

Vodafone

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Source: Account Planning Group (UK), Gold, Creative Planning Awards, 2001

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Campaign to launch Vodafone's roaming Prepay service for use abroad. TV and poster ads built on the reasons why people write holiday postcards. High awareness and interest achieved. Gold winner, APG Awards 2001.

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Vodafone rubs it in

The story

This is the dark tale of holiday behaviour and how the real reason behind the 'innocent postcard' provided the insight for launching Vodafone's new Prepay [1] roaming service. By using high interest groups we were able to uncover the motivations for calling and texting back home whilst on holiday, and formed a campaign around one key truth.

Receiving a holiday text message may never be the same again

The task

Vodafone was launching a service allowing all its 8.1 million Prepay customers to use their phones abroad. It was the first network to do this [2], allowing their Prepay customers to fully use their phones - inbound and outbound talk and text, just like you can at home.

Fantastic, a genuine USP. The only fly in the ointment was that the brief required us not only to announce this service, but also to encourage usage. Anyone with a contract phone knows the excitement of being able to use their phone from abroad for the first time. Surely an announcement would be sufficient to encourage usage of the service.

Therefore a brief was put into the creative department with the straightforward proposition: 'Stay connected to friends and family while on holiday with Vodafone Pay-as-you-Talk.'

The ads first time round

Some good campaign ideas came back, all based around similar holiday vignettes - 'I've just seen/done something mad/amazing/bizarre, and must tell the folks back home.'

They were very much on brief - not only announcing the service, but clearly prompting usage through depictions of 'reasons to call'.

These ideas were put into research: three qualitative groups - girls and boys (16+), mums and dads and grans and grandpas, reflecting the broad church of Vodafone's Prepay base.

All went well initially. Everyone liked the idea of being able to take their phone abroad, and didn't see why it should be limited to contract customers. Some non- Vodafone customers said they'd switch networks just so they could use the service. And most people took their phone with them anyway for last minute calls from the airport to check they hadn't left the tap running, etc.

We then showed them the ads.

The problem

The younger group loved the ads. They couldn't imagine going on holiday without their phone anyway; 'It's like my hand', 'I panic without it', and other worryingly dependent remarks. [3]

Mums loved them even more. They couldn't wait to be able to buzz friends back home, tell them about the flight, and find out what's been happening in East Enders.

Dads didn't see the point: one said, 'The mobile's not for nattering on anyway', another, 'I'd only call back if there's an emergency' and a third, 'That's stupid'.

It's the familiar problem of how differently men use the phone. Older men don't like to use the phone to chat. It's a business tool, a utility, not a 'socializing device'. Clearly the arrival of this new technology was not itself sufficient to overcome the deeply ingrained attitudes men have to telephone conversations.

This was going to be problematic!

As a group, older men were just too large to leave behind. They also acted as 'gate-keepers' to the phone; their lack of approval could lead to a wife cutting short her chat, or the kids keeping the calls brief: 'Do you know how much that's costing?', 'Can't that wait till we get home?' and so on. We needed a trigger that would encourage their usage as much as the softer target of women and youngsters.

The solution

Obviously some further and deeper understanding was needed in order to encourage older men to use the service. We believed that to do this, we would need to understand the communication needs of our consumers on holiday. Who are they talking to? Where? And more importantly why?

We decided that instead of doing another round of conventional qualitative groups to glean this insight, we would use two high interest groups.

Group one was just about to go away on holiday, whilst group two had just got back. As the holiday experience was top of mind for them, we could use them to really get under the skin of holiday behaviour. We began by asking them general questions about their holiday. Where did you go? Why? What was it like?

We then asked what they took with them. Sure enough, a mobile was seen as part of your essential holiday kit, along with the sun cream and trashy novel. Then we discussed mobiles and the ability to use them abroad. A familiar response came back, divided along the lines of age and sex. Young people and mums were keen to make full use of it, chatting to and texting their friends and family, just as they did back home. But dads just didn't see the need, and were strongly opposed to it. [4]

So we backed up a bit, and returned to general holiday behaviour. We split the respondents into pairs, to ask each other about holidays they'd recently been on. Initially the conversations were fairly cursory, but a clear trend began to emerge. You would either boast about having a fantastic, mind-blowing holiday, or confide that you'd had the holiday from hell. There were no half measures; no-one told of a so-so stay in Bognor, or an average retreat in the Seychelles.

When probed on this, some respondents replied that you spent fifty weeks of the year working, so that you can escape for just two - and these two weeks had to really count. You can't just have an all-right holiday - it's a tale you tell all year round and it must be interesting. Your holiday stories become social currency, to be bartered in pubs and around coffee tables throughout the land.

The odd postcard

We then asked the respondents what they did to communicate this holiday experience (good or bad) whilst abroad. The ritual of postcards was top-of-mind. They appear a strange phenomenon - people are loath to write them, but feel obliged to. However, when pressed, a glimmer appeared. There was something rather enjoyable about this chore - the thought of someone reading your card in rainy Leeds, whilst you were sunning yourself on a beach in Malaga brought a smile to the lips. It was actually worth all the hassle of buying, writing and posting them, just to have the satisfaction of gloating to your friends back home!

And who enjoyed doing this? Everyone, including dads. Even they could see the fun in letting their mates know that the beer was cheaper/weather better/ missus happier now that they're on holiday. So we put it to them - what about using your phone to do this instead of sending postcards?

They all agreed. They could see the beauty of doing it in real time, and saw text messages as virtual postcards; all the satisfaction of sending a postcard, without the bother of having to write and post it.

Hence the holiday gloating insight was born. It was something which united everyone, even the most hard-nosed male users. And it encouraged them to use the roaming service to gloat to those back at home, not just saving it for emergency use. This fundamentally challenges holiday usage patterns, which had previously been the odd call home to check that everything was okay. Now they had a license to gloat, and an obligation - if you weren't gloating, then the holiday couldn't be much good.

The ads second time round

A fresh brief was written with the new proposition: 'Vodafone Prepay customers can now gloat about their holiday whilst abroad.'

Planning provided further creative guidance by encouraging the team to play with the idea of typical usage, challenge the idea that you only use your phone to say you arrived safely, turn emergency use on its head, etc.

The resulting press ads featured lines such as:

'There is no way of disguising it. Calling to say you arrived safely is a gloat.'

'Phoning home to say you're going skinny-dipping with two Swedish sisters is not strictly calling in an emergency.'

Radio consisted of the sound of waves on a beach, or the voice of a sultry Spanish pull, for the 'benefit' of your friends back home.

The two TV executions featured a guy clubbing and a couple kissing, relaying the sound to a mildly hacked off friend back in the UK. All ads culminated in the line: 'You're on holiday. They're not. Rub it in.'

Creative potential

The gloating idea worked well above-the-line. But where else? The below-the-line and media strategy took the gloating insight and used it to create a new habit. By following the journey of a holiday maker, it reinforced the behaviour at every turn - on-line ads on travel sites, in-store promotions in travel agents like STA, editorial in the Rough Guide, and inserts in ticket wallets.

When you set off for your hols, there were ads at the airport reminding you to top-up and un-bar your phone, and ads at the destination airport urging you to start gloating. There were even gloating door-hangers in Club 18 to 30 resorts, and gloating postcards in Ibiza club toilets, a source of prime gloating material! The list goes on; from gloating web-sites on NME.com to live gloating broadcasts via Rapture TV, and a Virgin Radio gloating competition.

An ironic youth campaign also sprang from this insight. However to produce a more edgy tone, planning suggested turning the campaign around; look at reactions to gloats versus the gloats themselves. The creative result was fraught friends on the receiving end of gloating messages. Therefore it was a creatively rich insight, producing a truly through-the-line campaign idea.

See examples of creative: see [Figure 1](#).

Did it work?

After only two months of the campaign, a massive 76% of Vodafone Prepay customers (62 million people), knew they could talk and text from abroad. [5] The nearest rival (BTCellnet) only achieved 49% awareness, showing that for Vodafone's customers, we had successfully established Vodafone's number one position in the category.

And even the most mobile-sceptic, low users, the 45 - 60 year olds, wanted to discover more about using their phones abroad, on the strength of this advertising. [6]

Finally

Did planning make a difference to the creative work? By really understanding the holiday mindset we gave an extra dimension to what appeared to be an obvious strategy. Even a rare USP works harder when framed in the context of a consumer insight. And the insight which was uncovered proved universally motivating across the broad Prepay base, encouraging even the most reluctant of users to phone home when abroad. Go on, you know you want to you're on holiday, they're not. Rub it in.

[1] Prepay is the service which allows you to pay as you talk. Instead of a monthly bill, you buy top-up cards to

add credit to your phone, as and when you need it. Unlike Prepay customers, contract customers (monthly bills) have always been able to call from abroad.

[2] BT Cellnet allows its Prepay customers to make calls and receive text messages from abroad, but not the other way round. One2One offers a roaming service to its prepay customers, but it's not like using the phone back at home, you have to dial using a special code and wait up to a minute to be connected.

[3] 2cv qualitative research, 2001.

[4] Sadek Wynberg qualitative research, 2001.

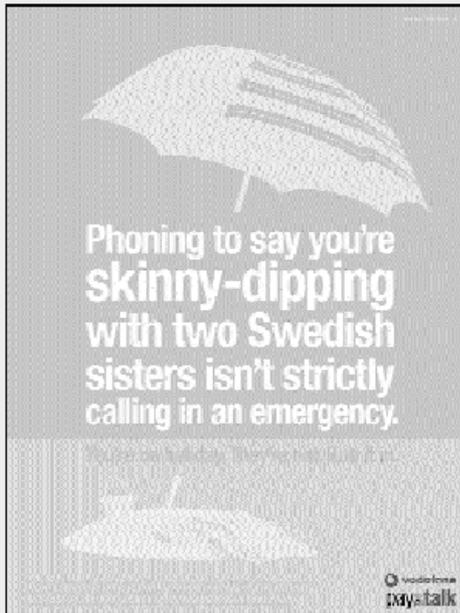
[5] OMD Snapshots quantitative survey, July 2001.

[6] Sadek Wynberg qualitative research, 2001.

NOTES & EXHIBITS

FIGURE 1: VODAFONE

Posters:



TV: "You're on holiday, they're not. Rub it in."

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