Stoptober 2019
Campaign evaluation

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Stoptober 2019 Evaluation

Background

Stoptober is a key strand of the Public Health England (PHE) tobacco marketing programme. It is an annual mass quit smoking calendar event, wholly created through marketing.

Stoptober launched in 2012 and entered its eighth year in 2019. Its ultimate objective is to motivate smokers to make a quit smoking attempt. Stoptober takes a revolutionary approach, using a powerful combination of consumer insight and behavioural economics to reframe the usual call to action of stop smoking campaigns from 'quit now' to 'join the 28-day quitting challenge'.

The campaign aims to inspire as many smokers as possible to make a quit attempt from 1 October and maintain it for at least 28 days. Evidence shows that if you stop smoking for 28 days, you are 5 times more likely to stop for good (1). Since 2012, Stoptober has driven over 2.1 million quit attempts (2).

Each year the campaign seeks to offer refreshed approaches to generate awareness, interest and engagement among smokers with a message that has now been running for several years.

Context

Each year, the campaign is fully evaluated internally, and learnings are applied to the following year's campaign.

Based on our headline key performance indicators, the 2018 campaign was a success – the campaign generated reported quit attempts among 19% of all smokers, with sustained quit attempts maintained at 8% year-on-year. However, there were some key findings from the evaluation of the 2018 campaign that warranted consideration for the 2019 campaign strategy:

- first, the 2018 (and 2017) campaign emphasised the effectiveness of quitting with support aids/tools, showcasing to smokers the range of support available and introducing a new PHE support tool, the Personal Quit Plan. Communications were in

1 R West and J Stapleton, 'Clinical and public health significance of treatments to aid smoking cessation', (Eur Respir Rev 2008; 17: 110, 199–204)
2 Sandtable modelling of PHE's Stoptober campaign related quit attempts 2012-2019

part designed to help address the confusion around harms created by the emergence of e-cigarettes as a quitting aid. However, messaging encouraging smokers to 'quit with support' struggled to land against contradictory noise in the landscape, with a sizable proportion of smokers (41%) still likely use willpower alone if they made a quit attempt and the majority (55%) still confused about which support tools would be most effective

- secondly, message take out remained lower than expected, suggesting a simplified narrative was needed to cut through

- lastly, the 2018 campaign attracted younger, lighter and more motivated smokers

2019 campaign planning also needed to consider the following factors:
- the political climate of 2019 dictated that the campaign would have no broadcast TV element
- during the campaign period, Brexit dominated the wider news agenda
- unlike previous years the Stoptober campaign ended on 6 October (previously 31 October) meaning the 'support' phase was shorter than usual. This was due to the launch of a major new PHE mental health initiative which would have been competing with Stoptober, reducing value for money

Strategy

To address the key findings of the 2018 campaign, the 2019 campaign sought to do the following:
- first, to navigate smokers' reluctance around using support tools and to increase message take out, Stoptober's messaging was refocused on the original and core proposition 'just give it a go'. Support messaging was instead introduced at strategic points of the customer journey. The website remained available to smokers wanting access to the most comprehensive information on support

- secondly, to ensure Stoptober motivated all types of smokers, the campaign strategically focused on addressing universal insight around common motivations, benefits and known barriers to quitting (eg quit apathy, and fear of failure, loss aversion), tailoring evidence to different segments to demonstrate that others 'like me' are quitting too

Implementation

The 2019 campaign ran from 19 September to 6 October 2019. Campaign activity included radio and contextual OOH targeted at areas of high smoking prevalence with a national digital approach and a PR component. In addition, the campaign was supported by a range of national and local commercial and public-sector partners who amplified the

campaign's reach. The total media budget in 2019 was £1 million, which was a slight reduction from the 2018 media budget (£1.2 million). This year the campaign introduced a new peer-to-peer Facebook group to create a sense of community support and to provide a real-time advice network for smokers making a quit attempt.

Evaluation methodology
The 2019 evaluation sought to build on the understanding of the previous seven years of activity and assess:
- campaign scale: reach and visibility (campaign and brand recognition)
- engagement and interaction: degree to which people engage with different elements of Stoptober, across all aspects of participation
- outcomes: actions and behaviours Stoptober has generated

A range of data sources were used in the evaluation including: market level data and surveys, such as the Smoking Toolkit Study (3), digital media diagnostics, PR analysis, partnership data, support tool engagement data, web data and a bespoke quantitative advertising tracking survey of 1000 current and recent ex-smokers (4).

In 2019 for the first time YouGov were used as the providers for our main bespoke tracking survey. This was to ensure the sample contained the largest and therefore most representative sample of smokers whose intention to quit is in line with findings from the Smokers Toolkit Study (a robust and representative sample to compare to). This change meant a fresh sample, mitigating any impact from the same respondents completing the survey year-on-year, reducing the likelihood of any conditioning effect on responses. However, parallel tracking of key questions with Kantar, Stoptober's historical tracking provider, was important to conduct as we transitioned providers in 2019. This has allowed for consistency when measuring campaign performance against targets, which

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3 The Smoking Toolkit Study is a national research programme run by University College London that tracks key indicators of smoking and smoking cessation. This evaluation uses data from the Study largely to improve understanding of the broader market context.
4 This was measured through pre and post campaign online tracking surveys with 1000 current and recent ex-smokers (aged 18+) in England. This quantitative work is carried out by YouGov, an independent market research agency. Parallel mid and post campaign online tracking surveys with 700 current and recent ex-smokers in England (18+) were also carried out by Kantar Public, an independent market research agency.

were set based on 2018 performance benchmarks measured by Kantar and has allowed important year-on-year comparisons to still be made.

Key performance indicators and targets against each were set as follows:
- campaign recognition: 50%
- reported quit attempts:16%
- reported sustained quit attempts (% of smokers reporting a quit attempt related to Stoptober and still not smoking after one month): 8%
- perception that people like me are quitting: 60% (5)

The above targets are based on all smokers in England.

In addition to these headline indicators, further performance indicators were set that provide additional context to our understanding of the campaign's performance.

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5 Measured in the tracking survey as agreement with the statement 'These days more people like me are quitting smoking'

Findings

Summary of findings

The 2019 campaign performed well, delivering against the campaign recognition and quit attempt targets. Positively, the campaign broadly maintained these results in the face of a crowded marketplace and without the use of TV advertising. However, the campaign fell short in driving shifts at a population level in the perception that 'people like me' are quitting which continues to decline year-on-year. With smoking prevalence in decline, the social norming aspect of Stoptober's role as a national quit event will be carefully considered in 2020 Stoptober planning.

Performance against targets

	Target	Achieved (Kantar)	YouGov results
Campaign recognition	50%	65%	49%
Reported quit attempts	16%	25%	11%
Reported sustained quit attempts	8%	9%	5%
Perception that people like me are quitting	60%	56%	60%

Findings in detail

Please note that not all metrics were tracked in the shorter Kantar tracker for 2019. For key KPIs and targets we have provided a comparison of Kantar and YouGov results. Where metrics are best understood by trends, we have provided, where possible, year year-on-year comparisons using Kantar data and YouGov data is provided alongside this for transparency. Where comparisons are not possible, as metrics were new or not included in the shorter Kantar tracker, YouGov figures have been reported, which will allow for year-on-year comparisons in 2020.

Moving forward all 2020 KPIs and targets will be set using YouGov data.

Campaign recognition

The Stoptober brand remains strong, with brand recognition high and in line with 2018 with 82% of smokers (83% in 2018 Kantar, 78% in YouGov) recognising it and the majority (61% Kantar, 69% YouGov,) expecting Stoptober to happen every October. That recognition remained consistent despite no broadcast TV suggests a digital, PR, partner and highly targeted radio and OOH channel mix can sustain recognition and keep Stoptober top of mind as a calendar moment for smokers.

There were no signs of serious 'wear out' for the campaign, with only 30% of those aware of Stoptober reporting being 'fed up with hearing about Stoptober' (21% in YouGov). This is in line with expectations and is similar to the level seen in 2018 (28%).

65% (49% in YouGov) of all smokers recognised the 2019 campaign materials, an increase on 2018 results (58%). The campaign achieved greater than expected recognition, despite the lack of TV showing the creative and targeting worked well in reaching and engaging smokers.

A wide range of commercial and public-sector partners helped to amplify the reach of the campaign with 11,000 pharmacies supporting the campaign this year.

Advertising diagnostics and messaging
The new advertising in 2019 took a different approach from 2017 and 2018 which focused on support tools. This change was welcomed by smokers and in particular resonated better with a younger audience. In 2019, 37% of smokers agreed Stoptober felt fresh this year (31% in 2018, 14% in YouGov), this rose to 49% among those aged18-34s (37% in 2018, 16% in YouGov). The lower figure recorded by YouGov is likely a reflection of this panel's sample being larger and less familiar with the Stoptober brand.

While the single-minded messaging about quitting cut through, with only 11% (YouGov) claiming they didn't know the main message of the advertising, the creative did not work as hard as hoped at making quitting 'big' in a smoker's world. 56% of smokers (60% in YouGov) thought the ads were aimed at people like them, lower than the 60% target, and only 12% (YouGov) believed people were talking about the ads. This may be due to the overall decline in smoking prevalence and absence of national broadcast media making it challenging for Stoptober, eight years after launch, to continue to make it feel as though everyone around a smoker is quitting.

As seen previously, health and finance were the top two drivers for quit attempts and this motivation was reflected in creative engagement figures so is something to continue to take into consideration for future campaigns.

Attitudes
As with 2018, the majority (93%, Kantar) of Stoptober quit attempts were made with a form of support (eg quit aid, digital tool, behavioural support) suggesting the more targeted approach to support messaging performed as planned. Interestingly, while at a national level concerns around the long-term impact of using e-cigarettes increased year-on-year to 60% (52% in 2018), usage of e-cigarettes in Stoptober quit attempts increased year-on-year to 43% (25% in 2018). This shift can be explained by a growth in advertising investment by the vaping category since 2018.

Campaign engagement
The 2019 strategic focus on 'give it a go' was right for driving quit attempts but did result in a reduction digital engagement compared to 2018. 2019 saw 18,939 app downloads (51,786 in 2018) and 18,568 Personal Quit Plan completes (91,135 in 2018). This reduction was expected, with media selected to drive quitting action not traffic/usage for support tools.

The new Facebook peer-to-peer support group providing real-time support received high levels of engagement, with over 26,000 comments from smokers across the campaign suggesting this emotional support from fellow quitters was valuable to some.

Further, pharmacy partnerships helped engage our C2DE socioeconomic audience who were more aware of this activity than the ABC1 socioeconomic audience. Local authorities also played an important role in keeping Stoptober top of mind for smokers, with 17,800 campaign assets downloaded for use from the campaign resource centre (35% increase on 2018). Additionally, charities and commercial partners, including Boots and Amazon continued to reach and engage smokers in their environments.

Quit attempts
The 2019 campaign exceeded its target for quit attempts and met its target for sustained quit attempts.

Year-on-year comparisons show that 25% of smokers reported making a quit attempt as a result of the 2019 Stoptober campaign (19% in 2018). Our decision to use a larger more representative panel (which will be used going forward) revealed that intent to quit smoking, engagement with Stoptober and other quitting metrics are higher amongst the Kantar panel vs YouGov panel. The YouGov panel reports 11% of smokers made a campaign related quit attempt. For 2020, tracking KPIs will be based on the larger and more representative panel.

Both panels show that campaign this year continued to attract younger smokers, with the increase in quit attempts achieved driven by smokers under 35. Positively, in reaching this audience there was no detrimental impact on the numbers of older smokers, aged 35+, making quit attempts. Older smokers were more likely to sustain their quit attempts vs younger smokers.

The proportion of smokers making a sustained quit attempt has also been maintained in 2019. 9% of smokers (5% in YouGov) reported that they were still not smoking after 4 weeks; this is similar to the figures achieved in 2018 (8%) and 2017 (8%).

Conclusion

The results from 2019 are largely positive and overall demonstrate a clear case for continuing the campaign in the future.

Even after having run for 8 years, Stoptober continues to effectively drive a sizeable proportion of smokers to make a quit attempt. In 2019, the campaign generated quit attempts among 25% of all smokers and recent ex-smokers, with 9% reporting that they were still not smoking at 4 weeks (in line with 8% last year). It is encouraging that we were able to sustain the proportion of quit attempts despite the number of smokers decreasing and the busy media context the campaign operated within.

Further, we maintained peak levels of smokers recognising Stoptober (82%), with campaign recognition increasing to 65% suggesting the media mix was effective in reaching the audience. There was room for improvement in proving to smokers that others like them were quitting. For 2020 the campaign will review the feasibility of this ambition in light of the reduction in smoking prevalence and channel mix available.

Strategically, the return to focus on 'giving it a go' was right for driving quit attempts and did not impact the numbers quitting with support, but as expected engagement levels with digital products (app, emails etc) decreased. However, the introduction of a new, more emotional support network via a community Facebook group proved popular with some smokers who were looking for advice and reassurance during moments of stress.

Health continues to be the most motivating factor in generating quit attempts, followed by the financial gain of quitting. The barriers of stress and not feeling ready were key reasons cited for not making a quit attempt. For 2020 the campaign should look to further leverage this insight against the landscape it will operate within to motivate and support smokers to quit.

About Public Health England

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Public Health England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UG
Tel: 020 7654 8000

www.gov.uk/phe
Twitter: @PHE_uk
www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland

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