

Working with Keep Britain Tidy

CIGARETTE
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Cigarette Butts are Rubbish

The context

In 2023, VCCP were appointed by Keep Britain Tidy to tackle the problem of smoking related litter. Cigarette butts account for 66% of all litter, making it the most littered item in the UK. Keep Britain Tidy needed a way to change the behaviour of regular smokers, a group resistant to change.



The idea

In partnership with Cowry Consulting (A world leading Behavioural Science Consultancy) and VCCP Stoke, in depth audience research informed the strategy. A combination of traditional in-person qualitative groups and innovative behavioural interviews and facial expression analysis took place.

This approach identified not only what smokers say, but how they feel subconsciously. Smokers claimed they didn't care what people thought of them, the research proved otherwise. They really really do care. It also proved that while smokers claim to care about the environment, it is not a motivating factor to changing their behaviour.

It also became apparent from research that smokers just didn't see their cigarette butts as litter. Yet they all spoke passionately about being anti-litter. This revelation landed us on the thought, We know you're not a litterer, but cigarette butts are rubbish.

The challenge was then finding the right tone and messenger to deliver this thought. We knew shaming smokers would result in them switching off. So we used humour and empathy to engage the smoker. It was integral to the campaign's success that the messenger chosen to deliver the news was likeable but able to cast judgement without antagonising or shaming the audience.

The results

We created an omnichannel campaign featuring a duck who casts judgement on a smoker's behaviour without moralising about their behaviour. The duck acts as a silent observer, who can in a non-confrontational way point out how smokers wouldn't dream of littering crisp packets or water bottles, so why on earth would they litter a cigarette butt?

Media activations (run by Wavemaker UK) appeared on high-profile AV launch spots across the UK to ensure the core message reached and landed with its target audience. This included a takeover at the O2 in London and a mural in Manchester. We ran tactical media communications in parallel at key points of action, such as targeted out-of-home in high indexing locations as well as audio, podcast sponsorship and social. Further media activations have been devised to illustrate the positive outcome of a 'good' behaviour, including unlocking ad-free content on streaming services and bespoke in-game advertising.

The O2 takeover included a 2 week behaviour intervention at the O2 arena, serving as an experiment to measure how effective communications can be in reducing the littering of cigarette butts at the O2 Arena. Bespoke campaign materials were displayed at the O2 Arena, ranging from D/OOH, to floor decals, wrapped bins and smoking zone interventions.

An accompanying PR campaign was implemented by our sister PR agency, Good Relations, and launched with a stunt where a mound of rubbish representing 225,000 butts was installed on Kingston High Street.

The results

81%

smokers liked the campaign

9/10

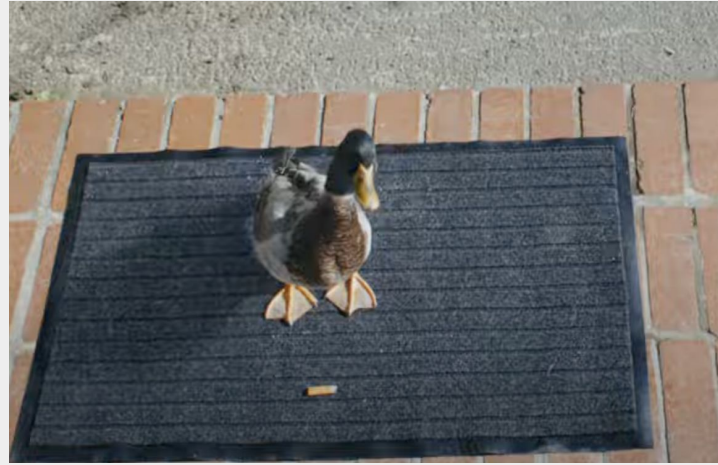
people said they'd get rid of their butts properly

77%

of people who recalled the campaign took at least one action



AV



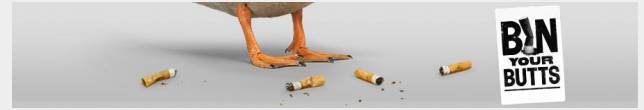
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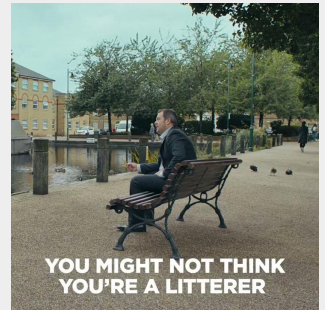
OOH



MURAL



PR



SOCIAL



AV



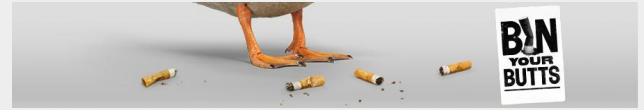
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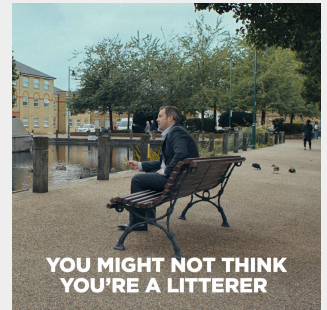
OOH



MURAL



PR



SOCIAL



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THE CHALLENGE

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THE OUTCOME

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"We wanted to create advertising that used best in class behavioural science to really speak to our audience, and we are thrilled with the output. Our charming feathered friend delivers an important message to smokers, who do not realise the devastating impact that their litter has on our environment. We are thrilled with the campaign and believe it will have a real impact on what is currently the UK's most littered item, cigarette butts."

Allison Ogden-Newton, CEO, Keep Britain Tidy



THE RESULTS

81%
SMOKERS
LIKED THE CAMPAIGN

9/10
PEOPLE SAID THEY'D
GET RID OF THEIR BUTTS
PROPERLY

77%
OF PEOPLE WHO RECALLED
THE CAMPAIGN TOOK AT
LEAST ONE ACTION