

Lessons Learned from a Health & Policy-Related Secondhand Smoke Health Communication Campaign

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Introduction

Maine is the first state to document the increase in prevalence of reported smoke-free rules in private cars and homes before and after the passage of a smoke-free vehicle law.¹ To raise awareness about the effects of secondhand smoke exposure and to educate the public about the law that bans smoking in vehicles when children under age 16 are present, the Partnership for a Tobacco-Free Maine (PTM) implemented a statewide health communication campaign titled, “Wherever You Live and Breathe, Go Smoke-Free” as part of its comprehensive tobacco control program. Scientific literature supports government interventions, such as health and policy-related mass media campaigns.¹⁻¹⁰ The promotion of smoke-free cars is becoming an increasingly important tobacco control strategy.⁵

Background

Three television advertisements and two radio advertisements were aired in Maine’s three designated market areas (DMA’s): Portland/Auburn, Bangor, and Presque Isle. Among the three television advertisements, the first titled, *It’s Like They Are Smoking*, was used to educate parents about involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke from a child’s point of view.

The second advertisement titled, *Trapped*, shows how secondhand smoke clings to the interior of a car, including a baby’s seat (Figure 1). The message serves to increase awareness that while not always visible, the harmful effects of the smoke from cigarettes lingers. *No Place to Hide*, using a similar camera effect as “Trapped,” follows secondhand smoke as it infiltrates every area of a home (Figure 3).

In addition, two radio advertisements aired statewide including, *Baby Jack*, a lighthearted spot to raise awareness about Maine’s smoke-free vehicle law and the importance of not smoking around children in a vehicle, as well as *Some Kids*, a more serious advertisement that identifies the harmful effects of secondhand smoke home exposure among children.

Methods

The “Wherever You Live and Breathe, Go Smoke-Free” secondhand smoke media campaign evaluation involved a cross-sectional population-based random sample of Maine residents age 18 or older from across the state, with an over-sample of smokers. The study used a probability sampling approach, with the initial sample drawn proportionally by

county across Maine. An additional 402-respondent over-sample of current smokers was collected, to gain insight among this population. The final total of 1,606 completed interviews was used for this evaluation. Data collection took place March 19 through May 1, 2009.



Figure 1: Trapped

A telephone survey was used to collect responses to survey items from the volunteer participants. Interviews were conducted from the Critical Insights Information Center employing the computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system.



Figure 2: Nowhere to Hide

Results

Among the 1,606 participants, two-fifths were male (42 %) and three fifths were women (58%). More than one third of the survey population (35.2%) completed high school or a GED. Approximately two thirds (67.7%) of the survey population smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime. Less than two thirds (62.9%) did not smoke, one third (30.4%) smoked cigarettes every day and 6.7% smoked on some days.

Among the sample, 85.9 % of the respondents had self-reported awareness of at least one component of the campaign. As many as 72% of the sample provided confirmed awareness of at least

one attribute of the campaign, that is, accurately described a specific advertisement or theme of an advertisement or collateral item. More than eight out of ten respondents (82.5%) knew that it is illegal in Maine to smoke in a car when children under 16 are present. Young adults had the highest correct response to this statement (98.2%).

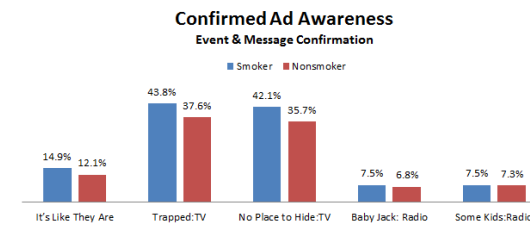


Figure 3

Conclusion

Survey respondents were significantly more likely to remember the two television advertisements, *Trapped* and *Nowhere to Hide*, which can be categorized as evoking negative emotions (Figure 3). Negative emotive tobacco counter-marketing advertisements have been shown to be effective, especially when realistic and new information, with an element of self-efficacy, is provided to the viewers.^{2,3,7,8,10,11} Specifically, a study found that having a strong perception of harm from secondhand smoke exposure was associated with having smoking bans.¹² Advertisements that are remembered are said to have ‘staying power’, meaning that while they may not be aired often people still remember them.¹⁰

Implications

Health communication campaigns to educate people about the harm from secondhand smoke exposure may increase smoking bans in homes and compliance in cars.^{1,12,13} Campaigns focusing on secondhand smoke may strengthen support for the protection of vulnerable populations from secondhand smoke exposure and increase the population’s knowledge about the negative effects of secondhand smoke. As in the case with Maine, such a campaign may continue the forward progress in reducing exposure to SHS and provide insight for other localities, states, and countries.

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