



Project Title
Thames Water drought campaign

Category
External communication design

Sub Category
N/A

Client Company
Thames Water

Design Consultancy
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For publication

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Beyond

Executive summary

By spring 2012 the South East had experienced the driest two years on record leading to a serious water shortage, with the potential to be one of the lost serious droughts of our time. Seven water companies imposed hosepipe bans.

Thames Water needed, in their words, 'a fresh and clear campaign – nothing fancy or clever' to encourage people to use less water. It also had to be informative, raising awareness of the circumstances leading to the water shortage and managing people's expectations.

The campaign has proved hugely successful both in terms of recall, understanding of the messages and behaviour change.

Results show significant and sustained behavioural change as a result of the campaign. Almost half (48%) of Thames Water customers surveyed are using less water as a result of the campaign. 40% plan to continue to use less water in the long term. At the beginning of the campaign the tracking survey said customers took an average 4.7 baths per week; at phase three of the campaign participants said they took 2.8 baths per week.

Research in June showed that 72% of Thames Water customers agree or agree strongly with the statement "*I have a good understanding of why there is still a serious water shortage*" even after the wettest april on record. 96% of Thames Water customers were aware that a drought has been declared and 93% were aware that temporary use restrictions were in place.

These results were achieved in spite of press cynicism and the drought eventually being dubbed the 'wettest drought in history'.

The heavens opened within hours of the ban being imposed and stayed open for almost the full duration of the 10-week ban that affected Thames Water's diverse 8.8M customer-base.

(286 words)

Project overview

Outline of project brief

Sustained and targeted advertising and marketing campaign to run from February 2012 to July / August 2012.

Aims and objectives

1. **Encourage customers to use less water** and order our free water-saving products – including visiting www.thameswater.co.uk/waterwisely
2. **Raise public awareness and understanding** of the circumstances that have led to drought to our diverse 8.8M customer-base across London and the thames valley.
3. **Manage expectations** by keeping customers informed every step of the way so when the time comes to impose water restrictions – (temporary use ban) or more serious restrictions (drought order) – it does not come as a shock.
4. **Communicate what water restrictions mean** – new legislation has been brought in replacing what was previously known as a ‘hosepipe ban’ with a ‘temporary use ban’ – there are now 11 ways in which water use will be restricted.
5. **Protect company reputation** by demonstrating we are as prepared as possible. It is highly likely that water restrictions will be in place for the duration of the olympics. On top of this, we are also the ‘official water utility services provider’ for the olympic and paralympic games (tier 3 sponsor) – we need to carefully manage our position as an ‘official water provider’ when we will be restricting water use as there is the potential of a PR disaster. www.thameswater.co.uk/London2012

Description

By February 2012, 17 of the previous 22 months had experienced below average rainfall, meaning a serious water shortage was imminent.

By early spring 2012 the south east had experienced the driest two years on record. In the middle of March 2012 Thames Water expected to announce that it would impose a temporary use ban (hosepipe ban) which would come into place in april if the situation didn't improve.

Thames Water needed a strong presence and a sustained multimedia campaign to let customers (including businesses and stakeholders) know a ban was coming and to keep them informed during the ban. As there was no way of knowing how long the drought would last, they also have to maintain momentum so customers kept listening and continued to use water wisely.

Thames Water didn't want the messaging to be apologetic or sensational. It was not a disaster – droughts happen. They plan for them and that includes imposing restrictions when necessary in a timely and coordinated manner.

Thames Water also wanted to lead industry communications on drought to ensure messaging was aligned, offering other water companies the opportunity to get on board, so the approach needed to be able to stand alone and be company neutral if need be.

The campaign was to work in phases designed to be flexible to react to changes – including the public mood and the topsy-turvy british weather. It was also designed to cover the olympic period due to the number

of tourists visiting the capital.

Media to be used:

- Outdoor - cross track, 48, 96 and 6 sheet posters, bus sides and street liners
- London and local press, full page, in page ads and advertorials
- Digital escalator panels and projected cross track on the underground
- Radio, including weather sponsorship
- Exhibitions at events including water-saving giveaway at main line stations
- Branded water-saving devices supported by literature
- On-line fulfilment and further information

Overview of market

A drought in London and the south east was officially declared on 20 February 2012 and a hosepipe ban was declared in March and imposed in april.

London and the south east rely on groundwater for its water. Groundwater had become so dangerously low that some rivers around London had started to run dry and some had disappeared completely.

Things changed in april 2012 when over double the national average of rainfall fell (262%). May experienced average rainfall but in the first two weeks of June 169% of the month's average rainfall had already fallen. By the 14th June the hose pipe ban had been lifted although the south east officially remained in drought.

Dubbed the ‘wettest drought in history’, the heavens opened within hours of the ban being imposed and stayed open for almost the full duration of the 10-week ban that effected thames waters 8.8M customers.

Throughout the wet spring the drought campaign ran as a reaction to the previous two dry years, dangerously low ground water and to help safeguard supply for future generations. The effectiveness figures featured in this submission were achieved in spite of press cynicism and almost constant heavy rain.

Project launch date
March 2012

Size of design budget
£120,000.00

Outline of design solution

The campaign strategy was to run in phases, initially to react to the ever worsening drought as the year progressed towards the summer and the olympics. The campaign did in fact work in phases but was reacting to a very different situation.

As the rain started to fall as the button was pressed on the campaign it became clear that the challenge would not be one of a worsening drought but one of reinforcing the core message that we had a serious water shortage and that we must all continue to use less water... as the rain poured down.

The initial phase focused on a simple 'we are in drought' message and that we needed to use water wisely. A campaign logo was devised and a tear device was included as an easily recognisable, signature element to pull all elements in the campaign together.

The hero image in phase one was cracked earth similar to earth we're all used to seeing in droughts in africa. In this case the campaign identified the image was from dried river beds in kent.

Phase two (as the rain fell) said 'a few wet weeks couldn't make up for the two of the driest years on record' and continued to re-enforce the fact that rivers in the south east remained dry by showing a wider shot of two dry rivers (the river pang and the river Kennett).

It was clear by phase three that we needed to demonstrate that we weren't just ploughing on regardless and not understanding the plight of Thames Water customers who were being soaked everyday on their way to work whilst in the midst of a hose pipe ban.

Phase three used the copy line 'rain or shine please always use water wisely' with supporting imagery and copy.

As it became apparent that the torrential rainfall would bring the hosepipe ban to an end sooner rather than later, the simple and straight forward 'Thank You for using water wisely' line was introduced. The 'Thank You' route was another step towards empathy and understanding and a genuine 'thank you' as it was becoming clear that the campaign had been instrumental in changing people's behaviours with a substantial amount of water being saved.

Media used:

- Outdoor - cross track, 48, 96 and 6 sheet posters, bus sides and street liners
- London and local press, full page and in page ads and advertorials
- Digital escalator panels and animated projected cross track on the underground
- A radio ad voiced by sian lloyd on 10 stations
- Weather sponsorship on heart
- Exhibition at paddington station handing out free shower timers and a presence at chelsea flower show
- Branded water saving devices supported by literature
- On-line fulfilment and further information.

Phase five will run during the olympic games on the tube network and at airports.

(478 words)

13/09/2012

Summary of results

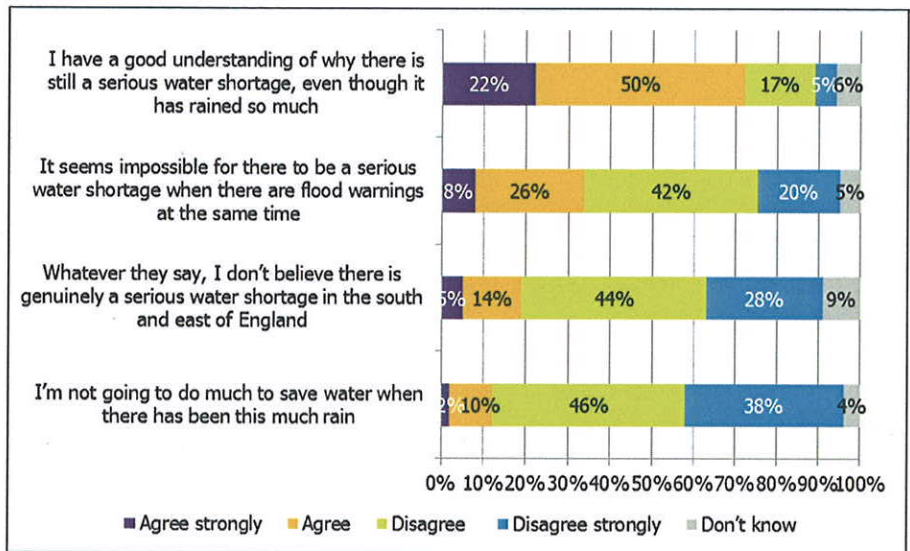
Overall awareness

Thames water's online panel of customers found that almost all (96%) were aware that a drought has been declared in the south and east of England and over 9 in 10 customers (93%) were also aware that temporary use restrictions are in place.

Understanding the message

Given that this drought has been dubbed the 'wettest drought in history' statistics supporting an understanding of why restrictions were necessary and that we continue to have a water shortage in the south east are very pleasing.

Just under 1 in 5 (19%) agree with a direct expression of disbelief that a water shortage exists and only 5% agree strongly with the statement "whatever they say, i don't believe there is genuinely a serious water shortage in the south and east of England."



A large majority of customers (88%) agreed or agreed strongly that they 'understand why the ban was necessary'.

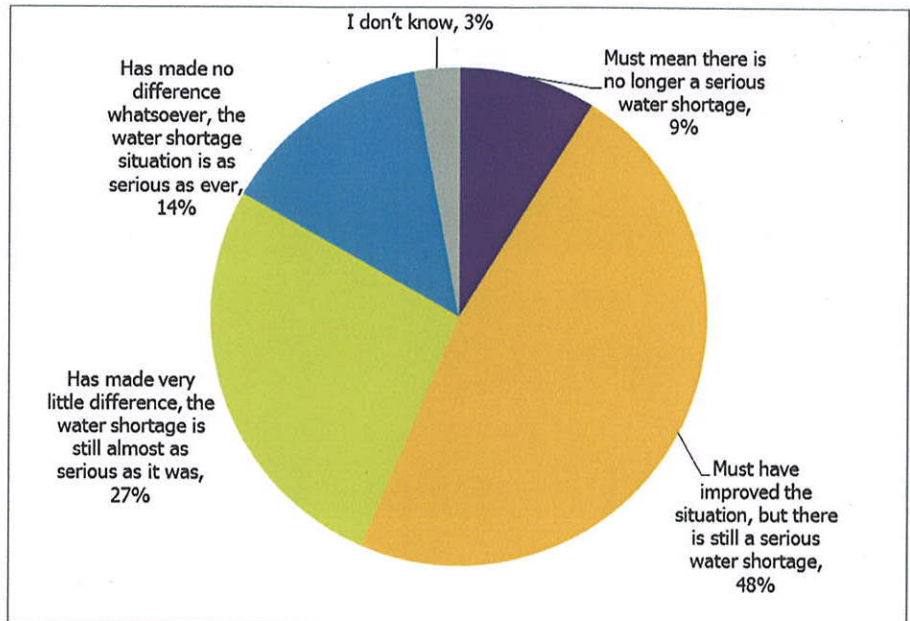
Research sought to understand Thames Water's customers' perceptions of how April's rainfall had affected the drought situation and provided them with a series of statements.

Almost three quarters (72%) of Thames Water customers agreed or agreed strongly with the statement "i have a good understanding of why there is still a serious water shortage, even though it has rained so much." Conversely, only 12% of customers agree or agree strongly with the statement "i'm not going to do much to save water when there has been this much rain."

Qualitative group research findings also mirrored the quantitative results:

All 10 participants were aware that a drought has been declared in the south-east of England, including London with spontaneous recall of the Thames Water campaign.

- The message that the recent heavy rain has not completely rectified the water shortage situation had hit home with high levels of awareness and understanding.
- There were specific mentions of the radio ads, press adverts and the billboards on buses, trains and the underground, with some recalling the exact messaging.



Recall against national averages

Two thirds of tw customers (65%) recall seeing water-related advertising recently. This is higher than the national average for recall (54%).

More tw customers than nationally recall water-related advertising from newspapers (20% vs. 15%), At bus stops / billboards (17% vs. 5%) And on the underground / on trains (11% vs. 3%).

The campaign logo

Customers were asked to indicate which of two messages would be more likely to encourage them to conserve water. Three quarters (75%) of Thames Water customers state that 'please use water wisely' would encourage them, whilst only 14% opted for 'please use less water'.

Behavioural change

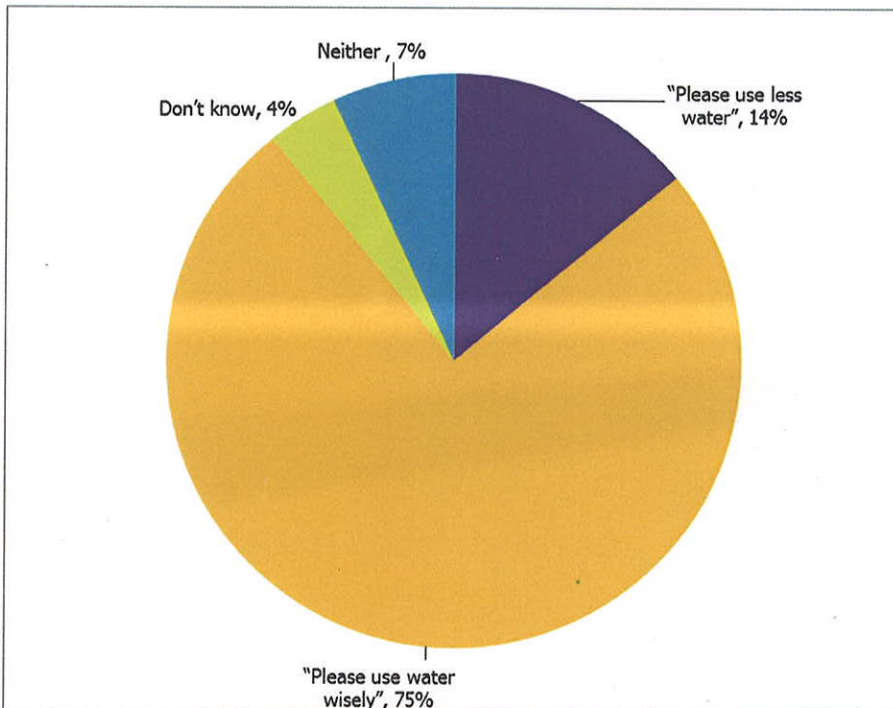
Results show significant and sustained behavioural change as a result of the campaign.

Almost half (48%) of Thames Water customers surveyed are using less water as a result of the campaign. 40% plan to continue to use less water in the long term.

At the beginning of the campaign, participants in the survey said they took an average 4.7 baths per week (the most profligate use of water in the home). After phase three of the campaign, participants said they took 2.8 baths per week.

During May's hot weather – two months into the campaign - water use across the Thames Water region was 100million litres per day lower than the expected water use.

In April, orders for water-saving products from Thames Water customers increased 467% (8,432) on normal levels.



Other influencing factors

Perversely the fact that this drought was dubbed 'the wettest on record' helped the campaign's visibility – as the rain continued to fall, the notoriety of the campaign grew.

Thames water's internal pr function and Thames Water's spokesperson, Richard Aylard was also prolific. Richard featured on many TV stations nationally and regionally and on the BBC Today programme explaining why the restrictions were in place and why the south east was in drought. Breakfast and daytime TV also ran features on the low levels of groundwater, how water was stored and how it could eventually be moved around the country.

Thames Water's on line water efficiency site (waterwisely) is also a mature, well thought through, existing channel that had been running for over 18 months before the campaign launched. The site gave more detail on the drought and on the restrictions and acted as the fulfilment function for the free water saving devices that Thames Water offered to all its customers. During the campaign and for several months ahead the waterwisely site was and will be re-skinned with the campaign look and feel.

Offering free water-saving devices also added to the campaign's appeal - the devices were branded and supported by campaign literature.

Although there was a great deal of media during the drought and the restrictions outside the core campaign the words and the language used were in harmony with or drawn directly from the campaign. The two dry rivers featured in phase one and two of the campaign were the focus of numerous TV and radio features. The 'two dry years v a few wet weeks' copy line was supported and explained in detail by experts on both TV and radio.