

# Message Not Received

Project case study (full)

Nicola Wass  
Chief Executive  
So-Mo



# Case Study

Birmingham City Council

**National safety campaigns, intended to promote seatbelt use, have brought down the rate of non-wearing to 8% (all occupants DfT 2018).**

**So, why are Birmingham City Council (BCC) seeing non-wearing rates of 38% in areas of the city populated by predominately South Asian populations?**

**So-Mo teamed up with BCC and local communities to uncover the truth behind these startling statistics. In doing so, we uncovered a health inequality that had remained hidden and unaddressed for many years.**

Road casualty figures in East Birmingham are disproportionately high. Interventions that have been effective elsewhere had achieved little impact.

Birmingham City Council concluded that generic approaches to road safety were achieving limited traction and commissioned So-Mo to help them understand the problem.

The Road Safety Trust found this work to be of wider national interest and subsequently funded Birmingham City Council and So-Mo to design a solution based on the integration of Behavioural Science and co-design.

## BCC's Hypothesis

BCC initially thought that young men speeding in high performance cars, lay at the heart of the

# Message Not Received

problem.

## The Data

When we interrogated collision data, alongside evidence from community interviews, we discovered that whilst young men driving high performance cars were visible and annoying to residents, the actual number of casualties attributable to them was very small. Tackling this problem would have made no difference to the area's casualty figures.

The real reason we were seeing higher deaths and injuries was explained by a very large number of passenger casualties. This strongly suggested that passengers were not wearing seatbelts.

To test this hypothesis, So-Mo observed seatbelt use at three casualty hotspots in East Birmingham. An observation of 507 vehicles uncovered a significant disparity.

**Nationally, the rate of passenger non-use is 8% locally it was sitting at 38%, a staggering 5 times higher!**

When we overlayed collision data with consumer and sociodemographic data, it transpired that 80% of these casualties were experienced by people of South Asian origin.

Whilst this problem affected all ages, it was particularly pronounced amongst the 16- 24 age group.

## Message not received?

Decades of high-profile, well regarded seatbelt campaigns supported by changes in the law, resulted in the UK having one of the highest wearing rates in the world. So, what had gone wrong?

A review of prior campaigns revealed two things.

First, the primary device used in these campaigns to drive a behavioural shift was the use of emotion associated with loss of a loved one.

Second, that the campaign actors were almost exclusively white families depicted as living in UK suburbs.

Heightened emotion aids engagement, memorability and recall of message - but only when the viewer is able to identify with the person they are seeing.

**People are more likely to empathise and feel an emotional response when they identify with the campaign 'actor' and its content" (Noar et al., 2007)**

A failure to reflect the lives and aspirations of South Asian people had inadvertently resulted in 'message-not-received'. We'd uncovered a health-inequality that had remained hidden and unaddressed for years.

# Case Study

Birmingham

## Our logic

We hypothesised that:

1. If we could increase use of seatbelts, we would see a reduction in passenger casualties.
2. Any intervention to increase seatbelt use would need to be targeted and tailored to a South Asian population.

## Approach

We wanted to be able to:

- View the world from the perspective of young, South Asian people living in Birmingham today.
- Uncover behavioural insights that could inform a new set of safety messages.
- Tailor those insights to reflect the lives and values of young South Asian people.

However, in early 2021, the UK was in lockdown.

# Message Not Received



You Know it Makes Sense 1963



Your Seatbelt is their Security 1970



Clunk Click Every Trip 1971



The Clunkers  
Late 70's / Early 80's



Belt up in the Back 1998 (& 2007)



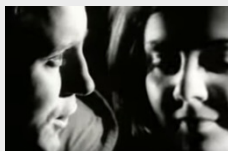
Clunk Click Even on the Shortest  
Trip 1981



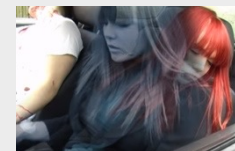
The Blunders 1983



Don't Do It 1983



Elephant  
1993



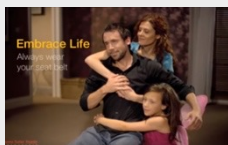
THINK! Wear a seatbelt  
2003



THINK! Reverse Advert  
2006



Three Strikes  
2008 (& 2010)



Embrace Life  
2010



Richard didn't want to die  
2011

Aside from a minor character in campaign from 2006, all actors in national campaigns appeared to be of White-British heritage.

# Case Study

Birmingham

At this point, COVID restrictions were limiting ability to conduct ethnographic studies. So-Mo devised an innovative way to engage 25 young people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage, through the creation of an online community. Here, we were able to learn a lot about the lives, dreams and ambitions of our user researchers.

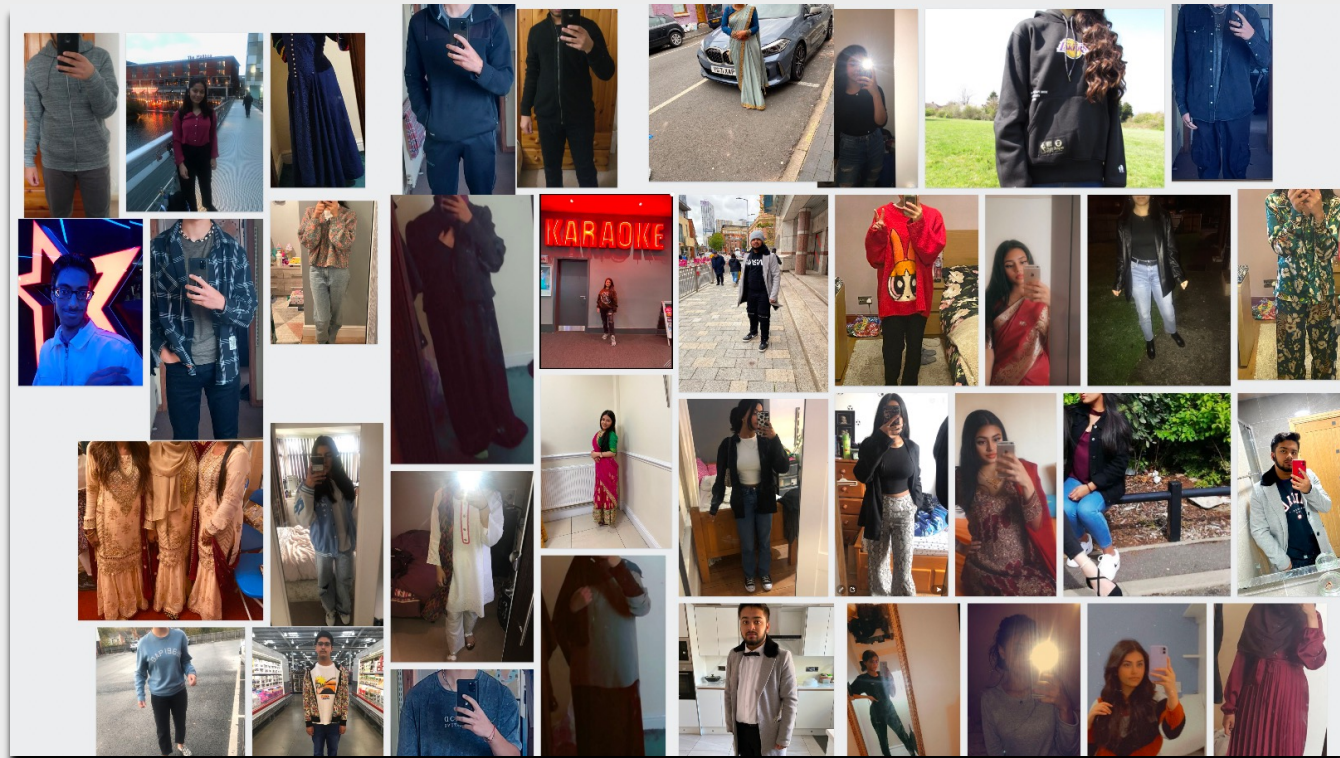
We were very interested in risk perception - a critical determinant of health behaviours. The young people we profiled had a very low sense of susceptibility to being killed or injured as a passenger. Seatbelts came very low down on their list of risky behaviours. We surmised that any campaign that focused purely on a narrative of death and injury was unlikely to be effective.

However, we also uncovered a very powerful insight. Namely, that all of our young people were highly susceptible to something known as 'anticipated regret'.

**Anticipated regret is the feeling experienced right now, of the regret we may feel in the future, about decisions we are currently considering making.**

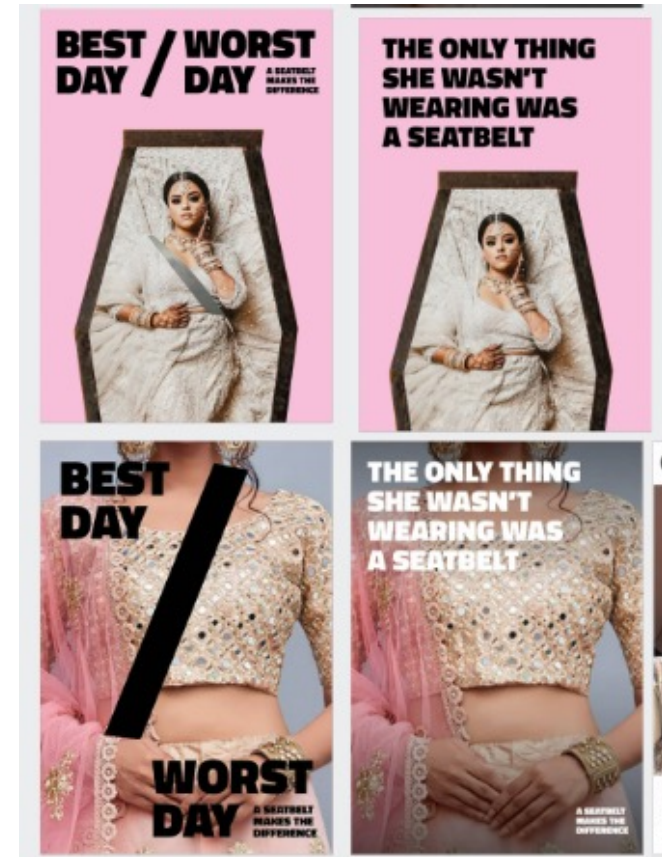
Anticipated inaction regret has a strong and stable association with health behaviour (Brewer NT et al 2016)

# Message Not Received



Over 6 weeks, 20 young people shared their lives, their hopes and their insight with us.....

# Anticipated regret - developing concepts



# Case Study

Birmingham

We worked with the young people (YP) to explore the concept of **anticipated regret**; this generated a number of possible scenarios.

Marriage and education came through as strong themes. One YP found an image featuring a mortar board crushed at the side of the road from a UAE campaign. Citing this as a great example of a tailored artefact. We built upon this concept. The real power lay in the behaviourally optimised messaging we embedded to further activate this main insight.

1. **Anticipated Regret**, to heighten emotion and create a sense of personal susceptibility.
2. **Cultural Tailoring** designed to increase salience (attention) and generate empathy (meaning).
3. **'Fasten up your future'** this message was designed for memorability and to create an association with the seatbelt as the way to protect a (now under threat) cherished future.
4. **Visual Cues** - including a visual of a seatbelt being fastened.
5. **Loss framed statistic**, pretested with our cohort for memorability and effect.

# Message Not Received



C



D

Two behaviourally optimised, tailored campaigns

# Case Study

Birmingham

4. Finally, we included a **loss framed statistic**, pretested with our cohort for memorability and effect.

# Message Not Received



Campaign mock-up

# Case Study

Birmingham

## Efficacy

The tailored, co-designed campaigns were then evaluated using a **randomised survey**, completed by 400 16-22-year-olds living in Birmingham.

We split respondents into 2 segments; those who identified as South Asian (185) and those from other ethnic groups (215). Each respondent was shown only 1 of 5 possible campaigns.

This comprised of the two tailored campaigns together with an:

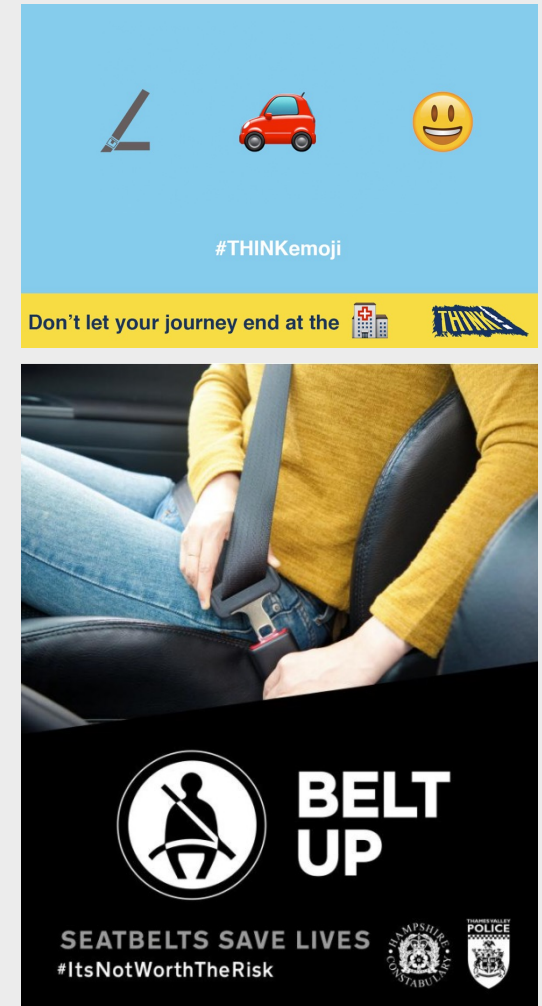
- Information only campaign created by So-Mo (A)
- The most recent national seatbelt campaign (B) and
- The most recent local campaign with high enough resolution for sharing (C).

We asked each respondent to score the campaign they had viewed across a number of measures.

# Message Not Received



A 'information only campaign' created by So-Mo



B National comparator, C Regional Comparator



# Case Study

## Method (continued)

### Measures used

1. Intention to wear a seatbelt after viewing the campaign.
2. What they thought the intention of their peers might be if shown the campaign (normative intent).\*
3. We measured their emotional response (Count of up to 10 emotions) and finally,
4. How likely they were to share the campaign with others (endorsement and potential reach).

Responses were described using simple statistics and compared using regression analyses appropriate to the outcome measure (significance reported at  $p < 0.05$ ).

### Headline results

#### **First, we looked at the response from the perspective of all respondents.**

The tailored campaigns performed significantly better than the comparator campaigns (national campaign, regional campaign and the

# Message Not Received

information-only campaign) on all measures.

Young people who viewed one of the tailored campaigns reported:

- The highest intention to wear a seatbelt (7.33/10) compared to (6.48/10) for comparator campaigns ( $p = 0.0005$ ).
- Were more likely to influence other young people to wear a seatbelt (7.06/10) compared to (6.14 /10)  $p < 0.0001$ .
- Reported double the number of emotions (1.66 versus 0.8 emotions,  $p < 0.0001$ )

#### **We then compared the responses of South Asian viewers to non-South Asian viewers.**

Here, we found one important distinction. Those who identified as South Asian showed an increase of 35% in the number of emotions generated from viewing the tailored campaigns (combined) (1.92 emotions) compared to (1.42 emotions,  $p = 0.035$ ) of non-South Asian respondents.

Given what we know about emotion as a device to increase attention, engagement and recall, this is a significant finding.

**\*A randomised control study** is the gold standard of research. Using this method, we had no control over who saw what campaign.

#### **\*\* Why we measure normative intent**

Normative beliefs are individuals' belief about the extent to which other people who are important to them would respond to selected stimulus (in this case, a campaign)

Measuring normative beliefs helps us to assess how accurate a reported subjective norm (the individuals assessment of how they themselves would behave). This is because an individuals' beliefs about what their peers think and do has been shown to provide an accurate read on their own beliefs and behaviours.

**\*\*\* Measuring emotion is important** because it provides insight into potential to command attention, elicit empathy, and depth of engagement, as well as ability to retain information.

# Case Study

# Message Not Received

## **This tells us two things**

The campaigns we had created were highly tailored - but not just to the condition of being South Asian.

Working with South Asian young people had in fact allowed us to derive valuable insights into two conditions.

1. The condition of being young and how this drives risk perception in relation to seatbelt use.
2. The condition of being South Asian.

**Tailoring to age** Our behavioural deep dive with young South Asian people had uncovered a number of powerful insights that were relevant to the experience of being young. Anticipated regret has potential to increase seatbelt use amongst young people in general.

**Cultural tailoring** People of South Asian origin demonstrated significantly higher levels of emotion when viewing a tailored campaign than their non-South Asian peers.

This supports the hypothesis that people are more likely to empathize and feel an emotional response when they identify with the campaign 'actor' and its content (Noar et al., 2007).

**This startling result demonstrates that the insights we uncovered, and the campaigns co-designed with young people from Birmingham have the potency and potential to reduce loss of life amongst this community.**

## What does the future hold?

Young people from all backgrounds have had limited exposure to seatbelt campaigns. There is an argument to suggest that the insights uncovered in the behavioural deep dive could be used to create a national campaign that would resonate with all young people

However, the deliberate inclusion of cultural tailoring will help to narrow an existing health inequality (passenger casualty rates) that we know exists within South Asian communities in Birmingham but may well apply to other minority groups within the population.

## Positive Feedback

**"I think our community gets stereotyped or misunderstood a lot of the time and by taking the time to carry out this research, it helps avoid these misunderstandings and produce a more effective ad" - co-designer (aged 16)**

**"Their innovation and creativity combined with well-established behaviour change and psychological approaches have delivered on the projects and changed how we think and work as a team with impact beyond immediate project commissions."**

– Mel Jones, Head of Transport Planning and Network Strategy, Birmingham City Council



**HIGHLY COMMENDED**  
CIHT Research Initiative of  
the Year Award