

**NHTSA**

# **DRUG IMPAIRED DRIVING:**

**REPORT OF FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS TO  
ASSESS TV COMMERCIAL IDEAS**

June 4, 2018



# BACKGROUND:

## FOCUS GROUPS

# 54 PARTICIPANTS, 6 GROUPS, 3 CITIES

- D.C. (ALEXANDRIA, VA): MAY 23, 2018
- CHICAGO (SCHAUMBURG): MAY 24, 2018
- TULSA: MAY 29, 2018
- MEN AND WOMEN AGES 18-34 WHO ARE LICENSED DRIVERS AND WHO SELF-REPORT RECREATIONAL USE OF MARIJUANA; AND WHO CONSUME ALCOHOL AWAY FROM HOME

28 men  
26 women  
Mix of ages  
Mix of races and ethnicities

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 four focus groups.



# DISCUSSION TOPICS

Dan

- ASSESSMENTS OF FOUR TV COMMERCIALS IN ANIMATICS FORMAT

1. “Feel Different”
2. “Bad Directions”
3. “Things Get Real”
4. “Game Over”

Scripts on next slide





# SCRIPTS



## FEEL DIFFERENT

Open on a man talking to his girlfriend as he slowly gets into a car. He's obviously drunk and in no condition to drive. We notice he has a glow around him that sets him apart from the situation a little.

Cut to a couple of kids in the backseat. The camera moves to the mother looking high as she drives. We reveal she also has the glow around her.

**VO: Marijuana and alcohol make you feel different.**

Cut to four friends talking and laughing in a car. The driver looks too drunk to drive who has a glow around him. He swerves and startles the two people with him.

Cut back to the first couple. Cut to guy driving slowly and looking barely aware.

He drifts across the center lane and a police car starts after him.

Cut to them inside the car as the guy gets a ticket. The glow around him fades as he takes the ticket.

**VO: And if you feel different, you drive different.**

## BAD DIRECTIONS

Open on a 20-something couple in a car pulling away from a bar. We can see marijuana smoke floating inside the car.

**Guy: (to GPS) Directions to Old City Brewery.**

**GPS: Turn left in 1000 feet.**

The guy gets into the left lane.

**GPS: Make that a right. Sorry, I'm a little buzzed.**

The couple looks weirdly at the impaired GPS.

**GPS: What? You think you two are the only ones who smoked a blunt and had a few drinks tonight?**

The driver slows down and gets ready to turn right.

**GPS: Wait, not this right.**

The driver speeds back up.

**GPS: It's the one after the red light you're about to run.**

The young man looks up to the red light then sees a police cruiser in his rearview mirror. Lights and siren engage.

**VO: Alcohol and weed make everyone feel different. And if you feel different, you'll drive different.**

## THINGS GET REAL

Open on a house party with a diverse group of friends. A guy on the couch says goodbye to a couple of his friends then turns his attention to the TV.

Cut to group of people in an apartment. They're talking and laughing. The camera zeros in on woman looking very mellow who sits and pets the dog beside her.

Cut to a third group of friends standing and talking in a living room. One guy moves to sit down with his girlfriend and the camera follows him.

Cut to a group of friends at a bar all talking and having fun as couple people say goodbye. The camera zeros in on a guy sitting on stool looking drunk.

**VO: If you've been smoking marijuana or drinking with your friends, remember...**

One by one, we match cut our four people sitting down to them behind the wheel driving impaired. They have friends them with them in their cars.

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Cut to the first guy getting pulled over by a police car.

## GAME OVER

This spot shows a video game being played from the player's POV.

Open on tight shot of a video game screen where we see a 20-something couple sitting in a car on a street where there are a lot of bars and restaurants. It's framed so we can see someone holding the controller, with the TV in the background. The player presses the button and the game starts.

The car starts driving. We see power-ups in the corner (objects that instantly benefit or add extra abilities to the game character).

The player presses a button and the alcohol power-up icon flashes causing a bottle of beer to appear in each of the couple's hands. They drink. This makes the car swerve over the center line a little bit. The player regains control of the car and steers it back into its lane.

The player presses a button on the controller again and the weed power-up icon flashes. This causes a blunt to appear in the couple's hands. They smoke. This makes the car swerve over the center line again. This time, it's a little more difficult for the player to get the car back over in his lane and gets the attention of a nearby police cruiser.

We match cut on same scene — from video game to reality, and the driver starts to get pulled over.

**SUPER: Game Over**

**VO: Driving impaired isn't a game. Alcohol and weed make you feel different. And if you feel different, you'll drive different.**



# SIDE-NOTES ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF DRUGS ON DRIVING SAFETY

- Dan ALTHOUGH THE PRIMARY “FOCUS” FOR THE GROUPS WAS ASSESSMENT OF THE TV IDEAS, THERE WERE NOTEWORTHY REMARKS ABOUT DRIVING AFTER CONSUMING DRUGS; THEY WERE CONSISTENT WITH PREVIOUS GROUPS:
  - Many participants claimed they were safer, more attentive and/or more cautious drivers after consuming marijuana.
  - However, this was not the case for alcohol. Drunk driving was considered significantly more dangerous.
- PARTICIPANTS SUGGESTED THAT ANTI-DRINKING-AND-DRIVING MESSAGES NOT BE COMBINED WITH ANTI-MARIJUANA-AND-DRIVING MESSAGES. THEY CONSIDERED THE TWO SUBSTANCES HAVING SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT EFFECTS ON A PERSON’S ABILITY TO DRIVE SAFELY.
- MANY PARTICIPANTS CONSIDERED THE POLICE PULL-OVER SCENE AS WEAK AND INEFFECTIVE. SUGGESTIONS INCLUDED SHOWING CRASH SCENES OR DRIVERS BEING PUT IN A PATROL CAR.



# TV COMMERCIAL ASSESSMENTS



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# ASSESSMENTS: FEEL DIFFERENT

Dan

Favorable comments about the “no-nonsense” and “direct,” “straight-forward” way the message is conveyed

Second highest scoring idea in grading assessments. Yet higher in number of “best of the four” votes, versus the idea with the highest grade average.

Would have had even more favorable grades with improvements to music and actors’ acting/expressions.

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Grade-point-average: **2.22** (on 4.0 scale)



# ASSESSMENTS: FEEL DIFFERENT



Clear, direct, straight-forward and to-the-point

Inclusion of infant in child passenger seat considered powerful, provocative

Portrays wide variety of people, ages



Music was slow and dull

Actors need to be livelier and more realistic in interactions with other passengers (rather than stoic, depressed, “zoned-out”)

Among critics of the idea, confusion about what the “glows” were supposed to represent



# ASSESSMENTS: BAD DIRECTIONS

Dan

Humorous approach  
makes it more likely to be  
memorable

Relatable

Highest scoring idea in  
grading exercise, but third  
highest in final tally of  
“which commercial best  
conveys the message”

In grading, most “A”s (10);  
most “B”s (23)

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Grade-point-average: **2.57** (on 4.0 scale)



# ASSESSMENTS: BAD DIRECTIONS



Liked because of its humor and ability to relate to participants' GPSs giving questionable directions from time-to-time

Retained attention

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While some liked the humorous approach, others considered it less appropriate “for such a serious subject”

Questions about lack of other vehicles on the roads

Driver appeared to be less impaired than the GPS navigator



# ASSESSMENTS: THINGS GET REAL

Different scenes and settings were commendable

Overall, however, more critiques than compliments about the idea

Third-highest scoring idea in grading exercise

Highest number of “C” grades; almost half of all participants (26)

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Grade-point-average: **1.81** (on 4.0 scale)



# ASSESSMENTS: THINGS GET REAL



Portrays different social scenes and settings

Numerous compliments for the line, “Things get real when you get behind the wheel”



Many comments about the people looking bored, “bummed,” and/or “zoned out”; atypical of most scenes when friends are together smoking and/or drinking and having a good time

Some participants bothered by the African-American guy being the only one pulled over

To several, appeared to have more of an alcohol emphasis rather than marijuana



# ASSESSMENTS: GAME OVER

Dan

Considerable criticism of the marijuana and alcohol “power ups” being portrayed as something positive/rewarding in the game -- makes consumption look like fun

Lowest scoring idea in grading assessments, including the most “F”s and the most “D”s

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Grade-point-average: **1.54** (on 4.0 scale)



# ASSESSMENTS: GAME OVER

Da'DUH

Dan



Visually engaging

Relatable to people who play video games



Wrong message conveyed by using alcohol and marijuana as “power ups” in the game

Use of game trivializes the message; not serious

No one noticed the intended shift from game to reality near the end of the commercial; but even if they had, likely would not overcome other issues with the idea



# RECOMMENDATION: REFINE AND PRODUCE “FEEL DIFFERENT”

- DESPITE RELATIVELY NOMINAL CRITICISM, THE RESEARCH IMPLIES THAT WITH REFINEMENTS, THIS TV IDEA CAN CONVEY THE INTENDED MESSAGE EFFECTIVELY BECAUSE OF ITS STRAIGHT-FORWARD, NO-NONSENSE APPROACH
- SUGGESTED REFINEMENTS:
  - Enhanced music that's less dreary
  - Livelier actors and interactions; less sad & stoic
  - Reconsider use or purpose of glows, due to this being confusing and/or distracting
  - Find ways to make marijuana smoking more obvious
  - Need a stronger enforcement ending. Participants think it will be more effective to show driver being put in a patrol car

