

# How to **DRINK** Properly.

## Campaign development research

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### Background

While drinking in moderation is the norm for most Australians, 'binge drinking' or drinking to excess remains problematic among young adult Australians. While not all 18-24 year old binge drink, rates of drinking at 'risky' levels among this age group have remained largely consistent since 2001. (1)

Behaviours surrounding binge drinking are often associated with poor social decisions, health problems, acts of violence and physical risk. Despite a raft of past awareness campaigns demonstrating the physical and social consequences that binge drinking can have on individuals, families and communities, it appears that these messages haven't cut-through to any demonstrable extent.

Given the damage this behaviour can potentially have on the lives of 18 - 24 year olds, DrinkWise Australia (DrinkWise) developed the *How to Drink Properly* (HTDP) campaign to confront existing permissive attitudes towards excessive drinking, with the ambition of moderating behaviour into the long-term. Clearly this objective was (and is) considered a difficult one - particularly as research conducted by Quantum Market Research identified that excessive drinking among many young people is seen as a rite of passage complete with cultural norms and social expectations that for many place drinking to intoxicating levels as 'a lot of fun'. (2)

### Organisational objective

In July 2013, DrinkWise commenced a process of developing a social marketing campaign that would seek to play a role in shaping the culture of binge drinking among young Australians - to one that promoted both safer and healthier drinking behaviours.

The core objective guiding this campaign was to help reduce the frequency and intensity of binge drinking occasions among the target audience of 18 - 24 year olds. Importantly, DrinkWise has not set out to unrealistically persuade legal age adults to stop drinking. In acknowledging how entrenched drinking is among this audience, it is understood that the objective of changing their drinking behaviour is likely to be a long journey which requires the influence of complimentary public health elements to effectively shape the norms, beliefs and attitudes likely to impact on the binge culture.

To commence the journey, DrinkWise had to consider the core issues behind how and why young Australians drink in the manner they do. From there, the application of recognised behaviour change theory was critical to the development of a research-backed approach to communications that would influence the modification of attitudes and behaviour change.

### The research development process

DrinkWise campaigns and initiatives have always been evidence-based, utilising a combination of behaviour change theory, primary and secondary research sources as well as tried-and-tested strategic creative approaches to understand target audience behaviour and to design salient, compelling and targeted health promotion messaging.

Throughout the development of the *How to Drink Properly* campaign, DrinkWise employed a rigorous and iterative research approach to ensure that the messages and the channels utilised to deliver the messages were meaningful and appropriate for the 18-24 year old audience.

To date, the process has included a number of key stages:

## Formative research

- Qualitative research conducted by Quantum Market Research (July 2013)
  - Four focus groups and 16 depth interviews with 18–24 year olds.
  - Objective: To explore drinking behaviours and role of social groups and drinking environments in regulating binge behaviour.
- Quantitative Research conducted by Quantum Market Research (August 2013)
  - Sample size 1,025 (ABS representation).
  - Objective: to understand current attitudes and behaviours and to segment based on attitudes to drinking excessively.
  - Four key segments identified: 'Sensibles', 'Good Timers', 'Shamefuls' and 'Hard & Heavies'.
- Exploratory Qualitative Research by Galkal (August 2013)
  - Eight friendship triads among 18 - 24 year old 'Good Timers' and 'Shamefuls' evenly divided between males and females across Melbourne and Sydney
  - Objectives:
    - To understand the core emotional trigger(s) that can be employed in communications to change binge drinking behaviour of 18 - 24 year olds.
    - To understand how drinking decisions are influenced by people's frame of mind, the people they inherently are and their environment.
    - To identify key influencers, trigger points and phases of behaviour by exploring and deconstructing the journey of a 'night out'.

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## Messaging & creative developmental research

- Territory exploration research by Galkal (October 2013)
  - Territory exploration: four friendship triads among 18 - 24 year old 'Good Timers' and 'Shamefuls' evenly divided between males and females across Melbourne and Sydney.
  - Objective: to identify the most relevant messaging platform to reframe moderation by playing to the behaviours and social behaviours of 18-24 year olds as identified by round one.
- Campaign creative assessment research by Galkal (October 2013)
  - Creative development assessment: six friendship triads among 18 - 24 year old 'Good Timers' and 'Shamefuls' evenly divided between males and females across Melbourne and Sydney.
  - Objective: to assess the *How to Drink Properly* campaign idea in more detail including messages, relevance, differentiation, likely impact on behavior as well as providing actionable feedback to creative around character, style, content and executional materials.
- Campaign creative refinement research by Galkal (January 2014)
  - Eight focus groups, four triads and four in-depth interviews among 18 - 24 year old 'Good Timers' and 'Shamefuls' evenly divided between males and females across Melbourne and Sydney
  - Objectives:
    - To assess the appeal, impact and overall takeout of the 'developed' *How to Drink Properly* campaign prior to launch.
    - To gain an understanding of the merit of the campaign and to gain clear and robust recommendations to inform the final stage of campaign development.

Throughout the messaging and creative development process, an iterative approach was utilised to ensure the imagery, messaging take-outs and overall creative direction had a positive effect on shaping attitudes and behaviour towards more responsible alcohol consumption among the target audience. This process ensured that the ideas presented did not glamorise or encourage excessive drinking.

## The creative strategy: an insights-driven process

The formative process, noted earlier, indicated that the age range of 18 to 24 is extremely complex. It's a time where young adults are trying new things, discovering themselves, putting focus on their friends and taking risks.

The 18-24 year olds who participated in the research expressed confidence, noting a strong sense of 'being in-control', and 'on the top of their game'. They also identified themselves as beginning to evolve into 'mature' adults, and seeking out expressions of social success, worldliness and sophistication.

When it comes to drinking, however, their behaviour is often at odds with their views of being mature and in-control. The research indicated that on a normal night out, 29% of 18-24 year olds reported consuming 7+ standard drinks, while on a self-defined 'big night out' nearly 3 in 10 18-24 year olds reported consuming 11+ standard drinks. They spoke of drinking regularly, often to excess, and often demonstrating no signs of wanting to slow down. In this context, DrinkWise understood that it wasn't about telling them to 'stop' altogether - but rather identifying the need to find a better way to do it.

Ironically, this audience can clearly articulate the difference between a responsible drinker and an irresponsible one. On one side, responsibility is often considered in the same vein as being self-aware, mature, and even 'professional'; while on the other hand, irresponsibility is surrounded by issues of carelessness, embarrassing behaviour and sloppy actions. These young drinkers can also clearly identify the potential social risks of behaving irresponsibly with alcohol - and of damaging their reputation and personal standing within their peer group.

Despite this understanding, many young adults fail to moderate their consumption and behave irresponsibly - believing that their peer group will 'forgive and forget'. It wasn't that the target audience didn't know *what* to do or even the desire to do so, it really came down to feeling that they didn't have social permission to moderate.

Due to the activity acknowledged by researchers at Flinders University (3) as 'drinking in sync', the group often dictates the pace of alcohol consumption, and puts pressure on the individual to 'keep up' with others. They found that those individuals who wanted to moderate or drink at a more 'responsible' pace felt social pressure not to do so - particularly in the early part of an evening out (e.g. the pre-loading or "pre's" stage).

In this regard, many young drinkers in the research indicated they would rather keep drinking to the point of sickness so they wouldn't miss out on the 'fun' being had or feel excluded from their friends and the events of a night out.

DrinkWise strategized that the best way to disrupt this pattern would be to empower the individual within the group to behave more responsibly with alcohol. At the core of this 'disruption' was the need to shift young adults' perception of moderation to a socially desirable behaviour, (and not as an 'uncool' one) thus giving an individual social 'credits' for drinking responsibly.

By doing so, DrinkWise sought to reinforce particular binge drinking behaviours as sloppy, embarrassing and immature - and provide 18-24 year olds with a more positive behaviour to mimic - that of a sophisticated, mature and 'classy' drinker. This would strike a chord with their emerging life stage desire to feel and appear more mature and in-control of their life.

## The campaign - the idea of *How to Drink Properly*

Based on the insights described above, HTDP was developed as part of a long-term campaign focused on starting to shape attitudes held towards moderation. Of the four segments identified in the research, the campaign targets the 'Good timers' and 'Shamefuls' (who make up almost 60% of this cohort of drinkers).

The campaign deals with several themes that resonate emotionally among the target audience including reputation, group belonging and exclusion, and being in control.

Creatively, these themes intertwine with traditional alcohol education/moderation tactics and advice around:

- How to break 'drinking in sync';
- Being empowered so 'say no' when pressured to drink; and
- Better understanding personal limits.

The early testing stages suggested that the shock and consequence tone of past binge drinking campaigns were unlikely to resonate with this audience and as such, the research participants didn't identify with these scenarios. Basically they opted out of listening and responding to past campaigns which they experienced as being delivered in a parent-to-child tone.

Instead, DrinkWise sought to speak to this audience on an adult-to-adult level, adopting their unique language and phrases, their aspirations and importantly their reality that most are going to consume alcohol.

HTDP introduces a central figure who acts in a sophisticated and in-control manner, while also providing a necessary voice of experience to educate the audience on the 'right and wrong' ways to drink - being either in a mature way (good) or sloppy and tragic (bad) way.

In the creative testing phase, this character was found to be extremely aspirational and admired by both males and females alike as a sophisticated and mature character who knows how to behave appropriately with alcohol. Ultimately someone positive to mimic and aspire to be.

Both the language and scenes depicted are deliberately edgy and profane and won't suit everyone's taste. Not designed for an 'easy share' on social media, they seek to build social cache with the audience via the way they communicate.

The use of an animated character has assisted in not only dramatising the scenarios, but also encouraging the target audience to self-identify with the messages (rather than disengage with an actual filmed character) and take ownership of the campaign messaging.

## Campaign activation

Introducing young Australians to the concept of "drinking properly" required relevant and relatable messages delivered in a tone which was both accessible and entertaining. Using a variety of social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and Spotify, the campaign speaks openly - and in appropriately colourful language - about the very inappropriate, very real, and very relatable consequences of less than classy drinking. This provides our audience with wisdom around moderation and promotes being 'experienced (in-control) drinkers' rather than 'amateurish' in their use of alcohol.

In addition to the initial strong social media presence at launch, DrinkWise also uses in-situ levers to actively promote behaviour change in the moment by extending the campaign into those environments where young adults typically drink. To date the campaign has been activated in pubs and clubs, national 'schoolies' events and high profile music acts and festivals. Recently, the use of safe Uber rides home and Tinder advice on how to drink (and date) properly, has allowed the 'central themes of the campaign to remain fresh and relevant.

## Summary

Although changing the culture of drinking among 18-24 year olds in Australia presents a long-term vision, DrinkWise is confident that the organisation's latest campaign - *How To Drink Properly* - has effectively made the first step in positioning moderation as a desirable behaviour, via a tone and approach that has cut-through with this audience.

Each campaign element has been tested with the outtakes being clear, consistent and incredibly motivating - that it's cool to moderate and drink responsibly in order to stay 'classy' and in-control.

### Notes

*Drinking patterns in Australia, 2001-2007, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*

*Formative Research: 18-24 year olds - Qualitative & Quantitative Research Report, Quantum Market Research, August 2013*

*Roche, A.M, et al (2008) Young People and Alcohol - the role of cultural influences, Flinders University*