

This section provides the conclusions drawn from the research findings

CONCLUSIONS

Observed impact

The results detailed in Sections 4 to 6 of this report, and summarised in tables in the executive summary, show that the changes observed in behaviour from November 2008 to April 2009 are generally positive (though not uniformly so, and all of the improvements apply to only some part of the target audience of 15–25 year-olds and/or to parents). The pattern of results is uniformly positive for knowledge, and more widespread, applying to two of three, or three of four, of the age categories asked each question. The results for attitudes fall in between those for behaviour and those for knowledge in terms of the proportion of changes which are positive, though no change is observed in more than one of the three age categories for those attitudes asked of 15–25 year-olds.

Awareness, reach and diagnostics

The results on awareness, reach and diagnostics are encouraging among the primary target audience of 15–25 year-olds. Awareness of advertising has increased. Recall of the negative effects of drinking and the association of drinking with violence and crime as advertising messages are up across all three age categories of 15–25 year-olds. These are the most widespread and consistent changes observed from November 2008 to April 2009.

Net campaign reach was high, at between 84% and 86% of the three age categories of 15–25 year-olds. Further, participants generally agreed that the television advertising was attention-grabbing, believable, informative and confronting, as all audience categories had levels of agreement between 85% and 96% for those attributes. Perceived relevance was more moderate among 15–25 year-olds for both executions, between 45% and 64%, with figures highest for 18–21 year-olds. Encouragingly, the TVCs were seen as more relevant as risk level of last occasion increased, ranging from 38% to 45% for those who had never had an alcoholic

drink and from 60% to 66% for those who drank at high risk levels on their last drinking occasion.

While a secondary target audience, the results among parents of 13–17 year-olds are also positive. Recall of the negative effects of drinking and the association of drinking with violence and crime as advertising messages are up among these parents, and their net campaign reach at 80% is only slightly lower than for the primary target audience. Results on the applicable diagnostics for the television ad were higher among parents than 15–25 year-olds, with between 92% and 98% agreement. Perceived relevance was not asked of parents.

Reported impact

Participants among the primary target audience were highly likely to agree with several impact statements regarding the campaign, with at least three-quarters of 15–25 year-olds agreeing that the advertisements made them think about various aspects of drinking.

Reported impact of the advertisements on consumption was weaker. Even so, the proportion of 15–25 year-olds who reported that they had reduced their drinking in response to the advertisements varied from 27% to 31% among 15–25 year-olds.

The proportion of 15–25 year-olds prompted to talk about various aspects of the negative consequences of drinking ranged from 31% to 56% with regard to talking to friends, and ranged from 17% to 52% with regard to talking to parents.

In terms of the secondary target audience of parents of 13–17 year-olds, they reported a greater level of agreement than 15–25 year-olds with all but one of the analogous impact statements asked of both target audiences. The exception was whether they had reduced their own consumption in response to the campaign, and even on this measure, 19% of parents reported the campaign had an effect on them. Finally, parents reported that the campaign had prompted them to undertake a range of protective strategies related to their children's drinking ranging from 'keeping an eye on them and knowing who they go out with and where they go' (83%) and 'setting a good example and demonstrating responsible drinking' (83%) to 'preventing them from going to places where there will be alcohol' (50%).

In sum, the self-reported impacts of the campaign are much larger and more consistent than changes observed by measuring differences between November 2008 and April 2009. As such, they provide a strong body of secondary evidence for the success of the campaign. It may be suggested that reported impact entails an element of flattery, while differences over time are reality. In a sense this is true, but it is rarely possible to have stable baseline measures, which are not being affected by time-of-year, seasonality and a range of other extraneous factors. The fact of the matter is that people did report that the campaign was having an impact on

them, and that does not happen for all campaigns. If the target audience did not think the campaign was effective, then they would have no hesitation in indicating this.

In conclusion

These results provide preliminary evidence that the campaign has had a positive, though modest, impact. Given that drinking to excess is so engrained in the Australian culture, this is perhaps as much as can be hoped for as the result of a first year of a communication campaign. Data from the next two waves of the evaluation will help to determine the extent to which the campaign is likely have contributed to these improvements and also the extent to which these improvements can be sustained and indeed improved upon with further campaign activity. This is particularly crucial given that time of year is likely to have some impact, particularly on drinking behaviours, in which case changes from one year to the same time of the year twelve months later will provide more robust evidence of the residual effect of the first wave of communication activity. Further, comparing April 2009 to April 2010 will also show the cumulative effect of two waves of communication activity, and the incremental effect of the second wave of communication activity.