

# **Institutional communication in public health as a pillar in the prevention of road traffic accidents**

**Marco Giustini**

Italian National Institute of Health  
Environment and Primary Prevention Department  
Environment and Trauma Unit



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Aula Marotta  
Italian National Institute of Health  
Rome  
April 11, 2013

## **BACKGROUND**

Communication in health care is one of public communication areas destined to take a *central and strategic* role in the relationship between State and Citizens.

This “centrality” is derived not only by the commitment of governments to respond to the rights of citizens to be informed, but also for the dimension and complexity of concepts as *health* and *care* have taken in contemporary society.

The spread of mass communication media, along with the development of Internet, have made possible and necessary to improve the available resources to implement an **effective communication strategy**.

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## **BACKGROUND**

Health information addressed to the communities was historically provided through a “**traditional information**” and health education campaigns, in many cases unidirectional (**one-way communication**). Institutional campaigns of public health (eg, in the fight against smoking and obesity), addressed to all potential subjects, were designed and built **without interactivity** and customization attempts, **without taking into account the differences** between different population target or without the assessments of results.

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## **BACKGROUND**

Since the end of the last century, the progress of technology and the development and spread of the Internet has made possible to provide citizens with health information, with the main objective to **increase the population's access to high quality health information**, involving more citizens/patients, making them responsible with respect to their health and awareness about the disease, the care and medical treatment.

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## **BACKGROUND**

This new approach differs substantially from the traditional one in which the information was provided to the citizen regardless of its interaction and understanding skills.

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# **EVERY YEAR 1.3 MILLION PEOPLE DIE** **ON THE ROADS OF THE WORLD**

- The injured people are up to 50 million
- The global trends are worsening
- Accidents are the leading cause of death for people 5-44 years
- 90% of fatal road accidents happens in low and middle income countries
- Almost half of the deaths are observed between pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists



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## WITHOUT SPECIFIC ACTION IN 2020 THE NUMBER OF DEATHS WILL RISE UP TO 1.9 MILLION.

- Road accidents cost to the country up to 3% of GDP
- Only 47% of countries have laws to counteract the 5 major risk factors:
  - *speed*
  - *alcohol*
  - *non-use of helmets*
  - *non-use of seat belts*
  - *non-use of child safety seats*
- Only a third of the countries adopted a road safety strategy

Total 2004	
1	Ischaemic heart disease
2	Cerebrovascular disease
3	Lower respiratory infections
4	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
5	Diarrhoeal diseases
6	HIV/AIDS
7	Tuberculosis
8	Trachea, bronchus, lung cancers
9	Road traffic crashes
10	Prematurity and low birth weight
11	Neonatal infections and other
12	Diabetes mellitus
13	Malaria
14	Hypertensive heart disease
15	Birth asphyxia and birth trauma
16	Suicide
17	Stomach cancer
18	Cirrhosis of the liver
19	Nephritis and nephrosis
20	Colon and rectum cancers
22	Homicide

Total 2030	
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	Suicide
	Liver cancer
	Colon and rectum cancer
	Oesophagus cancer
	Homicide
	Alzheimer and other dementias
	Cirrhosis of the liver
	Breast cancer
	Tuberculosis

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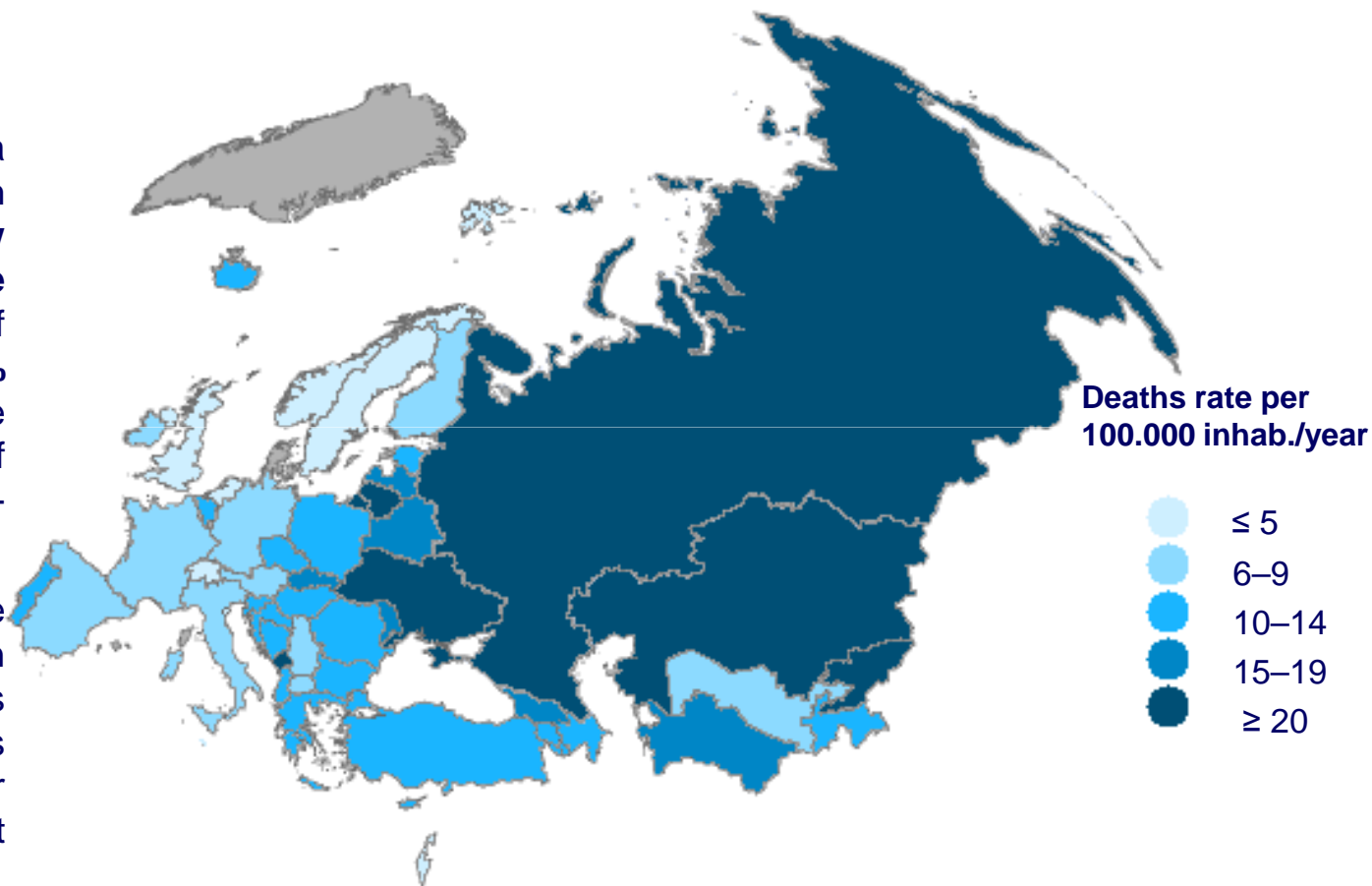
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# EVERY YEAR THE WHO EUROPEAN REGION REPORTS 120,000 DEATHS AND 2.4 MILLION INJURIES DUE TO ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Road traffic injuries are a great source of health inequality. Whereas **low and middle income** countries only have **26%** of the Region's vehicles, **70%** of victims are in these countries and the risk of dying is twice that in high-income countries.

Whereas the average mortality rate in the Region for road traffic injuries is 13,4 per 100.000, this ranges from 3 to 31 per 100.000 in different countries.



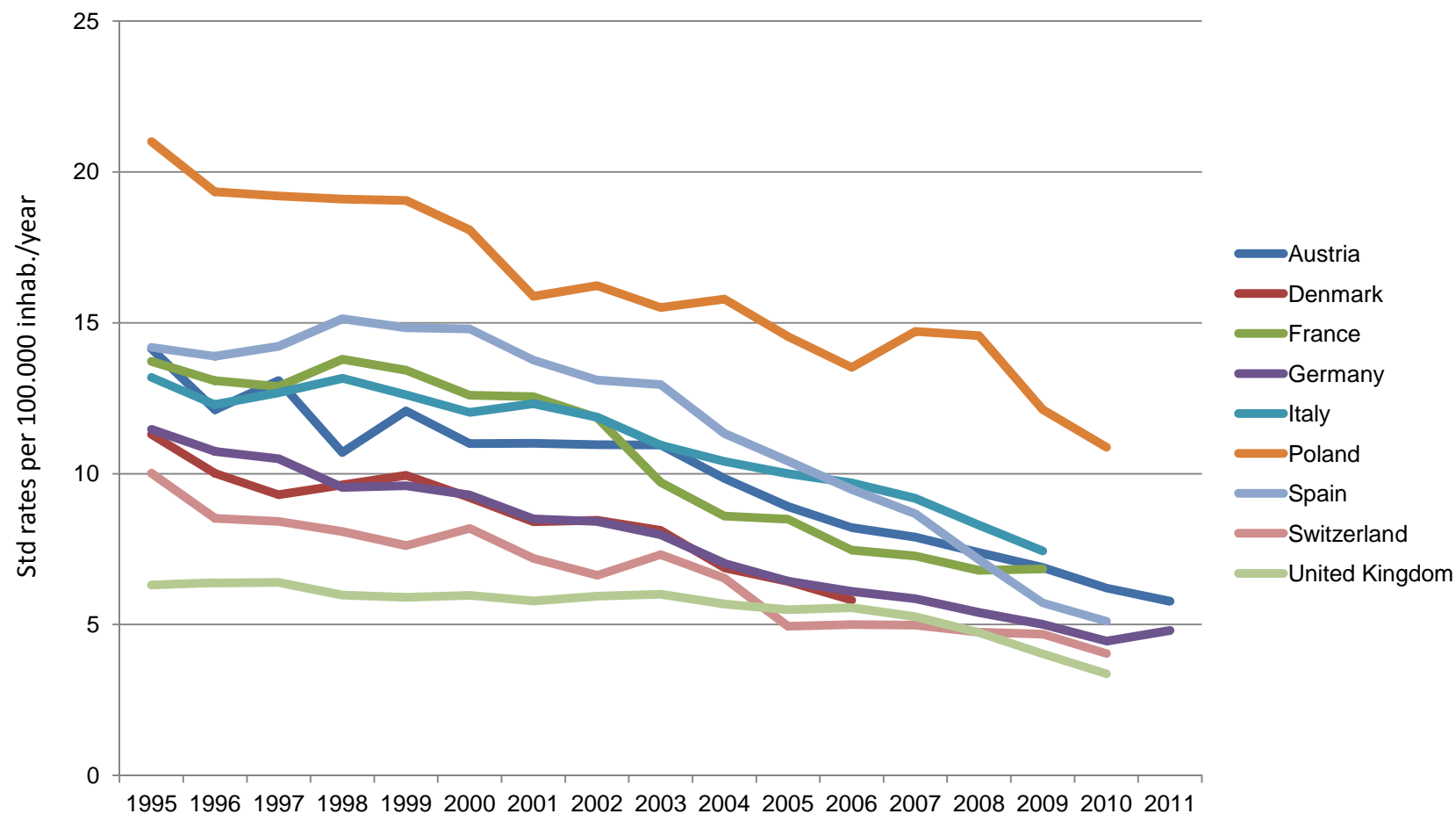
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# ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

## STD MORTALITY RATES



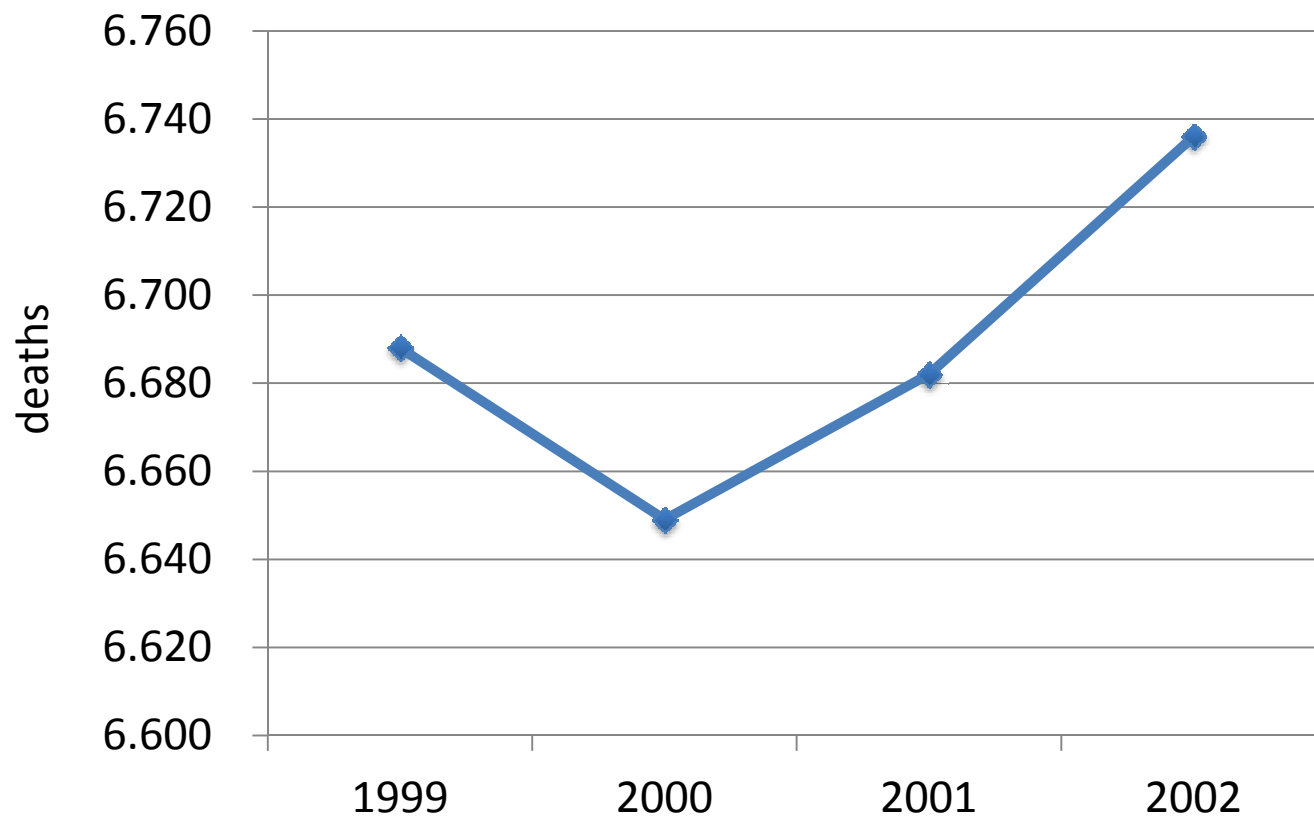
Source: Health For All database - WHO

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**AT THE END OF THE 90S ITALY WAS IN A "SWAMP".  
ROAD ACCIDENTS WERE STILL A MAJOR PUBLIC HEALTH  
PROBLEM AND THE OCCASIONAL PREVENTION STRATEGIES HAD  
PROVED INEFFECTIVE.**



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## **HOWEVER, EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MANY PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Estimated effect</b>
Reduction of 1 km/h in the average speed	-5% risk of fatal or severe Road Traffic Accident
Wear a helmet for Motorcycles	-72% risk and severity of head injury. -39% risk of death.
Wear a helmet for Cyclists	-63–88% in traumatic lesions of the skull and brain
Comply with the blood alcohol levels through intensive on road random controls	-36–42% incidence of alcohol related deaths
Wear safety belts	-45–55% of injuries
Use of safety devices for children	-70% deaths among infants -54% deaths among child 1-4 years
Environmental interventions for speed reduction	-11% number of injuries due to Road Traffic Accidents

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# MANY OF WHICH WITH AN EXCELLENT COST/BENEFIT RATIO!

Measure on which €1 could be spent	Savings (€)
<b>ROAD DESIGN</b>	
Removal of roadside obstacles	19.3
Upgrading marked pedestrian crossings	14
Guard rails along the roadside	10.4
Median guard rail	10.3
Area-wide speed and traffic management	9.7
Signing of hazardous curves	3.5
Pedestrian bridges or underpasses	2.5
Simple road markings	1.5
<b>CONSPICUOUSNESS</b>	
Roadside lighting	10.7
Daytime running lights (normal bulbs)	4.4
<b>ALCOHOL CONTROL</b>	
Random breath testing	36
<b>CAR RESTRAINTS</b>	
Child restraints	32
Audible seat-belt reminders	6
<b>HELMETS</b>	
Cycle helmets	29
Motorcycle helmets	16

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## **PUBLIC COMMUNICATION** **AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON ROAD SAFETY**

In this situation, in 2003 the **Italian Government** decided to act in a synergistic way involving all stakeholders.

On one hand the rules of the road traffic changed in a more restrictive direction, on the other hand a massive campaign of institutional communication started to improve the new rules effectiveness.

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# **WHAT WAS NECESSARY TO DO**

## **Structured and planned interventions**

- that use different strategies for prevention
- that are aimed at specific targets and issues (eg, risk factors, etc..)
- that analyze in advance the characteristics of the target to which they are addressed
- that evaluate interventions both during their course and afterwards

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**IN OTHER WORDS...**

**A SOCIAL MARKETING PLAN**

Social marketing is the  
**design, implementation and monitoring**  
of programs aimed to increase the acceptability  
of a cause or a social idea to one or more target groups.

*(Kotler, 1982)*

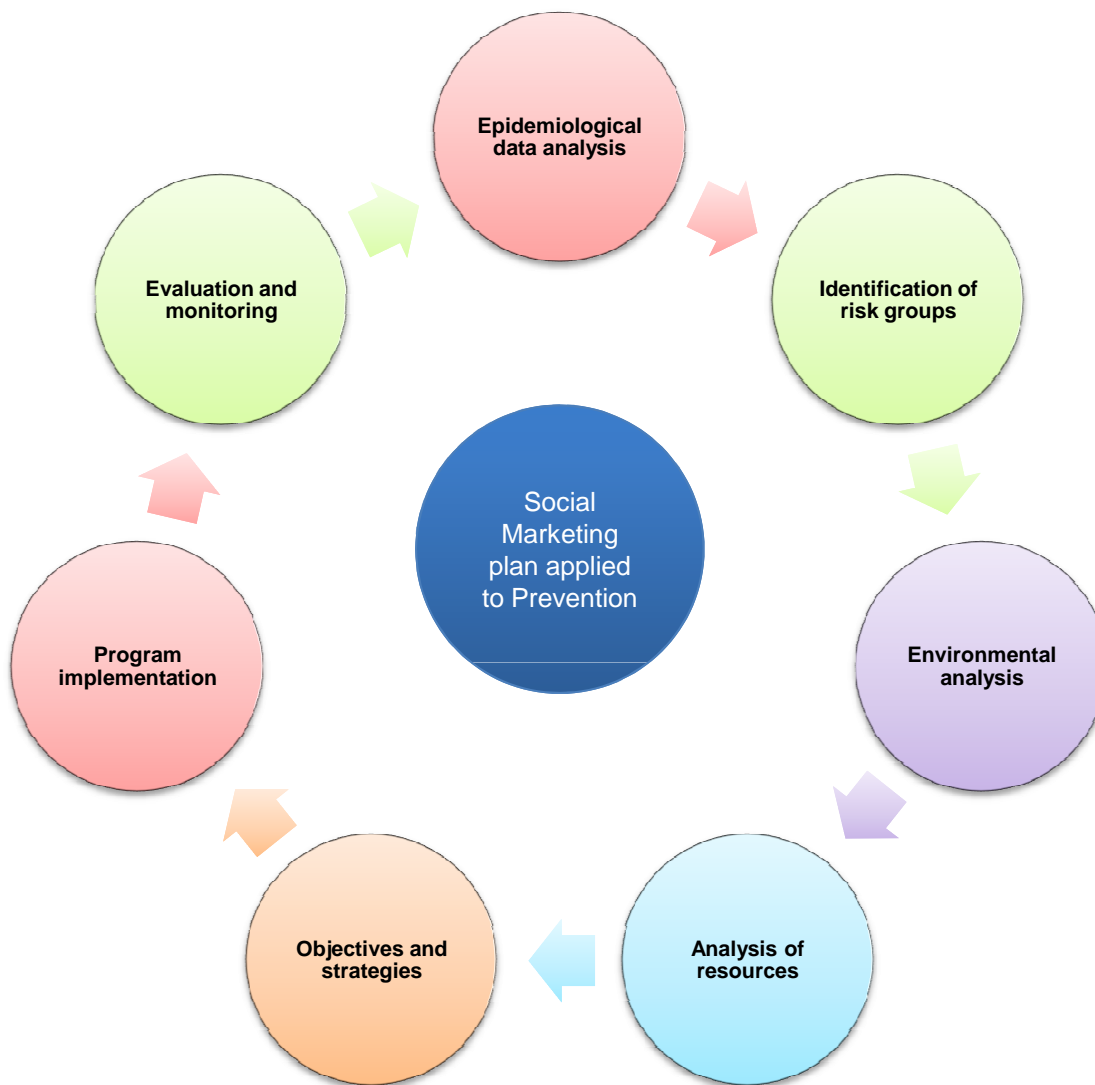
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# **SOCIAL** **MARKETING**



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## **PUBLIC COMMUNICATION:** **AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON ROAD SAFETY**

The connection between communication and road safety is clear, looking at the results from advertising campaign on **Road Safety introduced in Italy in 2003.**

In 2003 started the “awareness campaign” on road safety organized by the Ministry of Transport and realized by the *Grey Worldwide*, among the largest global advertising company.

The campaign was carried out on communication media and aimed to create a greater awareness of the risks arising from non-compliance with the rules of the road.

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# PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON ROAD SAFETY

What were the **variables** taken into account by Grey Worldwide in order **to maximize the effectiveness** of the awareness campaign?

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# **VARIABLES**

## ✓ **External to the message**

- Characteristics of the subject's personality (anxiety, self-esteem)

## ✓ **Internal to the message:**

- Elements in the message
  - *high probability of occurrence of negative event*
  - *high negative event harmfulness*
  - *suggested recommendations*
  - *high efficacy of suggested behavior*
- Representation of threat of injury or death
- Levels of intimidation

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# **VARIABLES**

## ✓ **Effects on emotional states**

- The message give a greater emotional reaction
- The chilling effects seem to disappear over time
- Other emotional effects (anxiety, disgust, depression, etc.).

## ✓ **Effects on attitudes**

- Positive effects
  - *Highest level of intimidation=>Greater change of attitude*
- Limiting factors
  - *Limited effect over time*
  - *Positive effect only for subjects with specific characteristics (eg, high self-esteem)*

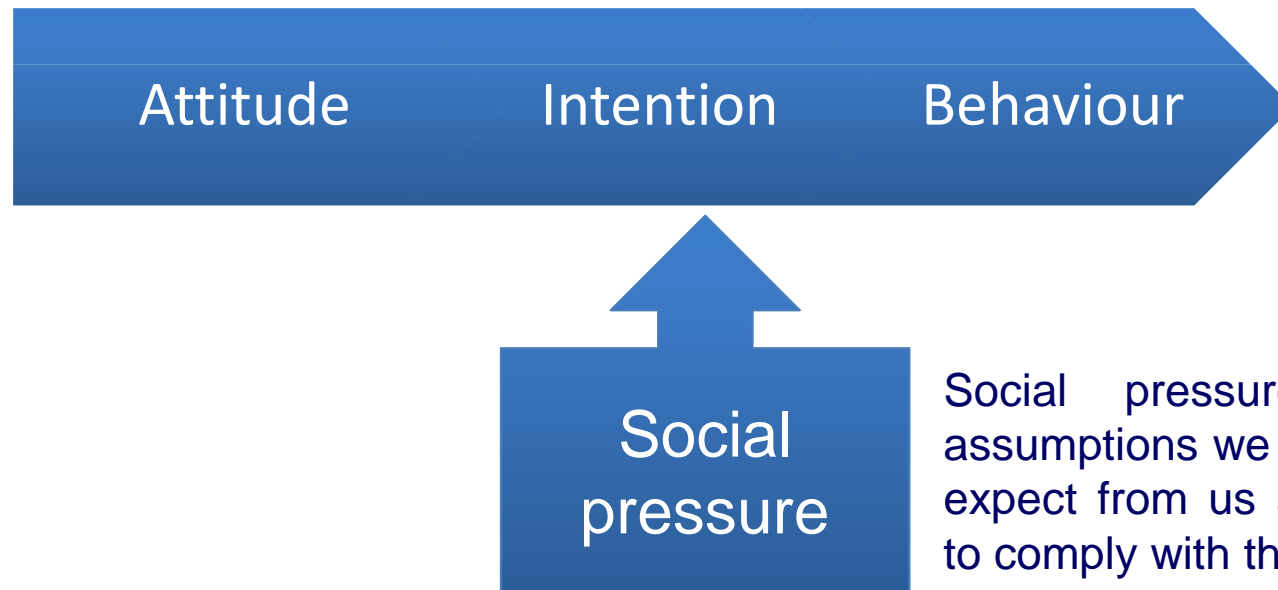
## ✓ **Effects on behavior**

- Difficult to measure driving behavior

# ATTITUDE

Spontaneous reaction, positive or negative, toward a person or an object, a concept, etc.

*Attitudes* influence *behavior* because we tend to behave consistently with our ideas. On the other hand we must keep in mind that the *intention* is also conditioned by *social pressure*.



Social pressure derives from the assumptions we make about what others expect from us and from the motivation to comply with the wishes of others.

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## **THE STRATEGY**

Messages with **excessive levels of intimidation** were **discarded** because unadapted to a population culturally different from the Anglo-Saxon because threatening messages lead not necessarily to behavioral responses desired by the issuer of the message.

In Anglo-Saxon culture, there are a lot of examples of campaigns using the cognitive approach of **fear appeals**.

# **FEAR APPEALS**

Include visual and/or verbal representations showing, in a more or less realistic way, the negative consequences of the risky behavior.

*Some examples...*

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### Too late to slow down

Speed kills all types of road users—drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. 80% of the average speed can reduce the number of road deaths by 50%.

Speed is the number one cause of road deaths.



www.mint.interno.it

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This trompe l'oeil guerilla campaign was placed at strategic intersections throughout European cities to remind urban drivers of the vulnerability of pedestrians.

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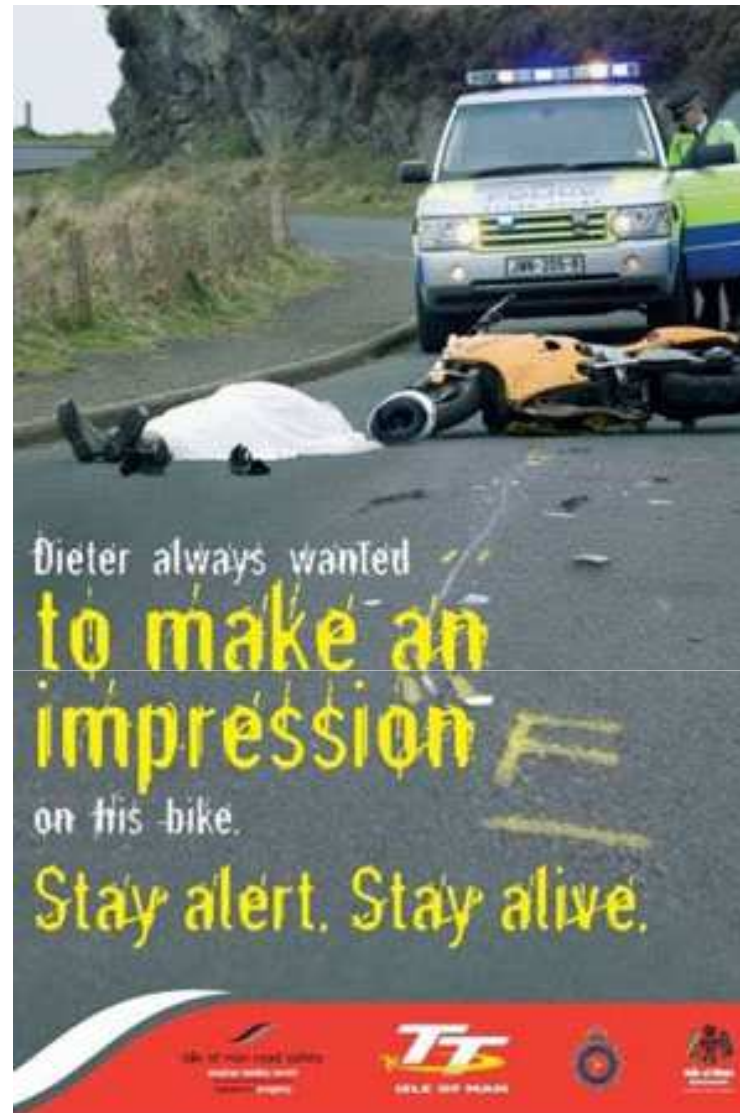
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Simple white flyers were placed on cars parked near schools in the Waikato region, with this image printed on the reverse.

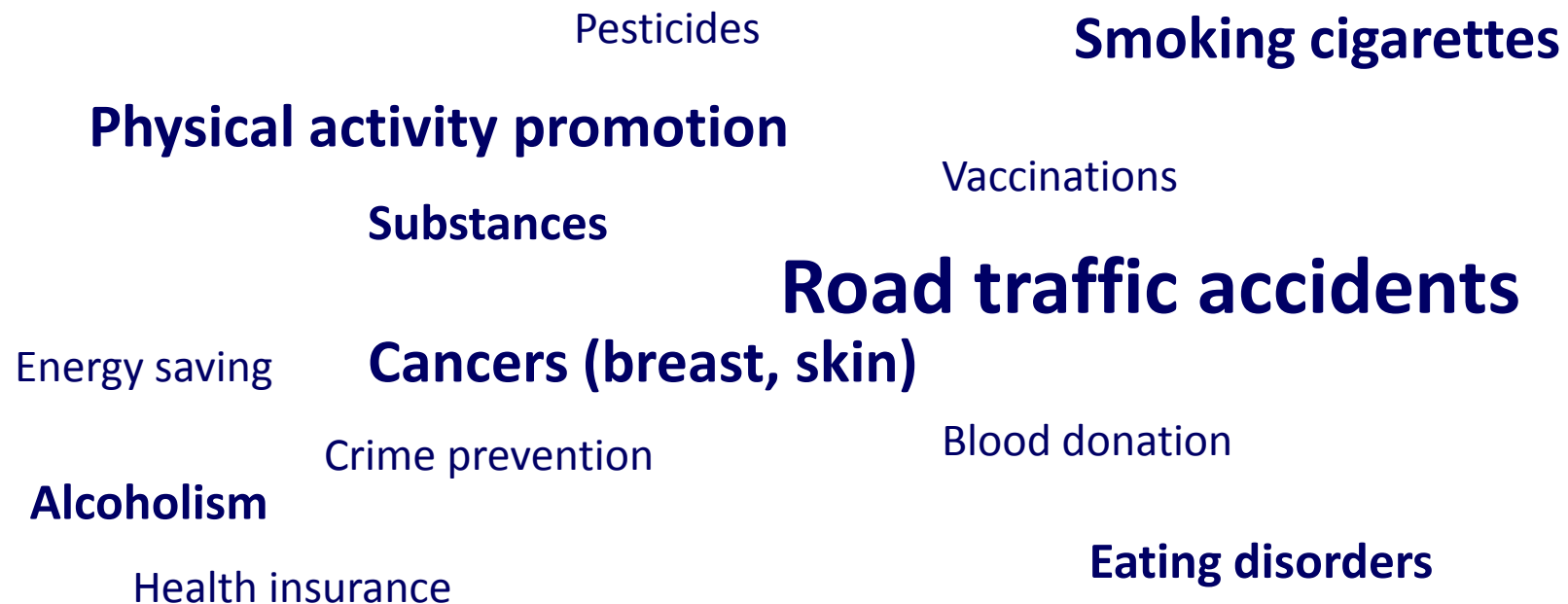
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# **ISSUES RELATED TO THE FEAR APPEAL**



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**CLAIM**  
**“HELP US TO GUARD YOU”**

It was decided to focus on a mix of motivational aspects, ranging from religion to charm, going through the empowerment of the road users that become informed and responsible.

An accurate casting selected an actor who met these criteria.

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# “HELP US TO GUARD YOU” DISTRACTIONS



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**“HELP US TO GUARD YOU”**  
**ALCOHOL**



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**“HELP US TO PROTECT YOU”**  
**HELMET**



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**“HELP US TO GUARD YOU”**  
**SAFETY BELTS**



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**“HELP US TO GUARD YOU”**  
**SPEED**



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## **CREATIVE RATIONAL**

It's nice to think that there is a *guardian angel* who always is by our side. Even when we drive. An angel who understands us, who leads us, who corrects our mistakes and intervenes at the right time if necessary to save our life. But *even an angel needs our cooperation* in order to best carry out his mission.

## **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

To *highlight how the rules and sanctions have been made and designed to save lives* and to protect citizens. The citizen must understand that the new Road Traffic Code is not an oppressive instrument but it is useful and necessary for the life of all of us.

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## **THE CORE OF MESSAGE**

The *angel* is a surreal testimonial for correct behaviors.

A poetic popularizer, a prompter of common sense and intelligence. The angel captures the attention leading us through dangerous situations in life and risky driving behavior, reminding what to do to save our lives and that of loved ones.

Using a strong evocative metaphor the Ministry of Transport promoted the creation of a new commitment and a more civilized collective culture by a message full of strong demand for awareness and respect for the rules.

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## **THE RESULTS**

All the following parameters reported extremely positive values, with better results respect to the average standard occurred in many of the major communication markets analyzed by the same research methodology.

1. Spontaneous total recall
2. Specific memory of advertising
3. Helped memory of advertising
4. Acceptance of advertising
5. Comprehensibility of the messages

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## THE RESULTS

In particular:

- 49.2% of respondents ***spontaneously recalled*** to see a road safety campaign (the average of the spontaneous memories of other campaigns monitored in 2002 and 2003 was 25.3% and 24.5%, respectively)
- The value for the ***related memory*** (ie specifically on the communication from the Ministry of Transport) has reached very high levels of 35.9% of the sample (the average of the *related memories* of other campaigns monitored in 2002 and 2003 was 21.6%% and 17.1%%, respectively)
- Even the ***helped memory*** was very high, with peaks of 70.7%, confirming the penetration of the message
- The collected data on the ***comprehensibility*** of the messages are above the threshold of excellence, confirming the ease of decoding of the proposed messages

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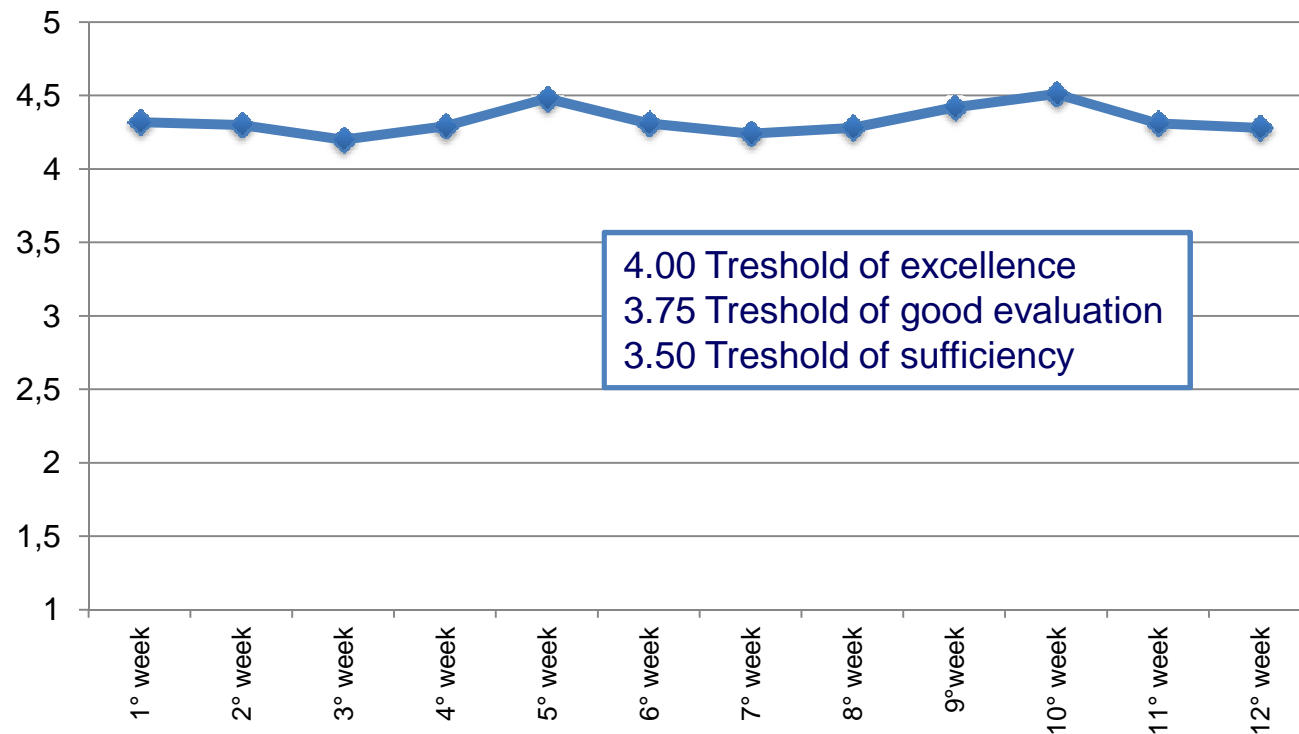
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## THE RESULTS

The ***approval rating*** of the messages was very high, consistently above the threshold of excellence



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## **THE RESULTS**

An evaluation at the end of 2003 showed that the campaign and the new law resulted in a significant reduction in the number of accidents and their consequences.

Accidents -19%

Deaths -28%

Injured -21%.

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“I've read in books that pilgrims were used to go to chapel before they went on journeys, to put up petitions for their safe return. Wise men! Journeys are very perilous especially outside the coach. Wheels come off, horses take fright, coachmen drive too fast, coaches overturn. I always go to chapel before I start on journeys. It's the last thing I do on such occasions, indeed.”

Charles Dickens

*The old curiosity shop*

1840

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