

OFT Review of Campaign Priorities in 2009-10

1. The OFT established seven campaign priorities:
 - **Scams**, September 09 warnings on concert ticket sales, lotteries in November 09; and Scamnesty, working with participating local authority Trading Standards Services (TSS), in February 2010.
 - **promotion of Consumer Direct (CD)**, working in partnership with CD local representatives and with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), our prime campaign focus was the 'Know Your Consumer Rights' campaign, launched during National Consumer Week in September; with further activity in the run up to Christmas and January sale periods.
 - **Business guidance on consumer rights**: linking guidance to the 'Know Your Consumer Rights' campaign an online portal – 'Sale of Goods hub' - is to be launched after the General Election.
 - Further roll out of the **doorstep selling campaign** in Nov 2009 focusing on rogue traders.
 - Promotion of **Save Xmas** messages, primarily in partnership with Citizens' Advice (CA) and Transact from February 2010.
 - Development of the **Consumer Code Approval Scheme** 'OFT approved' in partnership with Code partners (ongoing).
 - **Consumer education**: further roll out of our consumer education resource Skilled to go, with a specific version developed for use by TSS.

Individual marketing strategies for each of the above were published at www.oft.gov.uk/campaigns

2. TV films promoting Consumer Direct, scams, doorstep selling, Save Xmas and OFT Approved Code activity were launched and can be viewed on You Tube at www.youtube.com/user/OFTWebEditor.

Review of activity

Scams

3. **September:** Launch of 'Just Tick It' campaign warning consumers about fraudulent ticket websites. Supported by a host of musical and sporting celebrities, the OFT campaign coincided with new research which revealed that 20 per cent of people know someone who has been scammed by bogus ticket sites. Music and sports stars including Kate Nash, Dave Rowntree from Blur, Fightstar, and England rugby captain Steve Borthwick backed the campaign to help raise awareness of the issue and to help protect their fans. Publicity struck a media chord, with TV features on BBC, Sky and Five News; Radio 1 Newsbeat promoted scams as their lead story throughout the day; while DJ Chris Evans ran the story during Radio 2 Drivetime.
4. Detailed information on how people can protect themselves from scams can be found at, www.consumerdirect.gov.uk/ticketscams. Our fake website is at www.justtickit.co.uk. Published evaluation showed spend of £94k generated a total value of £785,050 worth of free coverage – an 8:1 return.
5. **November/December:** Launched lottery scams campaign on 30 November to raise general awareness of lottery scams and current trends, for example, the Jamaican lottery scam. The campaign was supported by Camelot and the National Lottery Commission. Activities included national and regional PR generated by the OFT and TSS, online banner advertising to promote an interactive scam guide on Consumer Direct's website, and direct marketing (via email) to help consumers identify lottery scams and to resist the persuasive tactics used by the scammers. An independent media evaluation found that 132 items of media coverage were generated, giving approximately 50,834,000 opportunities to see our campaign messages.
6. **February:** Launched Scams Awareness Month by highlighting the scale of mass marketed scams in Britain which aim to mislead people to part with their cash. The OFT raised awareness of the problem with a nationwide 'Scamnesty' run in partnership with 129 TSS.
7. Activities included a new online bin for forwarding suspected scam websites and emails via a new Scamnesty microsite (40,000 reports

were received), national and regional PR generated by the OFT and TSS, an online media partnership to target readers of Woman's Own, Woman, Woman's Weekly, and Chat magazines, online banner advertising, social media engagement via Facebook, Twitter, and bloggers, a new TV filler, and national and regional radio advertising.

8. We also targeted vulnerable consumers, particularly the elderly, via the distribution of our 'Scambuster' booklet to organisations such as Social Services and Age Concern/Help The Aged, advertised our messages on TV monitors in GP surgeries throughout the UK, and secured the support of MPs in the House of Commons through the use of an early day motion, tabled by Austin Mitchell MP. Evaluation of scams awareness month will be published.
9. **March 2010:** Pilot launch of chronic scam victim's toolkit for use by frontline support agencies.

Consumer Direct/Know Your Consumer Rights

10. Specific marketing to promote Consumer Direct was low key – presence in directories plus funding to regional communication officers for local promotions. We did, however, position Consumer Direct as the call to action in the majority of our campaigns. For example, we linked with BIS and jointly promoted the Know Your Consumer Rights campaign launched during National Consumer Week in September 2009. The campaign deliberately describes consumer rights simply – goods should fit the description given; are of satisfactory quality and are suitable for purpose – and signposts people to Consumer Direct for further advice.
11. **September 2009:** launch of campaign using PR, sales promotion and digital advertising to raise awareness.
12. **Christmas/January:** promotion of Know Your Consumer Rights messages during the busy consumer Christmas/January sale period where our focus was on more vulnerable consumers in particular. Activity comprised PR and advertising in buses and in shopping centres, supported by promotions by Consumer Direct regional communications officers around the country.

Business guidance on consumer rights

13. **In year activity:** while the 'Know Your Consumers Rights' campaign is designed to empower consumers, business knowledge of consumer rights is also important. Front line retail staff need to be fully aware of consumer rights. BIS have already launched guidance for smaller companies (see www.businesslink.gov.uk/consumersrights and the Trading Standards Institute (TSI) offer their Fair Trading Award training. During Autumn/Winter 2009, we looked at how OFT could build on existing activity. Discussion with key players included BIS, TSI, British Retail Consortium and wider trade bodies to establish the business need for sale of goods messages. Development of guidance materials to enhance business knowledge of consumer rights is in hand. An online portal is envisaged – Sale of Goods hub – to launch after the General Election.

Doorstep selling

14. **November 2009:** the November doorstep selling campaign – 'Your Doorstep, Your Decision' - focused on rogue traders. Our prime target audience was vulnerable consumers aged 70 plus and carers of those vulnerable to rogue trader approaches. We liaised with various TSS across the country and our aim was to reinforce existing activity. Our campaign approach consisted of PR – getting the issue talked about and targeting programmes which feature rogue traders; a national door drop to elderly consumers and dissemination of campaign collateral through the COI Publicity Register and through wider stakeholders. National radio advertising and roll out too of a 30 second public information film to highlight the issue.
15. Research findings were positive: our media work generated 98 pieces of media coverage generated 30 million opportunities to see and £322,000 worth of free coverage. Public reaction was positive: spontaneous awareness of doorstep selling problems increased by seven per cent; those who had read our material were less likely to fall prey to a door step seller (13 per cent who had read compared to 25 per cent of the general target audience). One per cent of the total audience is now less likely to fall victim as a result of the campaign. Overall 96 per cent of elderly people surveyed say they haven't or wouldn't use a doorstep salesman; though 25 per cent say they could be vulnerable where they

need something done urgently.

Save Xmas

16. **January to April 2010:** further roll out of savings messages primarily through intermediaries such as CA and Transact offering advice at workshops and community events; complemented by wider PR to raise awareness of saving options. Activity launched in January. Toolkit materials are available. A public information film encourages families to save earlier for Christmas.

17. Our latest evaluation published in March 2010 indicates that our Save Xmas messages reached circa 80,000 people in 2008-09 and an estimated total of 120,000 from 2007-09 who have received advice from CA, Transact and other intermediary organisations. Reaction is positive: almost all of Year 2 (2008-09) consumers who completed feedback forms rated the training sessions as useful (97 per cent) and when contacted one year after their training, 90 per cent of survey respondents said they felt confident about choosing saving options having attended a Save Xmas session. Forty two per cent of those surveyed reported changing their saving habits following the training.

Consumer Code Approval Scheme

18. Focusing on those sectors covered by the Code, we have worked with code sponsors to get the codes talked about. Our approach comprised ongoing PR utilising relevant events to generate news; digital media, signposting consumers to www.oft.gov.uk/codes where they can easily access details of companies who are Code members and go beyond the law in the consumer rights they offer. Activity is ongoing rather than short burst; a 30-second public information film also highlights the code as a source of reassurance when buying goods or services. Our biggest burst of activity in November highlighted top tips showing how consumers can get good service, make a complaint and avoid stress when buying goods and services. Consumer champion, Lynn Fauld Woods lent support acting as media spokesperson and promoting the codes in a video feature available on the OFT's You Tube site. (Search OFT + Codes to find it).

Consumer education: Skilled to go roll out

19. The response from teachers to Skilled to go, which we launched in June 2008, has been excellent. Developed in partnership with teachers, this online educational tool comprises three modules – Buying and selling, Technology and Utilities. New modules, focusing on scams and buying and running a car, are being developed for launch in 2010. Ahead of that, existing content has been updated and enhanced – including how Skilled to go fits with the Adult Financial Capability Framework. New versions for use by Trading Standards and secondary schools in Scotland launched in January and February 2010 respectively. All versions are available at www.oft.gov.uk/skilledtogo.
20. Our recent survey of those registered on the OFT website to use the toolkit found that 43 per cent of respondents had used Skilled to go - which is an impressive start for a new resource. Among users, repeat use is high: 60 per cent had used it two to five times, and 30 per cent over six times. Potential to grow users is strong: 80 per cent of respondents who hadn't used Skilled to go had not yet had time to download or review it or the opportunity to use it. To date, 51 per cent of all TSS nationally have a representative registered with Skilled to go – some 155 TSS officers have registered. Teachers from over one third of Scottish secondary schools have now registered with Skilled to go. In addition, registrations in Northern Ireland, which was previously underrepresented, have increased significantly.

BIS Proposed Consumer Advocate

21. BIS's consumer white paper published in July proposed the appointment of a Consumer Advocate to act as a consumer rights champion and to coordinate the delivery of existing consumer education by various players such as the OFT. BIS have since followed up with a consultation document inviting views on the Advocate's role and powers. Given the appointment of an Advocate, the OFT have placed further meetings of what we called the Consumer Education Alliance on hold. We hope to be closely involved in any strategic review of consumer education that the Consumer Advocate commissions. More recently, in the context of tightening budgets, BIS have commissioned a review of players in the consumer facing landscape. OFT are contributing to that review.