

# Adapting and Recycling Anti-smoking Advertisements

Two case studies: *Sponge* and *Artery*

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# Adapting and Recycling Anti-smoking Advertisements

## Two case studies: *Sponge* and *Artery*

### Background

In 2007 and 2008, the Cancer Institute NSW adapted two previously successful television anti-smoking campaigns to be broadcast in NSW. These two advertisements were *Sponge*, in which black tar is squeezed from a sponge to demonstrate the amount of tar absorbed by a smoker's lungs in one year, and *Artery*, in which the fatty deposits lining the aorta of a smoker are depicted. The rationale for adapting these campaigns was based on their previous successes in helping to reduce the prevalence of smoking in Australia,<sup>1,2</sup> and the aim was to re-introduce their health effects messages to a younger audience.

*Sponge* was originally aired in Sydney in 1983, and by 2007 the ad had not been run in NSW for over 15 years. Qualitative pre-testing indicated that there was some value in modernising the advertisement to communicate with the substantial number of smokers in the under-30 age group who had not been exposed to this particular health effects message. In 2007, the remade version of the advertisement was broadcast for seven weeks.

Ten years after the launch of the original *Artery* advertisement (part of the National Tobacco Campaign), the image of the aorta from that advertisement was one of 14 graphic health warnings introduced onto Australian cigarette packs in 2006. Exploratory research indicated that young smokers (in their 20s) didn't understand the message that the artery image was being used to demonstrate in the pack warnings. These smokers were too young to recall the television commercial relating the clogged artery to smoking when it first aired in 1997, and so the *Artery* advertisement was remade to help reinforce and clarify this message for the younger audience.

### Purpose

To assess recall and responses to these two adapted anti-smoking advertisements.

### Method

Smokers and recent quitters (quit in the last 12 months) 18 years and older were interviewed as part of continuous tracking research to evaluate the effectiveness of all on-air Cancer Institute NSW advertisements. The sample was obtained using list-assisted Random Digit Dialling (LA-RDD) and the interviews conducted using computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). Fifty interviews were conducted weekly while each of the ads was on air, and a further two weeks post-campaign (9 weeks in total for each ad). Smokers and recent quitters were asked a series of questions to determine their awareness and responses to the advertisements. For *Artery*, which was an advertisement specifically linked to one of the graphic cigarette pack warnings, respondents also answered questions relating to the graphic warnings.

Chi-square tests were used to investigate differences in the outcomes of interest between age groups, and univariate logistic regression was used to determine which age groups differed significantly from one another on the relevant outcomes. For continuous variables, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to test for differences between age groups. All quantitative analyses were performed using the statistical software SPSS v15.

### Results

Both advertisements achieved high levels of recognition – more than 80% for *Sponge* and almost 50% for *Artery*. Both ads were also rated as “attention grabbing” by large proportions of the respondents who had seen them. Respondents indicated

that the ads generated thoughts of quitting, with more than two thirds of smokers agreeing that *Sponge* made them think again about quitting, and more than 70% agreeing that *Artery* made them 'stop and think'. Encouragingly, more than half of the respondents indicated that they were not at all tired of seeing either of the remade ads, and this was true of smokers of all ages, even the older smokers who were likely to have seen the original ads. The full range of responses are shown in Tables 1 and 2 and any differences across age groups are noted.

**Table 1** Smokers' and recent quitters' awareness of and responses to the remade *Sponge* advertisement

	Overall (n=453)	18-24 years (n=43)	25-39 years (n=131)	40+ years (n=278)
<b>Awareness</b> (prompted recognition)	84% (n=380)	88% (n=38)	81% (n=106)	85% (n=235)
<b>The ad was...</b>				
attention-grabbing	86%	79% <sup>a</sup>	93%*	84%
believable	83%	92%*	91%*	79% <sup>a</sup>
relevant to me	73%	76%	81%*	68% <sup>a</sup>
<b>The ad made me...</b>				
stop and think	66%	74%*	73%*	61% <sup>a</sup>
think again about quitting (smokers only, n=185)	67%	71%	80%*	61% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Getting tired of this ad (not at all)</b>	53%	66%	54%	51%
<b>Effectiveness rating: M (SD)</b>	6.50 (2.66)	6.12 (3.14)	6.45 (2.28)	6.58 (2.75)

Note. Percentages represent the proportion of each sample who agreed (strongly or somewhat) with each statement; effectiveness rating (0-10);

<sup>a</sup> denotes reference group for univariate logistic regression analyses;

\* denotes significantly higher than reference group,  $p < .05$ .

**Table 2** Smokers' and recent quitters' awareness of and responses to the remade *Artery* advertisement

	Overall (n=456)	18-24 years (n=64)	25-39 years (n=113)	40+ years (n=279)
<b>Awareness</b> (prompted recognition)	47% (n=214)	45% (n=29)	46% (n=52)	48% (n=133)
<b>The ad was...</b>				
attention-grabbing	86%	79%	92%	86%
believable	91%	100%*	96%*	87% <sup>a</sup>
relevant to me	78%	86%*	87%*	72% <sup>a</sup>
<b>The ad made me...</b>				
stop and think	73%	77%	79%	69%
think again about quitting (smokers only, n=185)	71%	71%	74%	69%
<b>I'm getting tired of this ad (not at all)</b>	54%	59%	47%	54%
<b>Effectiveness rating: M (SD)</b>	6.22 (2.82)	6.31 (2.49)	6.40 (2.52)	6.22 (3.01)

Note: Percentages represent the proportion of each sample who agreed (strongly or somewhat) with each statement. Effectiveness rating (0-10);

<sup>a</sup> denotes reference group for univariate logistic regression analyses;

\* significantly higher than reference group,  $p < .05$ .

The rationale for remaking the *Sponge* advertisement was to reach young smokers who had not seen the original ad. The tracking research confirmed the modernised *Sponge* advertisement had a strong impact on younger smokers in NSW. Ratings of believability and relevance were highest amongst the younger smokers. Encouragingly, those aged 18-39 years were particularly likely to indicate that the ad made them stop and think, and 71% of 18-24 year old smokers related that the ad made them think again about quitting.

In order to assess any changes in awareness of the graphic pack warnings as a result of seeing the *Artery* ad, respondents who reported that they had seen the graphic warnings were asked to describe any warnings they could recall. Two components

of the artery pack warning were relevant: (a) the image of the aorta artery, and (b) the message ‘smoking clogs your arteries’. Comparisons were made in the levels of recall of the image and the message in the periods pre-campaign (9 weeks) and during the campaign (7 week campaign plus 2 weeks follow-up), differentiating between respondents who did or did not see the advertisement (see Table 3).

**Table 3** Smokers’ and recent quitters’ awareness of the graphic pack warnings and the *Artery* image and message

	Pre-campaign (n=448)	During campaign, does not recall <i>Artery</i> (n=235)	During campaign, recalls <i>Artery</i> (n=213)
Seen graphic warnings	96%	94%	97%
Recalled aorta image	28%	26%	30%
Recalled ‘smoking clogs arteries’	4% <sup>a</sup>	6%	8%*

Note. Percentages represent the proportions of each sample; <sup>a</sup> denotes reference group;  
\* significantly higher than reference group,  $p < .05$ .

There were no significant differences in awareness of the artery image. However, those smokers and recent quitters who had seen the *Artery* advertisement were more likely than those in the pre-campaign period to recall the pack message ‘smoking clogs your arteries’.

### Conclusion

Both of these advertisements achieved high levels of recognition, which, given variations in media schedules, were comparable to awareness levels of the original ads.<sup>1,3</sup> Adapting these ads appeared to be an effective strategy; reaching the target audience and generating thoughts about quitting. The adaptation of these ads exposed a younger audience who had been previously unexposed to the effective and iconic images and messages, resulting in important information being disseminated at a considerable saving of time and money.

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