Press Vibes & Videotapes – A Peer Road Safety Education Project

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ABSTRACT

The RAC’s ‘Press, Vibes and Videotapes’ (PVV) competition in 2005 challenged students to design and produce a television, radio or newspaper road safety advert for a target audience of young road users from their own age group. Students from years 10, 11 and 12 from across Western Australia were invited to compete for individual and school prizes and the chance to have their winning advert seen or heard by thousands of young people across the state. Entries were judged on innovation and creativity, communication of key messages, professionalism and impact of the message on a young audience. The results were presented in the major daily newspaper, on a youth radio station, and at Hoyts cinemas in WA.

Young people communicating and collaborating within their own age group is likely to increase the effectiveness of the road safety message being transferred successfully. Results from the PWV competition supports the use of this methodology and the importance of partnering with media organisations so as to increase the benefits from road safety education targeted at the difficult youth market.

INTRODUCTION

In 2005 the RAC Community Education Section re-launched its annual Road Safety Competition re-titled as ‘Press, Vibes and Videotapes’ (PVV). This is a project to raise awareness of road safety and engagement within the young high-risk age group (15 – 24 year olds). As an extension of the RAC Community Education program, the new look PVV competition challenged young students to design and produce a television, radio or newspaper road safety advert for a target audience of road users from their own age group.

Research suggests that young people communicating and collaborating within their own age group is likely to increase the effectiveness of the road safety message being transferred successfully (Henderson, 1992).

In semester one of 2005, students from years 10, 11 and 12 from schools across Western Australia were invited to take part in this competition. Students aged mostly between 15 and 17 years would compete for individual and school prizes, and the opportunity to have their winning advert seen or heard by thousands of other young people across the state. Entries were judged on innovation and creativity, communication of key messages, quality of presentation, and potential impact of the message on a young audience.
BACKGROUND

Young people between the ages of 15 – 24 years represent the highest risk group for serious injury and death from road crashes (Triggs & Smith, 1996). The Press, Vibes and Videotapes competition was a means of raising awareness and discussion of road safety issues focusing on this high risk age group. It is likely that young people communicating and collaborating within their own age group increases the effectiveness of the road safety message being transferred successfully, and potential for a positive change in the behaviour of young road users.

The competition encouraged students to consider the major behavioural factors that contribute to the youth road casualties and develop an advert to communicate that message to people of their own age group. The RAC encouraged students when developing their adverts to focus on:

- Drink Driving
- Speeding
- Fatigue
- Lack of use of restraints & seat belts
- Inexperience in road traffic
- Mobile phone use whilst driving

Students were required to research their chosen topic and ensure that all facts and figures used in their adverts were correct and relevant. They also had to collaborate with their fellow students to design a creative idea and use this information to communicate the message to their peers.

Students were encouraged to discuss road safety themes that were most important to them and create an entry that would ensure a strong impact of the message. This was revealed in the judging stage, where fatigue and use of a mobile phone while driving were the most consistent theme in the entries. This result could be linked to a Road Safety Council of WA advertising campaign, to raise awareness of fatigue as a major factor in road crashes, that was active during the months leading up to the closing date of the competition.

To encourage maximum participation from students and increase the range of media exposure the winning entries would receive, the RAC expanded the 2004 print competition to offer three separate entry categories in 2005:

1. **Press** - Press adverts were to be A3 in size, and all graphic designs had to be high resolution. Computer generated graphic designs, photography & hand drawn adverts were all accepted in this category.
2. **TV** – Adverts were to be no longer than 30 seconds in length and had to be recorded (not just written scripts).
3. **Radio** – Adverts were to be no longer than 30 seconds in length and had to be recorded.

The competition was open statewide and students were able to have multiple entries and entries in more than one category, either as an individual or in groups. A first prize was awarded to the winner of each category: $2,000 to the school plus an individual prize to the students and teachers involved.

The introduction of the three categories ensured that the competition could be taken up by more high schools, and hence students, as it opened up the opportunity for teachers to introduce the competition to their classes by choosing the appropriate category to fit in with their curriculum. For example, entries were received from high school classes of English, Media Production and Analysis, Health Studies, Visual Arts, and Visual Communication and Design.
PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS

The development process of the competition involved consultation with many organisations including government agencies involved in road safety, education authorities, and media relations groups so as to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

Media partners were consulted and actively involved for the purpose of ensuring the appropriate strategies were in place to select and best communicate the winning entries. An important component was securing a representative from each partner to participate in the judging process eg. Determining the judging criteria and involvement in the final awards assessment. These partners advised on appropriate avenues for effective media exposure of the winning entries so as to best capture the youth target audience.

Much consideration was placed on ensuring the media exposure granted to the winning entries actually reached the youth market. For example, consideration was given to the time slots that the radio winner was ‘aired’, the cinema locations, screening times and type of films the winning video entry was to be screened before, in association with the branding and image of the competition as a whole.

COMMUNICATION & MEDIA LEVERAGE

Sustained and targeted communication of the PVV competition was vital to project success throughout each key stage of the competition: launch, implementation and wind-up. The communication channels used throughout the process were consistent and included direct mail-outs of information to schools, face-to-face promotions and various forms of ‘above the line’ media (press, radio and internet).

Stage One: Communication at launch and during implementation of the competition:

- The competition was initially promoted via a mail-out to all WA secondary schools (both metropolitan and regional areas)
- Launched in the April/May edition of RAC Road Patrol magazine to members (circulation of 380,000)
- Editorial in education press including School Matters – distribution to every WA primary and high school.
- The West Australian newspaper’s Motoring Section – (circulation of 400,000)
- Promoted by radio 92.9FM in their Hot 30 Countdown which reaches an average of 37,000 listeners (47% market share of youth radio listeners).
- Face-to-face presentations to various road safety stakeholders – including agency ROC forum and Road Safety in Schools Coordination group meetings.
- Promoted through RAC Community Education presentations throughout semester one of 2005 involving over 300 presentations to an audience of 12,500 students

Stage Two: Communication of winning entries during wind-up:

Reporting of the results of the Press, Vibes and Videotapes competition to the youth and the wider WA community was through the media partners:

Print category winner

- WA’s statewide daily newspaper The West Australian was the media partner for the print category. The West Australian promoted the competition in the Motoring Section from February to August 2005, published the winning print advert in full colour on August 13th, and provided prizes to the winners and runners-up.
The winning print entry 'I Love You Tomorrow' (shown below) also featured as the cover of the Oct/Nov issue of the RAC's Road Patrol magazine with a full page story covering the competition and its results.

Radio category winner
- WA's most popular youth-oriented radio station, 92.9FM, was the media partner for the radio category. 92.9FM broadcast the winning radio advert following the awards ceremony, as well as providing prizes to the winners and runners-up.

Video category winner
- Hoyts cinemas hosted the awards ceremony in Perth which was attended by 400 guests, many of whom were students who entered the competition.
- Hoyts also screened the winning video advert for two weeks following the awards ceremony. The 30 second advert was screened at 10 Hoyts and Greater Union cinemas across Perth over a period of 2 weeks.
- The winning video entry was screened at the RAC Centenary exhibition at Perth and country community shows: Royal Show, Wagin Woolarama, Dowerin Field Day, and Brunswick Show. An estimated 30,000 people visited the RAC award-winning exhibition throughout 2005.
The winning video advert has also been a focus point of many RAC information displays including the displays at the RAC Community Safety month School Program at Forrest Chase Perth, during which the winners and finalists’ entries were broadcast on-screen.

The winning and finalists entries were also shown to thousands of senior high school students across WA as a feature in the RAC Community Education school-based presentations throughout 2005-06.

The RAC promoted the competition heavily through its membership magazine, Road Patrol. The magazine is posted to the homes of the RAC’s 460,000 members across Western Australia, and is the state’s second-highest circulating publication after The West Australian newspaper. More than twenty regional WA newspapers also covered the competition during the year.

SUCCESS OF PROJECT

The success of the Press, Vibes and Videotapes competition was measured by the:

- number of competition entries received by the RAC;
- number of schools involved in preparation of competition entries;
- level of media exposure;
- level of involvement in the awards event from students and teachers, and communication of results.

In 2004 nine schools (with 19 entries in total) entered the inaugural RAC Road Safety Video Competition. The target for 2005 was to double that number through the introduction of the new multimedia competition – Press, Vibes & Videotapes. In 2005 the number of entries rose to 63 from over 30 schools and involved the direct participation of 150 students (based on names on joint entries). Teachers from schools that entered the competition commented that the creation of one entry involves the work of many people within the school. Thus, the competition indirectly exposed road safety messages to a wider audience of young people.

The most common themes for competition entries were speeding, drink driving, fatigue and inappropriate use of a mobile phone. Only two entries were submitted in the radio category.
An additional aim was to secure media partners and their involvement for all competition categories to ensure maximum exposure of the road safety messages. The project team succeeded in securing involvement of the state's largest daily newspaper, the metro area's most popular youth radio station and one of the state's largest cinema chains. Over $100,000 worth of media coverage of the road safety messages to youth and general community audiences was generated through these sources. This represented good leverage on the direct project costs of $15,000.

A target was set of 150 students to attend the awards ceremony where the finalists of each category were to be shown and the winners announced. The result of more than 300 attending students (including entrants and classmates) far exceeded the expectations of the project organisers.

Anecdotal feedback from many teachers was that the competition, particularly the winning entries and finalists, was communicated to many parents and students at the participating schools through information in the school newsletters and announcements at school assemblies of students and parents.

SUMMARY

The RAC's Press Vibes & Videotapes competition in 2005 was assessed as a worthwhile road safety project. There was an increase in the number of entries in the competition, number of students involved in preparation of entries, number of schools involved (and thus greater exposure of road safety messages to the target group), and good leverage of project funding through partnering with major media groups.

The number of competition entries rose from 19 in 2004 to 63 entries in 2005. The entries addressed various road safety themes and focused on the major behavioural factors contributing to serious road casualties (speed, fatigue, alcohol, lack of restraint use, and mobile phone use whilst driving). Significantly more students were involved in direct creation of adverts to address these themes and the results were exposed to significantly more students in the target group.

Through partnering with major media groups, the winning entries were communicated to the wider WA metro and regional community audiences via cinema, radio and press exposure. The competition received more than $100,000 of free road safety coverage through the involvement of the competition's high-profile media partners. This result was good leverage on the direct project costs of $15,000.

The Press Vibes & Videotapes competition was a unique and successful means of involving and engaging high school aged youth in key road safety issues. Peer to peer road safety education is considered to be a promising way of reaching and engaging youth. The target audience is a difficult group to reach in communicating road safety messages and this methodology, plus communication leverage through major media channels, is worthy of consideration in future youth education projects.

REFERENCES

- Triggs, T. & Smith, K (1996) Young driver research program: Digest of reports and principal findings of the research. Canberra: FORS.