivers have shown a significant fall over the last few years indicating a change of attitude and behaviour. However, traffic safety is affected by a number of factors the influence of which it is difficult to determine separately. For instance introduction of a new driver education (1985), improved road safety conditions, changes in police enforcement strategies, as well as a number of publicity campaigns against drunk driving.

New questionnaire results after the most recent campaign confirm that young adults' attitude is quite clear: drunk driving is not just a problem for the police, but something that each individual should help to prevent.

References:


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