

# WASHINGTON

## Mall Market Research

### ▶ AT-A-GLANCE

#### ▶ Project Characteristics

Research  
Public Opinion

#### ▶ Program Areas

Occupant Protection  
Public Information and  
Education

#### ▶ Targeted Populations

General Public

#### ▶ Type of Jurisdiction

Community

#### ▶ Jurisdiction Size

213,000

#### ▶ Funding

Section 405: \$ 1,100

#### ▶ Contact

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## Problem Identification

The Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) oversees the production of highway safety-related television and radio spots. Between September 2002 and July 2003, WTSC spent \$900,000 on paid media to publicize traffic safety projects. The media spots publicizing the seat belt, "Click It or Ticket", project and the anti-impaired driving message, "Drive Hammered. Get Nailed."

WTSC wanted to confirm that the media spots being produced and aired were being received by the target audience in a manner consistent with WTSC's expectations. WTSC conducted a research project to test the impact of the media spots as well as to explore the feasibility and efficiency of an alternative mode of market research.

Market research efforts in the past had proven to be costly and the results were often disappointing. For example, WTSC has incurred costs of nearly \$8,000 for a focus group that only obtained the opinion of eight or ten people.

## Goals and Objectives

The goal of the WTSC Mall Market Research Project was to obtain a large public opinion sample to assess the effectiveness of radio and television seat belt and DUI (Driving Under the Influence) media spots without expending a large amount of money.

The program's objectives include:

- Assess the effectiveness of the "Click It or Ticket" and the "Drive Hammered. Get Nailed" programs based on participant feedback;
- Gather as much information as possible without incurring high costs (budget for the project was \$1000);
- Determine whether the following four goals that WTSC uses to guide development and production of television and radio spots have been met. Radio and television spots must:
  - Stand out amidst the clutter of the approximately 2,000 media messages that an individual encounters each day;
  - Inform the public about a traffic safety enforcement campaign that is either pending or underway;
  - Entertain the public without presenting the message in an amateur or annoying way; and
  - Present the message in such a way that the public can accept it without any negative reaction or publicity;
- Determine whether media spots are influencing behavioral changes.

## Strategies and Activities

WTSC staff identified questions that survey participants could answer that would indicate whether the media spots were achieving the expected objectives and were persuasive. WTSC staff then developed a public opinion survey form using these questions.

WTSC rented space in a busy shopping mall in Olympia, Washington, and set up three semi-private booths staffed by a WTSC staff market researcher and equipped with a television and VCR. WTSC staff members distributed fliers to mall shoppers alerting them to the market research project.

WTSC paid project participants \$10 to watch two television spots and answer four questions posed by the market researcher. Participants were also provided snacks to encourage them to spend as much time as necessary to answer the questions thoroughly.

## Results

WTSC's Mall Market Research Project achieved the following results:

- The cost to conduct the mall research was a fraction of the cost to convene a traditional focus group. The mall research cost was \$1,100 and surveyed 95 people.
- After analyzing the responses, WTSC drew the following conclusions:
  - Respondents overwhelmingly support state enforcement projects.
  - A large number of respondents agreed that saving children's lives is a powerful message when gaining support for the seat belt project.
  - PSAs like "Drive Hammered. Get Nailed," which feature rock and roll music, were viewed favorably by respondents over 35 years old, but less favorably by teens. Teens preferred PSAs with true, personal stories about people who lost loved ones as a result of a drunk driver more than music PSAs.
  - Respondents overwhelmingly favored PSAs that used actual crash footage in the promotion of a seat belt message. They considered them more persuasive than humorous ads.
- Since the "Click It or Ticket" project began, Washington has had a 95 percent seat belt use rate. Increases in seat belt use in Washington have saved 120 lives.
- WTSC plans a statewide survey to see how geographical differences impact attitudes towards traffic safety messages.