



Drive Clean Across Texas

2012 Independent Market Research and Evaluation of the *Drive Clean Across Texas* Campaign

Executive Summary



Research conducted on behalf of the Drive Clean Across Texas Team at the Texas Department of Transportation and Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to assist Texas cities in meeting federal air quality standards, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), in association with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), sponsored the development of the *Drive Clean Across Texas* (DCAT) public awareness campaign to raise the profile of air quality issues in Texas and to educate the public about various practices they could engage in to improve air quality. Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing (SMAM) has worked with TxDOT and TCEQ since 2001 to develop and implement the campaign, which has included paid media, outreach activities, media relations and educational materials to reach the public in targeted areas of Texas.

The campaign's activities are concentrated in nine areas of the state designated as nonattainment or near-nonattainment for air quality standards: Austin, Beaumont/Port Arthur, Corpus Christi, Dallas/Fort Worth, El Paso, Houston, San Antonio, Tyler/Longview and Victoria.

During the past eleven years, survey research tracking the effectiveness of the DCAT campaign was undertaken by the Texas Transportation Institute. This year, Collective Strength was asked to streamline the questionnaire and update the methodology. The evaluation survey was conducted in August 2012.

A total of 2,564 interviews [more than twice the number of interviews conducted in 2010] were conducted by a combination of landline, cell phone and internet interviewing. The sample was calibrated to the U.S. Census population estimates for the state of Texas, for the first time. Forty-five percent of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 34 – the target market for the public education campaign. Approximately half (54.1%) of the sample identified themselves as non-Hispanic white, while other respondents identified themselves as African American (7.9%), Hispanic (28.8%) or other (6.8%). Additionally, the target market of adults ages 18-34 in both nonattainment and near-nonattainment markets that were the focus of the campaign were emphasized for study, with the remaining areas of Texas and adults ages 35+ included as a control population for comparative purposes.

Objectives

The objectives of the *Drive Clean Across Texas* 2012 campaign evaluation and research study were to:

1. Track awareness, behavior and future plans of Texans regarding personal actions that can be taken to reduce air pollution from their cars and trucks.
2. Track the *Drive Clean* campaign's overall effectiveness in driving awareness, behavior change and future plans regarding air pollution reduction.
3. Track perceptions and beliefs about air pollution and impact.
4. Develop conclusions about campaign effectiveness and provide recommendations for the campaign strategy moving forward.

Generally, six broad categories were used for measurement:

- Perceptions of environmental issues generally and air quality specifically.
- Awareness of key actions to take.

- Media sources of information.
- Campaign impact on people’s behaviors.
- Beliefs related to air pollution.
- Respondent demographic profile, including primary mode of transportation and number of minutes spent commuting.

Key Findings

The following bullets summarize the key findings from the research when looking at the target market that includes nonattainment and near-nonattainment areas versus the control group referred to in the report as “Remaining Texas.”

Respondents from the target market are:

- More likely to see drought as the biggest environmental problem in Texas.
- Less likely to rate their own air quality as “good” or “very good.”
- More likely to believe their air quality is getting worse.
- Less aware (on an unaided basis) of key actions to reduce vehicle emissions, with the exception of carpooling.
- Slightly more aware of the DCAT social marketing campaign than the non-target market.
- Less likely to say they have had their attitudes about air quality changed by the DCAT campaign.
- Less likely to have already taken key actions.

Other findings, which are helpful for shaping future DCAT efforts, include that the target market:

- Strongly prefers to get additional information on the web.
- Is more likely than the non-target market to remember DCAT messages from billboards.
- Has a higher level of awareness of the DCAT campaign – when prompted – than the non-target market, in both the nonattainment and near-nonattainment areas (on average 12% higher).
- Has a much greater inclination to take action in the future by carpooling, trip combining and purchasing low-emission or higher fuel-economy vehicles, and a greater inclination for each action except for tracking ozone levels.
- Is significantly better than the non-target market at recalling the DCAT name on an aided basis. [The results are statistically significant.]
- Is much less likely to believe that having an impact on air pollution is “too difficult.”
- Is more likely to believe that if people take action to reduce air pollution, they can make a difference.

The research overall does not generally indicate a significant measurable effect from the campaign on the target market of 18- to 34-year-olds in nonattainment or near-nonattainment markets when compared to the remaining areas in Texas that were not targeted by the DCAT campaign. However, the target market in the nonattainment and near-nonattainment areas a) is significantly more likely to believe that air pollution is a serious problem, b) is less likely to rank air quality as good (by up to 50%) and c) believes that air quality is getting worse.

Moving forward, the “plans to take future actions” finding of the target market could be significant if their plans can be leveraged into actual action in the future. The target market respondents of 18- to 34-year-olds were more likely to say they planned to take certain *Drive Clean* actions in the future, including car/van pooling, purchasing a more fuel-efficient vehicle, combining trips, annual emissions inspections, avoiding drive-throughs, using teleconference/videoconference tools and doing regular car maintenance.

Conclusions

A number of key points emerge from the data to inform campaign strategy moving forward. These include, but are not limited to:

1. The target demographic has a clear preference for web-based media sources. More than 80% of 18- to 34-year-olds in every category use the internet as their primary source of information. More emphasis should be placed on consistent website presence, excellent search engine marketing (SEM) strategies and online partnering and promotion to drive traffic to the DCAT website. [*Note: Improving web traffic is also a recommendation from the 2010 report.*]
2. A shortened, tightened list of actions more adeptly packaged as a toolbox of small steps that reduce pollution, save money and keep air clean may be more effective to focus the target market’s attention on key action items.
3. Teleworking and videoconferencing are perceived as not offered by many employers, suggesting that businesses – not the general population – may be more appropriate targets for these actions. Employers/business owners could be targeted by the campaign specifically to encourage these and other options in the workplace.
4. Verbatim responses indicate that respondents are surprised to hear “purchasing new vehicles” as a recommendation during these difficult economic times. The data supports focusing more on “smaller” steps, but ensuring the target demographic views the steps as *making a difference* is critical.
5. Carpooling featured notably among the target market as a desired action to take in the future and was the primary action to be named without prompting by the 18-34 age group as a way to reduce air pollution. The target demographic was also more likely than respondents 35+ to say they have carpoled.

The target demographic is significantly more frugal and less car-oriented than previous generations, and new car sales are down in this demographic, according to national studies published in the past eight months. This trend may mean that maintaining older cars, taking public transportation, biking, walking and carpooling may be important to them for financial, moral and health reasons (or a combination thereof), and there may be emotional drivers that can align these actions with improving air quality.

The target demographic values being “educated” and “connecting” and not being marketed to in a traditional sense. Having an adequate degree of emotional resonance in the campaign may be key to establishing message retention for this demographic.