Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Stoptober 2017:
Campaign Evaluation

About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct delivery organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and support.

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Stoptober 2017: Campaign Evaluation

Campaign 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 sixth year in 2017. Like all campaigns under the current tobacco strategy, the ultimate objective is to motivate smokers to make a quit attempt. Stoptober takes a revolutionary approach, using a powerful combination of consumer insight and behavioural economics to reframe the usual call to action 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]

In 2016, competing priorities resulted in a significant media budget reduction (from £3.1 million in 2015 to £390,000 in 2016) for Stoptober. This in turn drove a radical rethink in media strategy and a digital only approach was taken in contrast to the usual multi-channel approach in previous years. As expected, the budget decrease resulted in reduced awareness of Stoptober (there was a reduction in campaign recognition from 71% in 2015 to 48% in 2016). Additionally, and as a likely consequence of the digital only approach, Stoptober 2016 participants were slightly more upmarket (they were more likely to be socio-economic group ABC1 versus C2DE) and younger than in 2015.

As a result of the above, the 2017 Stoptober budget was increased. The total campaign budget was increased to £2.1 million, with the media budget increasing to £1.2 million. Traditional media, including TV and radio, were added back into the mix. The 2017 campaign aimed to refresh those elements of Stoptober that worked well and deploy the additional funding to reverse some of the trends seen in 2016, specifically to:

Increase visibility of Stoptober: In 2016 campaign recognition fell from 71% in 2015 to 48% and Stoptober brand recognition fell from 80% in 2015 to 67%. A number of metrics indicated that people took less interest in the campaign, for example, there was a 70% decline in online searches for Stoptober.

Rebalance the demographic profile to increase engagement, specifically among the C2DE socio-economic group and older smokers.

[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)

Additionally, the 2017 campaign sought to:

Emphasise the importance of using support when making a Stoptober quit attempt. Data shows that smokers are more likely to be successful in their quit attempt if they use stop smoking support, yet the majority continue to quit using willpower alone.[2] The 2017 campaign highlighted that **there are more ways than ever to quit smoking** and featured the full range of support available, including nicotine replacement therapies, face-to-face services and the Stoptober app.

For the first time, PHE included **e-cigarettes** in the advertising. E-cigarettes are the most commonly reported stop smoking support among Stoptober participants as well as in the wider market. PHE's position is that e-cigarettes are at least 95% safer than tobacco cigarettes and can support a smoker in their attempt to stop smoking.

A comprehensive evaluation of Stoptober is conducted each year. The 2017 evaluation sought to build on the understanding of the previous 5 years of activity and in particular assess:

- **campaign scale:** reach and visibility (campaign and brand recognition) of Stoptober
- **engagement and interaction:** degree to which people engage with different elements of Stoptober, across all aspects of registration, downloads and conversations
- **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 and a bespoke quantitative advertising tracking survey of 700 current and recent ex-smokers (aged 16-74).[3] The evaluation also takes into account a range of digital media diagnostics, support tools and web data.

Targets were set against the following key metrics:

- 75% brand awareness
- 16% reported quit attempts (12% among C2DE socio-economic group)
- 8% sustained quit attempts (% smokers reporting a quit attempt related to Stoptober and still not smoking after one month)

[2] http://www.smokinginengland.info/latest-statistics
[3] This is measured through pre and post campaign online tracking surveys with 700 current and recent ex-smokers (aged 16-74) in England. This quantitative work is carried out by Kantar Public, an independent market research agency.

Findings

Summary of findings

The Stoptober 2017 campaign performed well; in line with the increased spend. The campaign met or exceeded all of the key campaign targets for brand awareness, quit attempts and sustained quit attempts. The campaign also managed to reverse the trends in 2016, by rebalancing the demographic profile and re-engaging lapsed Stoptober participants.

The performance against campaign targets:

- **brand awareness** was 76%, meeting the target of 75% and improving on the 2016 result
- **quit attempts** met the target of 16% of smokers and recent ex-smokers reporting a quit attempt as a result of Stoptober
- **sustained quit attempts** (% smokers and recent ex-smokers reporting still not smoking after one month) increased from 6% in 2016 to 8% in 2017

The performance against trends in 2016:

- **there was a rebalancing of the demographic profile**:
    - people from C2DE socio-economic groups engaged more with the campaign. The increase in the proportion of Stoptober recognisers who were C2DE demonstrates this, up from 53% in 2016 to 56% in 2017
    - the campaign also appealed more to the older audience. There was an increase in campaign recognition amongst the 45-74 age group from 35% in 2016 to 42% in 2017. There was an indicative shift in proportion of quit attempts made by this age group, increasing from 10% in 2016 to 19% in 2017
    - there was an increase in male engagement with the campaign. This is shown in the increased proportion of male Stoptober recognisers in 2017, up from 44% in 2016 to 48% in 2017. This was also seen in the significant shift in men making quit attempts, from 51% of all quit attempts in 2016 to 61% in 2017

However, the campaign performance metrics did show the advertising could be simplified to land the key message more clearly.

Brand recognition and campaign awareness

Reflecting the increased spend and reintroduction of traditional media into the strategy, Stoptober brand recognition was 76%, meeting the target of 75% and improving on the 2016 result of 67%. This brought brand awareness back to similar levels to 2015, where awareness reached 80%.[4]

There were positive signs that the campaign rebalanced the profile of Stoptober brand recognisers – a greater proportion of Stoptober recognisers in 2017 were men, in the 45-74 age category and from C2DE socio-economic groups. A range of metrics indicate that TV was the main driver for this. For example, smokers and recent ex-smokers from C2DE socioeconomic groups cited TV as the main source of awareness.

Campaign awareness also improved compared to 2016. 6 in 10 smokers and recent ex-smokers (58%) recognised at least one element of Stoptober 2017 campaign activity, up from 5 in 10 (48%) in 2016.

Advertising diagnostics

Response to the new TV advertising for 2017 was broadly positive. The overall call to action continued to land strongly with 48% agreeing that the ad made them think they should stop putting it off and quit now compared with 46% in 2016.

However, the advertising diagnostics did show that the advertising could be simplified to make sure that the key message has stand-out. The campaign strategy was developed to showcase the breadth of support available for smokers to help them quit from nicotine replacement therapy to e-cigarettes, face to face support and the Stoptober app. This meant that there was a lot to communicate in a 30 second TV advert. As a result, the audience were not clear about what the key message of the advert was, with just over a quarter saying that they were ‘not sure’.

Additionally, given the focus on the range of support in the advertising, the small 2 percentage point increase from 2016 to 2017 in people saying that the adverts made them think that ‘there’s lots of support to help stop smoking’ shows that there is room for improvement here. Therefore, in 2018 we will simplify the advertising, reducing the number of messages to strengthen message comprehension. We will also focus on communicating the importance of support to smokers, as we know it increases the effectiveness of quit attempts.

[4] Whilst for the most part the evaluation compares 2017 figures to 2016, there are some instances in which we compare to the evaluation in 2016. In this instance, the objective for brand awareness was to reverse the decline seen in 2016 and return to levels seen in 2015, when the media mix and budget was more similar to Stoptober 2017.

In 2017, e-cigarettes were referenced in the above the line advertising as one of a number of tools to help quit smoking for the first time. Despite this, fewer people that took part in Stoptober stopped smoking using an e-cigarette (42% in 2017 compared with 53% in 2016). This is unlikely to be as a direct result of the campaign but more likely reflects the wider context where reported e-cigarette use has plateaued since rapid early growth in 2011-13 and levels of confusion around e-cigarette safety remain high.[5]

Campaign engagement

Since the first Stoptober campaign in 2012 the strategy has evolved from driving sign-ups to participation with the campaign. This shift in strategy reflects the changing market, as people are less willing to share contact details and there is increased demand for quick, easy to access information and guidance. There are a range of metrics that we use to assess campaign engagement and these paint a positive picture for 2017:

- online search for 'Stoptober' peaked at a higher level at launch than in 2016
- there were over 200,000 website visits within the campaign period, a 10% increase on 2016
- we saw 37,053 downloads of the Stoptober app, up 47% on 2016. Overall, 12% of those who downloaded the app during the campaign received the 'You Did It' badge in response to them indicating that they were still smokefree after 28 days
- sign-ups to our eCRM programme were down 33% compared to 2016, as expected since this has been deprioritised in the campaign
- the Stoptober Chatbot continues to be a popular tool among those who use it. In a survey with users [6], 85% reported using the Chatbot at least once a week and the majority reported using it daily. 9 in 10 (92%) said they would recommend it to others considering quitting smoking

We will review usage of and engagement with individual Stoptober tools on an ongoing basis, prioritising and adapting the most effective. Stoptober continues to be well-supported and amplified by partners from a wide range of sectors. Local authorities, NHS organisations and pharmacies are still committed to using the campaign:

[5] West R, Beard E, Brown J, Trends in electronic cigarette use in England: http://www.smokinginengland.info/latest-statistics McNeill A, Brose LS, Calder R, Bauld L and Robson D (2018), Evidence review of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products, A report commissioned by Public Health England: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684963/Evidence_review_of_e-cigarettes_and_heated_tobacco_products_2018.pdf

[6] An online questionnaire of 283 chatbot users. This was carried out by Kantar Public, an independent market research agency.

- downloads of Stoptober resources for use by local authorities and NHS organisations more than doubled in 2017 compared to 2016 (124% increase between 2016 – 2017)
- 91% of pharmacies in England promoted Stoptober (a 13% increase on 2016 levels)

Given the strategic approach to rebalance the demographic profile of Stoptober participants, new partnerships were forged in 2017, which helped to extend the reach of the campaign. In particular, a new partnership with the Independent British Vape Trade Association saw Stoptober being promoted across 600 vape shops. Meanwhile, 30 football clubs across the Premier League, Championship, League One, Two and the Conference supported the campaign, with a variety of activity such as match day big screen advertising and PA announcements, with a total potential reach of over 42 million fans.

Quit attempts

Stoptober 2017 met the target for campaign-driven quit attempts and sustained quit attempts. 16% of smokers and recent ex-smokers reported a quit attempt as a result of Stoptober. This is in line with previous years. Half of those reporting a Stoptober quit attempt (8% of all smokers and recent ex-smokers) said they were still not smoking after one month. This is a percentage point increase from 2016 in which 6% smokers and recent ex-smokers that reported a quit attempt said they were still not smoking after one month.

Conclusion

The results of the campaign are largely positive and show that the campaign continues to play an important role in motivating and supporting smokers to quit smoking.

Following the decreased spend in the previous year, the 2017 campaign reversed the trends seen in 2016, with brand awareness back at the levels seen in 2015 and the demographic profile being re-balanced. The campaign also hit the targets that it was established to achieve, with 16% of smokers reporting making a quit attempt and 8% of smokers reporting they were still smokefree at the end of October.

Following the success of 2017 the strategy for Stoptober 2018 will not change dramatically. We will continue to use a similar media mix as this has proven effective in 2017. We will look to simplify the TV advertising to clarify the key messages, and will focus on communicating the importance of smokers using support to help them quit, as this is far more effective than using willpower alone.