

Face the Facts - What did we learn?

Face the Facts was launched in April 2009 with the overriding goal of putting tobacco 'on the radar' of New Zealanders and heightening tobacco's priority as a health issue. The approach chosen focused on dispelling some of the myths that prevent people from quitting smoking or resisting taking up smoking, by presenting a series of facts about smoking.

Face the Facts comprised a series of 15-second television commercials (TVCs) that showed a black and white photograph with a voiceover stating the associated fact. The fact was also presented in words visually, being superimposed on the photograph. Each TVC showed the phrase "Smoking. Face the Facts" and each closed by directing people to the Face the Facts website (www.facethefacts.org.nz). The photograph was intended to create emotional engagement. Face the Facts was also presented in various other media such as radio, billboard, print, and Adshells (bus shelters).

The simple, 15-second format was chosen so that multiple advertisements (ads) could be made inexpensively and in a flexible format, with new ones able to be added as circumstances changed (such as the May 2010 excise tax increase).

An evaluation was undertaken one year after launch, by which time 11 facts had been in the market.

Rationale

The target audience for Face the Facts was adults and the overriding goal was to put tobacco 'on the radar' of New Zealanders and heighten tobacco's priority as a health issue. The specific objectives of the initiative were to:

- increase New Zealanders' knowledge and awareness of specific issues surrounding tobacco and its use
- dispel some of the myths that prevent people from quitting smoking or resisting tobacco initiation, and replace with factual information
- prompt quit attempts (a secondary objective).

Results

- Almost eight in 10 (78%) respondents recalled seeing or hearing Face the Facts. The ads grabbed people's attention (74%) and made them think (71%). People thought the ads were believable (95%) and that they learnt something new from the ads (52%).

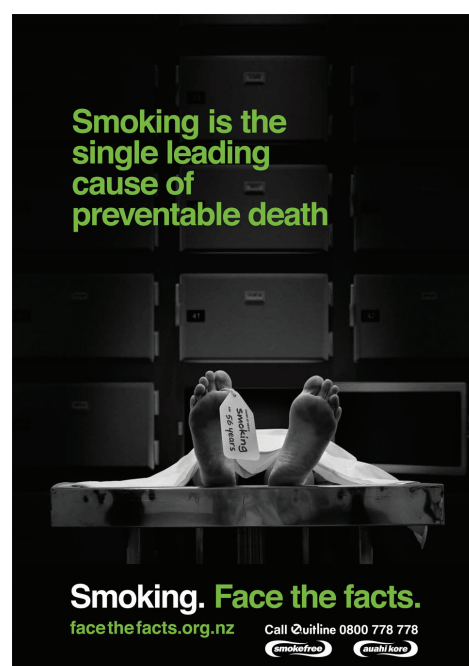


Figure 1. A printed version of a Face the Facts ad.

- Face the Facts made people more supportive of things that can be done to reduce smoking (68%) and more concerned with the impacts of smoking (65%). Face the Facts made some people discuss the ads with others (31%) and realise that smoking is worse than they thought (48%). They also made some people want to support or encourage others to quit smoking (56%), and over one-third (37%) said the ads had put them off smoking.
- A majority of smokers and recent quitters¹ who had seen or heard Face the Facts reported that the ads had made them think about quitting (70%) and become less likely to smoke around kids (64%). Some smokers and recent quitters said the ads had prompted them to quit or to try quitting (39%) or to ring the Quitline (9%).
- Compared with before the launch of Face the Facts, there were significant increases in some knowledge areas – a smaller proportion of people believed that ‘the dangers of smoking have been exaggerated’, ‘the dangers of second-hand smoke have been exaggerated’, and ‘smoking is not more risky than a lot of other things that people do’. However, knowledge in five other areas did not change.
- Compared with before the launch of Face the Facts, there was also a significant increase in people’s support for stronger regulations - ‘a complete ban on displays of cigarettes and tobacco inside shops’ and ‘a ban on the sale of cigarettes and tobacco in New Zealand in 10 years time’.
- However, there were differences between the recall of particular ads, with some having higher recall than others:
 - Smoking is the single leading cause of preventable death (50%).
 - Smoking robs your loved ones of 15 years of your life (35%).
 - Tobacco kills one in two smokers (34%).
 - Second-hand smoke is deadly (31%).
 - Smoking kills 5,000 New Zealanders every year (31%).
 - Kids do what you do (30%).
 - Patches and gum are safe and double your chances of quitting (12%).

Learnings

Advertising works

The overall goals of Face the Facts were achieved:

- 78% recalled at least one of the messages.
- There was an increased understanding in some knowledge around smoking harms.
- 70% of current smokers or recent quitters reported that they have thought about quitting as a result of seeing or hearing Face the Facts, while 39% had actually made a quit attempt.

Recent work by Melanie Wakefield and colleagues² demonstrates the effectiveness of mass media campaigns in tobacco control, showing they can directly and indirectly produce positive changes or prevent negative changes in health-related behaviours across large populations. Wakefield et al’s work also links adequate exposure to media campaigns to a reduction in population tobacco use. The National Preventative Health Strategy from Australia also recognises that well-funded campaigns can reduce smoking prevalence, with levels of media exposure influencing the extent of reductions.³ In Australia, the withdrawal of media campaigns has been associated with a decline in beneficial effects.

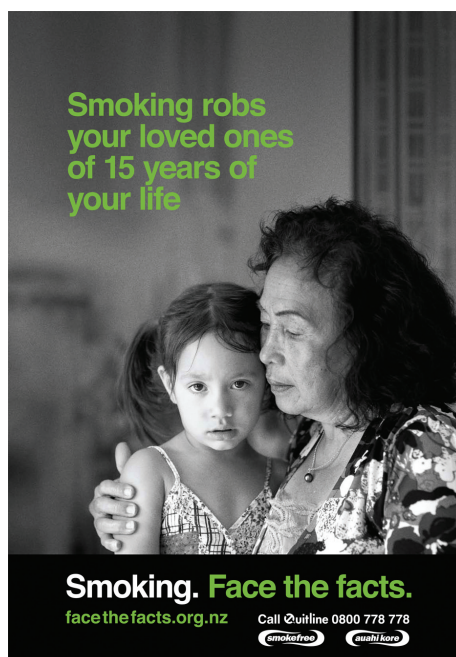


Figure 2. A printed version of a Face the Facts ad.

Emotion works

In Face the Facts, the most emotive images and messages worked best. The ads with the highest recall had the most evocative or emotionally engaging images and/or messages. This may be because people could more effectively envisage themselves or their families in the situation:

Message: Smoking is the single leading cause of preventable death (50%), see Figure 1.

Message: Smoking robs your loved ones of 15 years of your life (35%), see Figure 2.

Message: Tobacco kills one in two smokers (34%), see Figure 3.

These results are supported by work that has been undertaken in Australia², which found that high exposure to anti-tobacco messages can elicit negative emotions, such as fear, disgust, and sadness, as well as promoting increased cessation (quit) rates, particularly in lower socio-economic populations. Media campaigns that link smoking to serious health damage can motivate smokers to quit as well as helping to prevent young people taking up smoking.

Australia's National Preventative Health Strategy³ outlines the importance of using

messages that are personally relevant and emotionally engaging as they are more likely to increase perceptions of health risks. In addition, it states that emotionally arousing stories are more likely to be discussed with others and be more memorable. Their work supports the use of emotional narrative communications as an effective way of reaching low socio-economic groups as it enables people to fully and vividly imagine how it would feel to have a smoking-related disease.

Context is important

As outlined above, the main purpose of Face the Facts was to increase New Zealanders' knowledge and awareness of specific issues surrounding tobacco and its use.

The basis for this goal was that many New Zealanders seemed to believe that issues around tobacco were 'fixed'. The successful introduction of the Smoke-free Environments Amendment Act in 2004 (introducing smokefree bars and restaurants) and other more recent interventions such as pictorial warnings on tobacco packaging may have contributed to this belief. As a result it was decided to introduce a campaign that raised (or 're-raised') concerns about smoking. It was believed that presenting some facts about smoking would help change any misperceptions that existed and bring tobacco 'back on to the radar'.

By increasing people's concern about issues surrounding tobacco and smoking we believed we would increase engagement with the issue. People did not need to have a high specific recall of the ads/messages to have engagement and, therefore, to prompt behaviour change. Face the Facts achieved this goal. People understood the single-minded proposition that smoking still presents a number of issues worthy of concern (even though specific recall of some messages was low).

Following the survey results that showed good recall of the overall theme, some changes were made to how the Face the Facts campaign was delivered, with four key messages being focused on. These are:

- Smoking is the single leading cause of preventable death.

- Kids do what you do.
- Smoking kills one in two smokers.
- Quitting smoking will save you money.



Figure 3. A printed version of a Face the Facts ad.

To achieve this new objective we cut the number of messages from 11 to these four only. This effectively lifted the target

audience rating points (TARPs)⁴ level for the separate messages.

Fewer messages

It is necessary to be careful when introducing multiple messages, as recall and understanding may be compromised. This is particularly relevant in campaigns like this, where remembering and understanding messages can be important to the outcomes of the campaign.

While the overall awareness objective was achieved, in retrospect, we believe there were too many messages (a total of 11 in a 12-month period) covering too wide a range of issues for a campaign that had a relatively small budget - a clear case of fewer being better.

More Emotion

As mentioned above, for this campaign images people could relate to and that elicited an emotional response are the ones that were remembered the best. In the future, where appropriate, we will ensure all messages have a strong, emotive execution.

If you would like to see the full evaluation report, email research@hsc.org.nz.

About the HSC

The Health Sponsorship Council's (HSC's) function is to promote health and encourage healthy lifestyles, with a long-term focus on reducing the social, financial and health costs of a number of health behaviours. To achieve this it delivers a range of initiatives that aim to improve health outcomes by:

- reducing cancers, heart disease, chronic respiratory disease and stroke by reducing the incidence and prevalence of smoking
- reducing skin cancers (including melanoma) and eye disease by increasing sun safe behaviours
- reducing obesity and its associated illnesses (diabetes, heart disease, kidney failure, joint deterioration etc) through better nutrition and physical activity
- reducing emotional, social and financial harms by reducing the incidence and impact of problem gambling

For more information about the HSC visit www.hsc.org.nz

References

- ¹ Recent quitters are defined as those who had ever smoked but stopped smoking in the past 12 months.
- ² Wakefield, M., Loken, B., & Hornik, R.C. (2010). Use of mass media campaigns to change health behaviour. *The Lancet*, 376, 9748, 1271-1271.
- ³ National Preventative Health Taskforce (2009). *The Healthiest Country by 2020 - National Preventative Health Strategy: Overview*. Commonwealth of Australia. Accessed online (26/11/2010): <http://www/preventativehealth.org.au>.
- ⁴ TARPs are a measurement of advertising impacts against a target audience. One TARP is equal to 1% of a target audience being exposed to a message.

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