

NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY

REPORT TITLE: RESULTS OF THE RECYCLING COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN 'SAVE OUR STUFF' (2016 – 2019)

REPORT OF: MANAGING DIRECTOR

FOR SUBMISSION TO: AUTHORITY MEETING

DATE: 2 DECEMBER 2019

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

This report informs Members of the outcomes and impact of the Authority's recently concluded high-profile recycling communications campaign.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Authority is recommended to note this report and to agree that plans for future communications activity and campaigns during 2020/21 be taken to meetings of the Members Recycling Working Group for input and oversight.

SIGNED:  Managing Director

DATE: 20 November 2019

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In June 2016 the Authority awarded a contract to the creative agency Media Therapy, now called 'Therapy', to design and deliver a three-year communications campaign (2016 to 2019). Millennials (people aged 18 to 34) were selected as the target audience for the campaign on the basis that their awareness of recycling, and therefore likelihood of taking part in recycling, is lower than some other groups. The campaign focused on a 30 second advert, which was shown only in north London on:
 - 1.1.1 Sky TV (where the subscription information shows that there are likely to be people aged 18 to 34 living in the household and broadcast alongside programmes they are likely to watch);
 - 1.1.2 YouTube;
 - 1.1.3 social media; and
 - 1.1.4 via adverts alongside 'video on demand' programmes.
- 1.2 The campaign, which was titled 'Save Our Stuff' also included supporting social media activity and a campaign website containing recycling information, and, from 2017, a recycling game testing participants' knowledge of recycling.
- 1.3 The advertising was delivered in two six-week bursts for each year of the campaign.
- 1.4 In December 2018 members of Members Recycling Working Group (MRWG) asked officers to explore options for extending the campaign into a fourth year during the 2019/20 financial year in order to maintain momentum generated by the campaign. Officers presented various options for extending the campaign to members of MRWG and Members Finance Working Group (MFWG), who indicated that it would be most beneficial to deliver an additional 'burst' of advertising in 2019/20 using the same channels as used in the previous three years. Authority approval was provided as part of the budget approval process in February 2019. This final burst of advertising began on 17 June 2019 and ran for six weeks until the week commencing 22 July 2019.
- 1.5 The campaign website showing all three years' adverts is at <https://saveourstuff.co.uk/watch-stuff> and the adverts are also available on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1ccmNWt061n4swd-NuqfWA>
- 1.6 The campaign cost £305,000 each year (£915,000 total), including the cost of media (advertising) space and agency fees, plus £81,850 for the additional phase of the campaign delivered in the fourth year.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The 'Save our Stuff' campaign aimed to (1) raise awareness of recycling and (2) increase motivation to recycle by demonstrating the consequences of not recycling. For the first two years of the campaign a different advert each year focused on the imagined future consequences of not recycling a different material; in year one the material was plastic, in year two the focus was glass. In the third and fourth years a different advert, known as 'Tin Man', focused on a man wasting tin foil.
- 2.2 The third objective (3) of the campaign was to give a large proportion of the target audience more than one 'opportunity to see' the advert through the channels they normally use (social media, on demand media content), and to see the message around recycling via high-level, non-instructional and humorous advertising. The campaign was unbranded in order to appeal to the target audience and to avoid any negative associations with being 'told what to do' by an authority figure/body.
- 2.3 Therefore, a fourth objective (4) was to trial a new approach to communications around recycling – moving away from a traditional approach to something less well tested.

3. CAMPAIGN OUTPUTS

- 3.1 During the campaign a series of three television adverts were produced. These were distributed via Sky AdSmart television advertising and via 'video on demand'. The adverts were supported by a website, saveourstuff.co.uk, where residents could find more content and local information about recycling. The campaign also included extensive social media activity. The focus of this activity shifted throughout the duration of the campaign; initially content was focused on information and advice about recycling, delivered by the central character in the first two adverts, 'Arjen'. In the latter stages of the campaign the focus was on promoting the adverts themselves on social media to increase the total number of views of the advert.
- 3.2 During the second year of the campaign, an event was delivered in White Cross Street market in Hackney. The event consisted of a free lunchtime 'bar' serving non-alcoholic cocktails with the catch that the bar had no glasses - highlighting the impact of a world without glass. Instead, in order for passers-by to have a free cocktail, they had to drink from an array of ceramic or metal tankards, goblets or cups.
- 3.3 No media coverage resulted from the event. However, the reaction of passers-by was extremely positive, resulting in some additional social media activity. Approximately 130 leaflets were distributed during the event, giving residents advice on recycling in north London. Given that this activity did not achieve the objectives set it was not repeated for year three of the campaign.

3.4 Table 1 (below) summarises the total number of times the advert was seen by north London residents during the three-year campaign, including the additional burst of advertising during the fourth year. The campaign consistently exceeded the targets set for reach/number of views in each year of the campaign with members of the target audience having multiple opportunities to see the advert.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 (plus extension)
Television (Sky AdSmart) views (in 2016/17 impressions/times shown) of the advert	798,724	1,032,016	1,545,075
Video on demand (VOD) views of the advert	1,620,954	3,110,811	2,630,020
Completed views on social media	25,678	187,126	101,825
Total	2,445,356	4,329,953	4,276,920

Table 1

3.5 The engagement rate (number of people interacting with online content) on social media has grown steadily during the years in which the campaign was delivered. The engagement rate for those viewing the third year advert reached 28.75% in 2018/19 compared to 5.37% for the second burst of advertising in 2017/18. This is particularly high when compared to industry norms and suggests that the advert was well received, generating genuine engagement with the target audience.

4. CAMPAIGN OUTCOMES, IMPACT AND LEARNINGS

4.1 The initial creative development of the campaign had been guided by concept testing research carried out in 2016 both on-street and with focus groups of north London millennials. This research showed that whilst the sample of millennials involved in the research claimed positive attitudes and behaviour towards recycling, men were less motivated than women. That research also showed that the Save Our Stuff campaign stood out well and seemed very different from other recycling adverts people have seen previously; the combination of being engaging and informative resonated well with the target audience. However, the research also concluded that for the strongest impact, the message needed to be clear and woven throughout the narrative, humour should be a key hook for the campaign, but certain details could jar and distract from the key message.

4.2 In June 2017, MRWG asked for work to be undertaken to ensure that the campaign was resonating with north London millennials. Pre and post-campaign research was carried out to assess campaign effectiveness at the end of the second year before and after the first phase of advertising. The

research methodology involved an initial online survey (August 2017) and then a second online survey (October 2017) to measure the recognition and impact of the campaign. The research involved over 200 participants for each survey drawn from north Londoners aged 18-34 across all seven boroughs, with a mix of gender and ethnicity.

- 4.3 The research suggested that the 'Save Our Stuff' campaign brought a unique voice to the mix of communications about recycling and that it stood-out well. The researchers concluded that part of the campaign's success is likely to be due to the benefit of having delivered a first year of the campaign in 2016/17, upon which the 2017/18 campaign builds.
- 4.4 The humour used in the advert was generally well liked and appreciated for being a friendly way of approaching a serious message. All ethnicities and genders found the advert appealing although appeal was strongest amongst white males.
- 4.5 45% of the target group who participated in the 2017 research agreed that the advert made them more likely to recycle.
- 4.6 As a result of this research adjustments were made to the advert produced for the third year of the campaign; the key learnings from the research were taken on board to ensure the campaign didn't appeal disproportionately to white males and to ensure that, while the humorous approach was maintained, that this wasn't likely to cause offence or detract from the campaign message.
- 4.7 To further assess the recognition and impact of the campaign at the end of the third year, MRWG asked officers to conduct some additional pre and post-campaign research with the target audience around the campaign's third year 'Tin Man' advert. Officers commissioned market research company Differentology to conduct online market research, which took place between March and May 2019.
- 4.8 The research results indicated that the advert met its objectives in terms of taking a uniquely humorous approach in order to raise awareness and increase motivation to recycle. The headline results from the research are detailed below and describe the impact of the campaign against the aims set at the beginning of the campaign:
 - 4.8.1 1 in 4 of those questioned in the post-advertising research recalled the adverts, suggesting that the campaign was memorable to the target audience. This recall figure, combined with the viewing figures outlined above, suggest the campaign had good reach across north London.
 - 4.8.2 The research results suggest the campaign met its aim of taking a different approach to encouraging the target audience to recycle more - more than 9 in 10 of those who recalled the advert believed it to stand out as different to other things they've seen about recycling.

- 4.8.3 The most commonly taken message from the advert was that 'recycling is everybody's responsibility', in line with campaign aims.
- 4.8.4 The research results suggest that the campaign was effective in its aim to encourage the target audience to recycle more as more than 3 in 4 of those who recalled seeing the advert reported that they are now more likely to alter their recycling behaviour. The most popular action was 'to make sure to recycle all household waste', with plans to 'tell others to recycle' also prevalent.
- 4.8.5 Additionally, 4 in 5 of those who recalled seeing the adverts claimed to have done something since exposure, with the most popular action being 'to make sure to recycle all household waste'.
- 4.8.6 Of those who remembered seeing the advert 60% said they 'would think differently/think again' about recycling.
- 4.8.7 Finally, 4 in 5 people claimed to have been recycling more after seeing the advert.
- 4.9 The different pieces of research conducted throughout the campaign period all consistently demonstrate that the campaign met its objective of taking a different approach to communicating about recycling and delivering an original advert that stands out amongst other pieces of recycling communications. The research results indicated that the use of humour appealed to the target audience with good levels of recall and exceptionally high levels of engagement on social media, particularly in the last two years of the campaign. The indication from the research is that the adverts raised the levels of awareness and interest in recycling amongst the target audience and there was a claimed increase in recycling by the target audience as a result.
- 4.10 While the research samples only cover a small proportion of the target audience the results suggest the campaign was successful in motivating the target audience to recycle more. However, it is extremely difficult to link this claimed behaviour to changes in actual behaviour as regards recycling more.
- 4.11 Increasing levels of engagement with the campaign on social media suggest that the adaptations made to social media during the campaign were the right adjustments to make. Specifically, the social media element of the campaign was adapted from continuous posting of campaign-related content in the first year of the campaign to delivering short bursts of social media activity to promote the advert, during the final two years of the campaign. It also suggests that the adaptations made to the advert tone and style in the final year of the campaign were successful in terms of broadening the overall appeal of the campaign.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 In developing and delivering the Save Our Stuff campaign the Authority intended to try a new and different approach to communicating with north London residents about recycling. This was the first time the Authority had produced a television advert to encourage residents to recycle. The campaign was delivered as planned across a three-year period (with an extension) and within budget. The results of the research suggest that the Authority was successful in its aim to deliver an original, high profile and humorous campaign with the aim of maximising impact.
- 5.2 The viewing figures and social media results detailed above, which exceeded the targets set, indicate that the campaign had an extensive reach amongst the target audience, with residents having multiple opportunities to see the advert and other campaign activity. Officers consider that the use of a media buying agency, AMS, was key to achieving the target results in terms of reach of the advert and providing advice throughout about how the media mix might be adjusted to gain more impact. Regular reporting by AMS also enabled officers to review progress throughout the campaign.
- 5.3 The social media viewing and engagement figures, along with the separate sets of research results, indicate that an original and high visibility campaign is effective in communicating with and motivating this target audience to improve recycling behaviours. Furthermore, they suggest that this particular campaign met its objectives to raise awareness of recycling and increase motivation to recycle.
- 5.4 While the campaign results indicate that high visibility campaigns are effective in this area, further thought needs to be given to how a high profile campaign could be adapted to appeal to other target audiences, without losing its impact and becoming too bland.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Authority is recommended to note this report and to agree that plans for future communications activity and campaigns during 2020/21 be taken to meetings of the Members Recycling Working Group (MRWG) for input and oversight.

7. EQUALITIES

- 7.1 As outlined in section 4.6, throughout the campaign the appeal of the adverts was assessed and adjustments were made to ensure wide appeal. This report does not give rise to any issues as regards the Equality Act 2010.

8. COMMENTS OF THE LEGAL ADVISER

- 8.1 The Legal Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no comments to add.

9. COMMENTS OF THE FINANCIAL ADVISER

- 9.1 The Financial Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments have been incorporated.

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