Can Social Marketing change Driver Behaviour: The case of the Young Male Irish Driver

Maurice Murphy, Cork Institute of Technology.
Globally

- 1.3 million people killed on roads and between 20 and 30 million people injured every year.
- 3,000 deaths a day globally.
- Males aged between 15 and 44 years account for over half of all road deaths globally.
- If trends continue – deaths will rise to 2.4 million per year by 2030.
- Over 90 percent of the deaths occur in low-income and middle-income countries, which have only 48 percent of the world's registered vehicles.
World Road Traffic Deaths (2002)

The bar chart shows the number of deaths due to road traffic accidents in different age groups and genders. The data is summarized as follows:

- **Age groups**: 0-4, 5-14, 15-29, 30-44, 45-59, ≥ 60 years
- **Genders**:
  - Males
  - Females

### Age Group Breakdown

- **0-4 years**:
  - Males: 12,000
  - Females: 7,000
- **5-14 years**:
  - Males: 80,000
  - Females: 45,000
- **15-29 years**:
  - Males: 250,000
  - Females: 100,000
- **30-44 years**:
  - Males: 200,000
  - Females: 75,000
- **45-59 years**:
  - Males: 180,000
  - Females: 65,000
- **≥ 60 years**:
  - Males: 100,000
  - Females: 40,000

### Analysis

- The highest number of deaths occurs in the 15-29 age group for males, reaching approximately 250,000 deaths.
- The 5-14 age group has a significantly high number of deaths for both genders, with males having 80,000 and females 45,000.
- The 30-44 age group follows closely with 200,000 deaths for males and 75,000 for females.
- There is a notable decrease in deaths for both genders in the ≥ 60 age group, with males having 100,000 and females 40,000.

These statistics highlight the disproportionate impact of road traffic accidents on younger age groups and males.
Road Deaths on Irish Roads

- 1959 - 306
- 1972 - 640
- 1978 - 628
- 1980 - 564
- 1985 - 410
- 1990 - 478
- 1995 - 437
- 2000 - 415
- 2001 - 411
- 2002 - 376
- 2003 - 335
- 2004 - 374
- 2005 - 396
- 2006 - 365
- 2007 - 338
- 2008 - 279
- 2009 - 239
- 2010 - 212
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* Data from 2001
** Data from 1998

Source: CARE Database / EC
Date of query: February 2005
40% of deaths were those aged under 25.
Sunday was the most dangerous day of week with 51 deaths.
49% of road deaths happened at weekends.
Between 6pm – 8pm is the most dangerous time with 30 deaths (13%).
Average monthly fatality rate was 20 in 2009, 23 in 2008 and 28 in 2007.
Target of achieving no more than 252 deaths per year by start of 2011 was achieved 3 years ahead of schedule.
EU15 Fatalities (18-25) 2004

- Car: 70%
- Two wheels: 21%
- Pedestrian: 5%
- Other: 4%
- Moped: 7%
- Pedal cycle: 1%
- Motor cycle: 13%
Number of 18-25 Year Olds Killed on Roads by Time and Day

European Union*
average for the last 5 years available
* data for Germany not available

Source: * CARE
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* Data from 2001
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Source: CARE Database / EC
Date of query: February 2005
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* Data from 2001  
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Source: CARE Database / EC  
Date of query: February 2005
Fuller (2005) – 14% of Irish driving population are high risk drivers.
90% of these are young male drivers.
Mean age – 26 years.
High risk drivers are problematic as their driving behaviour is derived from attitude.
Attitude is difficult to alter.
Even if a change in attitude is achieved, behavioural change is by no means assured.
Reasons for Over-representation of Young Drivers in Road Collisions

- Related to young drivers’ propensity for risky driving.
  - Driving at excessive speed.
  - Dangerous overtaking.
  - Close following.
  - Driving after drinking.
  - Driving after drugs.
Reasons for Over-representation of Young Drivers in Road Collisions

- Psychometric features:
  - Inexperience,
  - Inattention,
  - Poor risk/hazard perception,
  - Impulsivity,
  - Propensity for thrill/sensation seeking,
  - Over confidence.
Can Social Marketing have an Effect?

- Investigate the effect on young male drivers of fear appeals that focus on death and disability as a consequence of bad driver behaviour.

- Investigate the effect of high physical fear advertisements on young male driver attitudes.
Our study!

- Seven focus groups of young male drivers aged from 17 – 24 years.
- Participants were students from the Automotive Department of CIT.
- Shown 2 short road safety films by RTE (the Irish national broadcaster) showing young, paralysed drivers as well as families talking about being left behind.
- Also shown Irish and international road safety advertisements and reactions gained.
“The way I look at it anyway is that when you’re 18 to 25, you’re a lunatic…”

“It’s a phase at the start when you’re young...you’re watching films and you’re influenced by all these things and you just want to get out and burn road…”

“You do get a buzz throwing your car into a corner, especially at night time, when you know there’s not much traffic on the road…”
"There is a buzz, driving fast, rallying on the road a bit...I’m not saying every day but I would test the car out every now and then"

"If you know your car can hold bends, it makes you drive on harder"

"If you’re travelling away there at say 80 or 90kph, you’re not going to be paying much attention to what’s happening, whereas if you’re travelling at 110kph or so, you’d be..."
“Most people when they’re going out on the road don’t think about who they are leaving behind…”

“Well that would make people think more about their family and about how it would affect them…”

“The film was biased talking about boy racers…”
“I thought the Shattered Lives film was more effective, looking at lads paralysed. If I was in a crash, I’d rather be dead than paralysed”.

“I know if it was me, I couldn’t stick it, I’d rather be dead than paralysed”.

“Once you’re dead, you’re dead but if you have to look at your family and you are paralysed from the neck down and they’re all trying to help you, I’d say you’d feel a lot worse...”.
Conclusions

- Wearing seatbelts especially back seat belts seen as unmanly.
- Advertising should undermine the acceptability of speeding.
- Advertisements should have credibility to effect attitude and behaviour change.
- Lecture type advertisements can trigger defensive cognitive processes.
- High threat advertisements work.
Conclusions

- Focus on serious injuries rather than death.
- Advertisements should highlight the threat of killing or seriously injuring friends.
- “Traffic informers” – the most effective and credible road safety communication medium.
- “Traffic informers” are real-life crash casualties that have been severely and permanently injured in a road crash.
- Using them in advertisements or live presentations should prove the most effective method for attitude change.
Effective marriage of enforcement (penalty points) and advertising.

Integrated road safety strategy – 4Es (Education, Enforcement, Engineering and Evaluation).

Enforcement levels by Irish police must match the threat communicated by the advertisement.

The perceived certainty of punishment is more powerful than the perceived severity of punishment in order to effect attitude change.