

Operation Khanyisa (South Africa)

Scope of Good Practice

Operation Khanyisa is a national partnership campaign against electricity theft. ‘ Khanyisa ’ is a Zulu word which means to light up, explain, or enlighten. This innovative campaign is informed by a behavior change strategy and is rewriting the history books of communication campaigns that tackle deep-seated social problems such as crime. The campaign has been carefully crafted to make use of all appropriate communication channels, combining enforcement, advertising, public relations, partnerships, and community mobilization. Electricity theft cannot be tackled through enforcement and ordinary advertising methods alone; rather than just dealing with those who steal electricity, the campaign is premised on a theory that crimes like electricity theft proliferate because good people do nothing.

The Problem Addressed by the Campaign

Electricity theft is a global problem, and costs South Africa around R4.4 billion (about \$450 million) annually. This complex issue takes place across society, in both poor and affluent areas and among large power users in all sectors. The theft impacts the financial sustainability of power utilities and poses a risk to the South African economy and society as a whole. Electricity theft contributes to power outages, tariff increases, job loss, and the death of children by electrocution from illegal connections. Electricity theft as a crime is not yet clearly stipulated in legislation, and hence enforcement procedures and the legal consequences need to be entrenched. The campaign tackles all of these related problems in an integrated manner.

Background Research

A national survey was conducted to determine level of awareness of, attitudes toward, and beliefs about electricity theft and the need for a campaign to address it. Baseline data helped inform the strategy and set measures to assess impact. The research indicated that although there was recognition of the problem of electricity theft (74 percent), there was low acknowledgement of electricity theft in respondents ’ own communities (33 percent), or that consumers are responsible for doing something about it (13 percent). Although belief that electricity theft is wrong was high (96 percent), only 16 percent believed they would get caught and only 14 percent that they would be prosecuted for it. These insights informed the campaign strategy and targeted messages to promote awareness, education and voluntary behavior change with the ability for all to take action, including calling an anonymous crimeline number to report electricity theft.

Partnerships and collaboration with community and sector leaders amplified the messages through on-the-ground activation, exhibitions, workshops, summits, and train-the-trainer sessions. The role of national, regional and local media through print, radio and TV advertising, out of home, digital and social media, and other publicity made the campaign widely visible through a sustained presence. Action being taken against offenders is highlighted in the media, making the seriousness of the crime real.

Strategy

The big idea behind the creative for the first 18 months of the campaign was a subversion approach, to take what people know and turn it on its head to send an enticing positive message that intrigues and interests. The danger signs that one usually sees at electrical installations and substations were adapted to convey messages to targeted audiences that raised questions and stimulated further inquiry. This was followed by intensive advertising, activation, social mobilization, and a public relations campaign that entrenched the Operation Khanyisa brand and campaign by providing more explicit messages, education, and calls to action.

Creative

As this is a behavior change campaign, the elements produced go beyond what a traditional advertising campaign would entail. Traditional elements of print, outdoor, TV, radio and digital were complemented by various collateral in the form of posters, banners, booklets, brochures, handbooks, train-the-trainer manuals, and student workbooks and games. These forms of communication were used to support on-the-ground events, activations, partner mobilization, and community engagement. The campaign started off with print and out-of-home posters. These were followed and supported by a national TV and radio campaign that used two likeable characters, Kevin and Dosto, who further expanded on issues surrounding electricity theft in a humorous and conversational way.

Creative elements developed for exhibitions, expos, workshops, summits and seminars were tailored to specific audiences such as farmers, businesses, schools and government officials. Methods such as competitions, edutainment, industrial theater, and one-on-one engagement ensured that the audience engaged with the material in a creative and interesting way. During the holidays, information packs with games, brochures, puzzles, and workbooks were distributed at tollgates, reaching 2.4 million people. Throughout the campaign we kept the messaging simple and consistent, integrating it in all our elements and engagement activities, thus educating and reinforcing that urgent action needs to be taken.

Media

The campaign takes a 360 degree view of the target audience and uses all appropriate communication channels, including broadcast, print, digital (web, Facebook and Twitter), and face-to-face engagement. The media strategy is broad and targets all markets, the objective being to drive awareness in the general public and sustain this with a drip strategy, with a burst strategy in fast-penetrating media. A reach of 75 percent has been achieved in one of the most comprehensive out-of-home campaigns yet launched in South Africa.

The campaign's use of communication channels goes beyond traditional media, using partnerships to leverage their platforms and constituencies. At the community level, fieldworkers are working with community leaders and structures in six pilot sites. A problem-solving approach is followed with the objective of achieving self-regulation and solution building. The campaign is funded by South Africa's power utility, Eskom; however, much coverage was achieved through unpaid editorials in national, regional and community newspapers. During 2010-2011, over 200 articles were written on the campaign and the issues it addresses. Exposure is also achieved through media ambassadors, i.e. communities and leaders taking up issues of legal, safe and efficient use of electricity by using their platforms, talent competitions, and events to reinforce the messages.

Impact

Since launching the campaign in October 2010, 96,019 people have been engaged face-to-face through household visits, workshops, community activities and expos. In addition to core campaign partners, partnerships have been developed with national and local government and organizations; 9,500 stakeholders including local government, traditional leaders, religious organizations, youth and women's groups, schools, police, business structures, burial societies, taxi associations, and community leaders have pledged to be legal power users and promote legal, safe and wise electricity use. Distribution of information and activity packs to people going through tollgates reached 2.4 million during the holiday season.

In addition to awareness and education campaigns promoting voluntary behavior change, and community solution-building initiatives to address barriers to legal power use, enforcement is an important part of the strategy. Achievements include development of the first-ever Guide to the Prosecution of Electricity Theft in South Africa, used as a resource in training prosecutors and investigators. Amendments to the National Electricity Act of 2006 have been submitted and are in the process of being included. A landmark court victory in March 2011 set a new legal precedent, with the conviction of two men on racketeering charges for theft of pre-paid electricity vending machines. They received a combined sentence of 111 years and asset forfeiture of R7.5 million (about \$760,000), clearly communicating that although electricity is seen as 'intangible', it is a crime to steal it and legal proceedings will be undertaken. In addition, we have succeeded with 59 court cases and convictions for electricity theft. There

have been over 5,000 tip-offs to the crimeline number to report electricity theft, with R20 million (about \$2 million) recovered in tamper fees and 17,000 illegal connections and meter tampers disconnected by Eskom. Operation Khanyisa was awarded the Crimeline Star Award and Best Overall Exhibition Award at the annual Business Opportunities and Franchise Expo in 2012.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As indicated in the introduction, Operation Khanyisa is rewriting the history books of communication in South Africa through its comprehensive and integrated behavior change approach. Its objective is ambitious yet achievable. The level of awareness and buy-in achieved with communities, partners and sectors including business, media, and local and national governments is remarkable. The problem is complex and will take years to tackle successfully, but results so far bode well for the future, confirming the appropriateness of the behavior change approach. Some of the important lessons learned include the need for an extensive above-the-line campaign to support on-the-ground community and sector-specific initiatives; the importance of sustained engagement with communities to find solutions to barriers to the desired behavior; and that working in partnership with stakeholders requires consistent support and joint planning to activate and sustain their commitment and focus.