



**Tombras**

# NHTSA 2019 Rx Drug-Impaired Driving

Findings from Focus Groups to  
Assess Video Creative Concepts

May 7, 2019

# 6 groups in 2 cities

## Participants (total of 54):

All licensed drivers

All self-reported use of legal prescription and/or over-the-counter medications known to have side effects that could impair safe driving

All Caucasian\*

3 groups female, ages 25-54\* (**primary target** demographics); N=27

3 groups male, ages 25-35\* (**secondary target** demographics); N=27

\* Age, gender and race demography are based on secondary research data that indicate high proportions of over-use of these drugs by these cohorts. Such over-use skews towards Caucasian women ages 25-54.

1. Knoxville, TN: April 29 & 30, 2019 / 2 female groups, 2 male groups
2. Orlando, FL: May 1, 2019 / 1 female group, 1 male group

NOTE: For this report, numerical references to grades and grade averages are cited. However, due to small sample sizes, these metrics are not intended to be projected across any population group. Rather, they are only indicative of the degrees of differing opinions expressed by the participants in these six focus groups.

## **2 major topics for discussion**

- 1.** Points of view about the impact of prescription/  
over-the-counter drug use on driving
- 2.** Assessment of 3 video concepts

## Topic findings:

# Prescription/over-the-counter drug-impaired driving

Widespread acknowledgment and acceptance that various types of drugs do/can have have effects that are detrimental to safe driving

Wide consensus that drugs and dosages affect each person differently

Practically no threat posed by law enforcement --

- Prevailing belief that law enforcement will not pull over/ticket/cite impaired driving that results from drugs such as these
- This includes the belief that law enforcement lacks any valid means of testing for impairment because of these drugs

However, it's both credible and thought-provoking to reference the altered states-of-mind caused by these drugs to be "being under the influence"

Implied concern/sensitivity: People do not want to feel stigmatized or stereotyped by depictions that use of these drugs means they are bad, worthless, sloppy, unintelligent, etc. -- particularly considering that the medication use is common, lawful, often medically-necessary

Types of drugs specifically referenced by moderator for discussion:

- Certain allergy medications known to cause drowsiness
- Muscle relaxants
- Antidepressants
- Anxiety medications
- Pain medications, including opioids

## Topic findings:

# Prescription/over-the-counter drug-impaired driving

Various terms/descriptions used to refer to altered states-of-mind caused by such medications:

- Foggy
- Groggy
- Drowsy
- Loopy
- Impaired
- Out of it
- High
- Gone
- Lit
- Zombie
- Stoned
- Messed up
- Doped up
- Tore up
- Dazed

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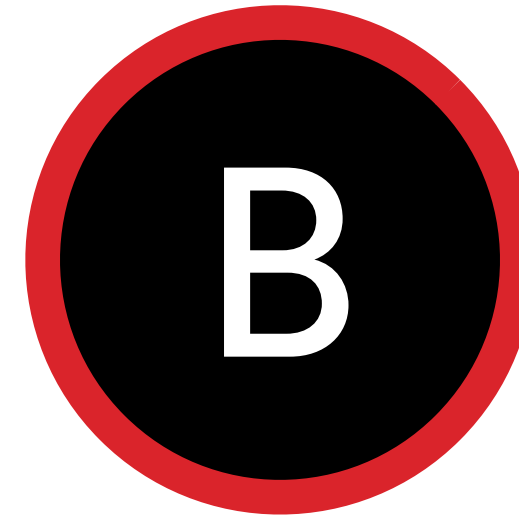
# Topic findings:

## Assessment of 3 video concepts



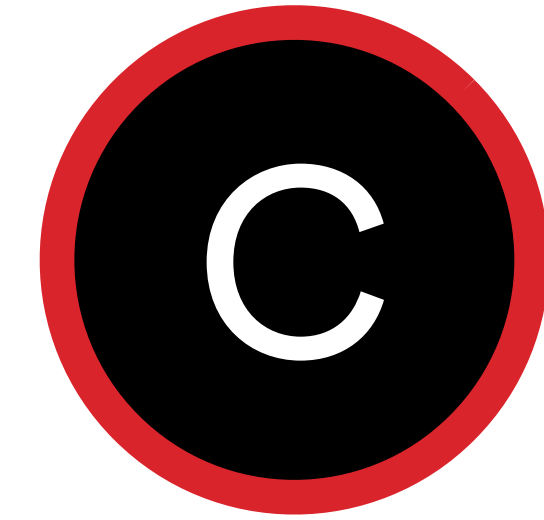
### Down the Rabbit Hole

- This is an interactive video allowing the viewer to choose her/his own story to see how different medications can influence the way a person drives.
- Medications viewer can choose: Pain, anxiety, allergy and cold
- Depiction of/reference to DUI at end



### Heavy Machinery

- This video shows that medication warning labels saying, “Do not operate heavy machinery” also include driving a car.
- No particular medication type referenced
- No depiction or reference to law enforcement



### Sobriety Tests

- This video shows examples of “real world field sobriety tests” that can be used to help people realize they may be under the influence.
- No particular medication type referenced
- Depiction of law enforcement in end scene, but no portrayal of arrest/citation; rather, enforcement is implied

At the end of all three: **“There’s more than one way to be under the influence. Pass it on.”**

# — Assessments: Down the Rabbit Hole



- Interactivity feature of idea was appealing to many, especially men
- Included scenes of unsafe driving
- Depicted altered states of mind via changing colors; liked and memorable
- Implied that there may be different consequences to different choices; and that different drugs may affect people in different ways
- Strong connection with line, “There’s more than one way to be under the influence”



- Distracting elements -- e.g., hero had too many health issues; what happens when good choices are made?; scenes changing from neatness to sloppiness
- Despite agreement with “...more than one way...” line, skepticism about reality of a DUI charge; also, questions about how law enforcement could prove a DUI
- Criticism about allergy med having such a serious effect (re: female version of video)
- “Sloppiness” depictions mildly offensive; questions/critiques raised about the relationship between being irresponsible with the use of legal drugs

Grade-Point-Averages:  
(on 4.0 scale)

2.80 (all respondents)

2.89 (female (primary) respondents)

2.70 (Male (secondary) respondents)

Only 10 participants  
(2 females and 8 males)  
considered this concept  
as having the most  
promise of being  
an effective concept



# — Assessments: Heavy Machinery



- Particularly well-liked and understood by primary target (females)
  - Daydream sequence perceived as both humorous and relatable
  - Having a pharmacist (considered credible) to remind hero that “heavy machinery” includes vehicles
  - Humor made it more interesting and memorable
  - Message clearly and directly conveyed
- 



- Did not depict unsafe driving and/or consequences
- Although most liked the humor, others were critical of using humor for a serious topic
- Daydream sequence had too many different types of machinery and became monotonous

Grade-Point-Averages:  
(on 4.0 scale)

**2.85** (all respondents)

**2.96** (female (primary)  
respondents)

**2.74** (Male (secondary)  
respondents)

**34 of the 54 participants**  
**(23 females and 11 males)**  
considered this concept  
as having the most  
promise of being  
an effective concept

# — Assessments: Sobriety Tests



- Scenes/depictions considered credible/relatable among several participants who shared anecdotes about people they know who are adversely affected by medications
- Used realistic examples of how drug use can lead to mistakes
- Showing police car implied law enforcement consequences
- Phrase “If you fail your test, you’ll fail their test” stood out and recalled by many participants



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- Did not show unsafe driving
  - Resentment about the scenarios of things going wrong; the scenarios were considered common occurrences and have nothing to do with use of drugs
  - Females especially were offended by scenarios; perceived as stereotyping/sexism
  - Confusion about wrong car in parking lot not considered criminal; passive threat of law enforcement not credible
  - Although “test” phrase recalled by many, “test” terminology not appropriate or understood by several others

Grade-Point-Averages:  
(on 4.0 scale)

**2.35** (all respondents)

**2.11** (female (primary)  
respondents)

**2.59** (Male (secondary)  
respondents)

Only 10 participants  
(2 females and 8 males)  
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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**HEAVY MACHINERY**

# — HEAVY MACHINERY

## Rationale

- Interesting, relatable, credible
- Highest levels of preference and positive remarks by females, the primary target group
- Consistency in comments, descriptions, impressions across all six groups
- Fewest number and range of critical remarks, compared to the other two ideas
- By not specifying names or types of medications, idea envelops full spectrum of drugs that could impair driving

## Suggested Considerations for Refinements

- Shorten the daydream sequence
- Consider including a depiction of the adverse effect of drug use on driving safety and/or implied DUI law enforcement
- Remove reference to “Pass it on.”



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