



'Doorstep Selling' campaign Your Doorstep, Your Decision

Evaluation report

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Office of Fair Trading's 'Your Doorstep, Your Decision' campaign is a long-running initiative designed to raise awareness of the risks posed by rogue doorstep traders, particularly to vulnerable people. Its objectives are to increase and promote understanding of consumer rights when buying on the doorstep and in particular to empower elderly consumers in the UK to refuse offers on the doorstep of on the spot building and maintenance repairs. The campaign also promotes advice service Consumer Direct as a contact point should consumers wish to report concerns. This paper evaluates the activity that took place in 2010 as part of the campaign, and makes recommendations for future work.
- 1.2 Owing to the marketing and advertising freeze implemented by the Cabinet Office in June 2010, this year's doorstep selling campaign was different from both previous and planned activity. The campaign relied purely on PR to raise awareness, supported by partner distribution of existing campaign materials. Plans for radio advertising and leaflet redesign and distribution were put on hold in light of the marketing freeze. Total spend for the campaign was reduced from £254k to £28k. The campaign was divided into bursts. The first and main burst of the campaign ran in July, the second in October.
- 1.3 Although KPIs were set for the campaign, we were unable to measure the effectiveness of the campaign via independent evaluation in light of the marketing freeze. The effectiveness of activity can therefore only be measured by Consumer Direct data. The difficulty of using this as the only measure of campaign effectiveness is discussed in this report.

2 BACKGROUND

The issue

- 2.1 Much detriment in doorstep trading results from aggressive sales techniques, many of which the Consumer Protection Regulations now outlaw. Specifically, there is the problem of rogue doorstep traders, who use a high degree of coercion and / or deception to exhort money.
- 2.2 In 2004, OFT estimated that 16,000 bogus trading cases were reported to TSS a year¹, though the overall incidence could be much higher. The average money paid to rogue traders is well over £2,000. Although there are crimes involving smaller items, most of the detriment and distress stems from higher value house and garden repairs where losses can run into thousands. Victims are likely to be older consumers living alone, especially women.
- 2.3 In 2009, over 12,000 complaints were made to Consumer Direct, regarding uninvited doorstep sales approaches. Complaints peaked in July and September 2009, with 1223 complaints being recorded in each month. The lowest number of complaints was in December and January. This tallies with feedback from Trading Standards officers who highlight that the problem of rogue traders is particularly prevalent during the summer months. The top five complaints over the year related to roofing, tarmac and paving, installation, guttering and burglar alarms.²
- 2.4 Despite high numbers of complaints to Consumer Direct, an OFT survey in 2009 showed that 96% of the target audience claim they would never use a doorstep trader³. With such a high number of our

¹ OFT Position paper: Legislative options for tackling bogus trading, 2004

² Consumer Direct database, 2009 report

³ Campaign tracking, November 2009

target audience suggesting that they would not fall victim to rogue traders because they would not buy on the doorstep at all, the need for a campaign could be questioned. However, feedback from Trading Standards officers highlights that the high percentage of people claiming they would not use a doorstep trader does not reflect local experience. They stress that doorstep selling is an under-reported crime because victims are often embarrassed about what they have agreed to, do not realise they have been conned, or do not know what to do about it. Many people believe they would never fall for such practices but in reality the pressure of presence from a rogue trader often changes that. For this reason they might respond to a survey believing that they are not likely victims, when the reality is different. This feedback, coupled with the research showing that one in four of our target audience agree with statements that suggest that in some circumstances they might be tempted to agree straightaway to have work carried out by a tradesmen knocking on their door, suggests that awareness raising campaign activity continues to be required.

- 2.5 As well as the financial impact, there is a well documented impact on victims' welfare. Studies conducted by OFT have shown that the combination of the home environment and face-to-face interaction with a sales person creates a setting that is intrinsically different to other selling situations, particularly in terms of the risk to vulnerable and less confident consumers.

Why OFT involvement?

- 2.6 OFT's mission is to 'make markets work well for consumers'. Our vision for consumers is that well-informed and confident consumers are normally able to operate safely and effectively within markets. Confident consumers drive competitive markets, activating vigorous competition between firms. This can break down when consumers or businesses are ill informed, and/or where there are rogue traders targeting vulnerable people. In the case of doorstep selling, consumers are often both ill-informed about their rights and under pressure from a rogue element.

2.7 OFT's doorstep selling campaign works alongside other interventions designed to improve the doorstep selling market. OFT's enforcement work supports fair dealing businesses by providing legal clarification and detriment to rogue traders. For example, Consumer Protection Regulations have been brought in which seek to outlaw aggressive sales techniques. The Cancellation of Contracts made in a Consumer's home or place of work Regulations (2008) give consumers protection when they buy goods or services from a trader on the doorstep or in their own home. Working in parallel, support for industry-led initiatives (self-regulation) reduces the need for enforcement. The Direct Selling Association (DSA) has a code which is approved under the OFT's Consumer Codes Approval Scheme (CCAS). This aims to provide a higher level of consumer protection than required by law.

3 CAMPAIGN KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

3.1 KPIs set for the 2010 campaign were:

- To maintain the number of people in the target audience claiming that they would not use a doorstep trader at 96% and reduce those claiming they would use a doorstep trader under certain circumstances.
- To increase the number of people claiming they would talk over any repairs with someone they trust first.

3.2 The long-term impact of the campaign is measured via monitoring the number of complaints to Consumer Direct.

3.3 Measuring claimed behavioural change for this campaign is challenging. Many of our audience already claim to exhibit the behaviours the campaign aims to encourage. Few elderly people admit to using trades people who knock at their door (4%). 95% claim they would check the opinions of others before agreeing to work.⁴ Claimed behavioural change figures for this campaign therefore need to be viewed with some caution.

3.4 Because of the sudden restrictions placed on this campaign by the marketing freeze, it was not possible to undertake formal campaign tracking. The impact of campaign activity on claimed behaviour could therefore not be measured in 2010, and evaluation of the effectiveness of activity relies solely on analysis of Consumer Direct data.

⁴ Campaign tracking, November 2009, FDS

4 KEY MESSAGES AND TARGET AUDIENCE

- 4.1 2010 activity was targeted at likely victims: the over 70s living alone, especially women. Family members and carers of the target audience were the secondary audience for this campaign. The key messages of the campaign were:
- If a trader knocks at your door, do not agree to on the spot house repairs.
 - Be wary of special offers or warnings that your house is unsafe.
 - Talk over any repairs with someone you trust.
 - If in doubt, call Consumer Direct (08454 04 05 06).
- 4.2 This was supported by more detailed advice which explained consumers' legal rights when buying on the doorstep and gave information on the tactics employed by rogue traders.

5 CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY

5.1 The 2010 campaign differed from previous years' activity because of the restrictions imposed by the marketing freeze. Activity, contractually committed pre the freeze, comprised PR, using a PR agency to target media and leaflet distribution via partners, such as Trading Standards and the Police. We focused PR activity in July because CD stats and feedback from Trading Standards highlight that this was a peak time for rogue traders. Our second main burst of activity was planned for September, as Consumer Direct data showed this as another peak for complaints. However, because of issues finalising this story, our press release was not sent out until October. We used 'case studies' to support all campaign activity. This allowed us to highlight the very real detriment caused by rogue traders.

PR campaign

5.2 Below is a breakdown of PR activity during 2010.

5.3 First PR burst

- Launched in July 2010. However, because of media interest in June, some coverage appeared early such as an article in the Express and some coverage on BBC.
- OFT targeted media via a press release warning of the increase in rogue doorstep traders during the summer months. CD stats were used to support this story.
- Consumer champion, Esther Rantzen, and OFT's Michele Shambrook were spokespeople for the campaign.

5.4 Second PR burst

- Launched in October 2010. OFT targeted media using a news hook of warnings to older people of rogue doorstep traders, as preparations for winter weather began.

- OFT ran this story in partnership with Age UK. Helena Herklots, Services Director at Age UK was a campaign spokesperson, and agony aunt Denise Robertson provided a quote.

5.5 **DIY story angle**

- Ran in August 2010 to tap into the secondary target audience and maintain momentum for the first burst of PR activity.
- The story focused on home improvements and used CD stats on complaints about home maintenance.
- OFT issued a media alert to general consumer home improvement titles as well as specific DIY publications and websites.
- All activity was delivered by PR agency, 3Monkey Communications, with support from OFT's press office.

5.6 **Support from OFT's partners**

- The OFT always works with Trading Standards and the Police on the doorstep selling campaign, important partners who reinforce our messages through their own channels including distribution of existing advice leaflets to the target audience. These included a leaflet written for the target audience directly, an advice leaflet for their family and friends and a door hanger of key tips, designed as a helpful reminder of information for our target audience. This partnership was even more crucial than usual as OFT had no budget to pay for distribution such as a door drop or supply of advice leaflets to public places such as doctors' surgeries.
- In addition, we updated Consumer Direct and OFT advice pages on the website which partners could link to and reference. Many of our target audience do not have access to, or are not comfortable with using the internet and so web advice is aimed primarily at our secondary target audience.

Figure 5.1: Snapshot of Doorstep Selling target audience leaflet



OFFICE OF FAIR TRADING

Your doorstep, your decision
Your guide to dealing with doorstep selling

Buy wisely

- don't sign on the spot, consider carefully whether you want the goods or service
- always shop around for the best price
- be wary of special offers or warnings about your home
- don't hand over a cash deposit
- don't agree to a trader starting any work straight away
- talk to someone you trust for a second opinion

• if in doubt, call Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06.

Get peace of mind
Choose members of the following organisations for extra reassurance.

Trade Associations
If the trader claims to be a member of a trade association, you can contact the association yourself to check their membership, but make sure you look up the number yourself.

Your rights
If you spend more than £35 with a trader in your home or on your doorstep, you usually have seven days to change your mind and cancel and get any money you have paid back. You cannot waive your right to cancel.

Your right to cancel should be given to you in writing by the trader. If you are not given this information, they can't hold you to anything in the contract and you can't be made to pay anything.

If you decide to cancel, advise the trader in writing within seven days of being told of your right to cancel. Keep a copy of your letter or email as proof of cancellation. However, if you agree in writing to work starting or consume goods within the seven day period and then cancel, you may have to pay something. This is the only circumstance in which you can't get all your money back. If you haven't agreed in writing to work starting early, then you don't have to pay anything if you cancel, even if it does start.

Keep this leaflet somewhere easy to refer to if a trader calls at your door.

6 RESULTS

PR campaign

- 6.1 The campaign generated 138 items of coverage between May and November 2010 with a total reach of 40,683,000. The total Advertisement Value Equivalent (AVE) achieved (i.e. what it would have cost to buy the media space) was £468,040 and the ROI for the campaign was 18:1.
- 6.2 The OFT was directly mentioned in 89 per cent of coverage by volume (123 items) with the campaign slogan 'Your Doorstep, Your Decision' in 53 per cent of coverage (73 items) and Consumer Direct in 67 per cent (93 items). One or more of the campaign tips appeared in 71 per cent of the coverage by volume (98 items), 60 percent by reach (24.3m). Roofing was the most commonly referenced scam in campaign coverage, appearing in 40 items. This is unsurprising since it is the highest complained about home maintenance issue.
- 6.3 Online media generated 74 percent of the total coverage by volume, 47 percent of the total reach and 21 percent of the total AVE. National coverage, including items on ITV1 and BBC2, generated 73 percent of the total AVE. National press generated 28 percent of the total reach.
- 6.4 The tables below summarise the campaign results.

Figure 6.1: Monthly coverage (volume/reach)

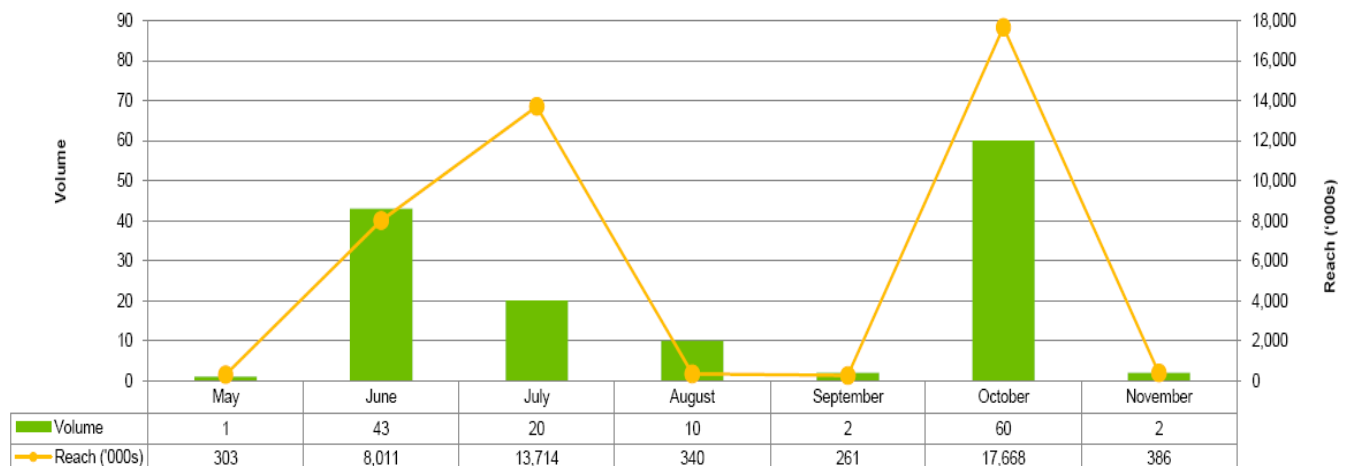
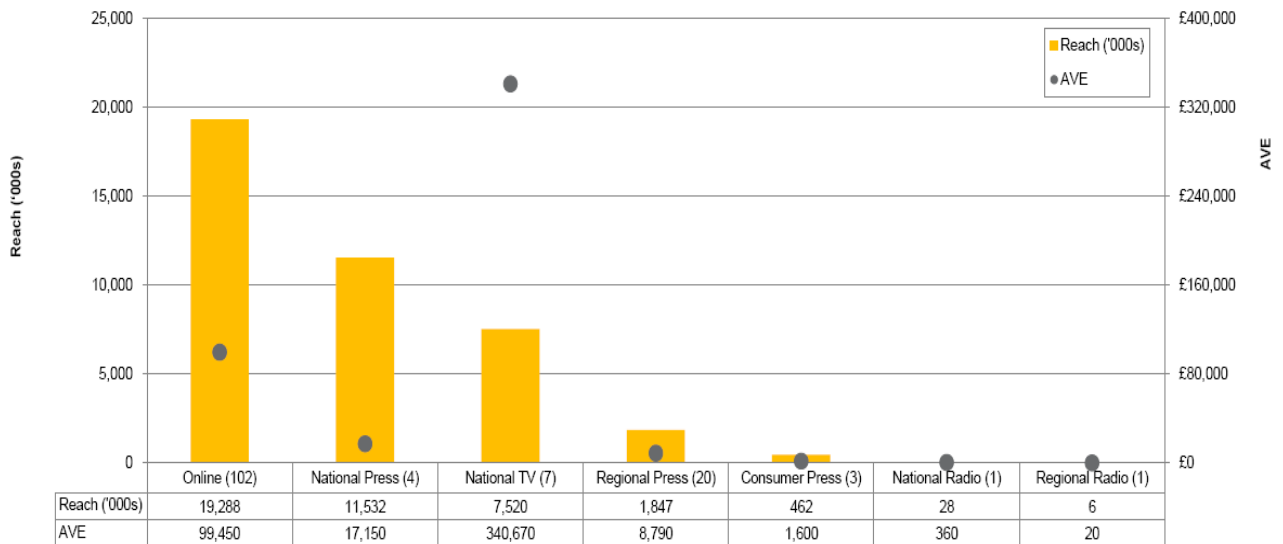


Figure 6.2: Campaign coverage by media type (reach/AVE/volume)



- 6.5 The AVE for this campaign was excellent, and largely driven by media coverage in print and on television. This coverage was mainly achieved thanks to an excellent celebrity spokesperson, and a number of compelling case studies.
- 6.6 Volume for the campaign was driven by online media. Arguably, this coverage was less effective. Although linking to the CD and OFT advice pages, it did not lead to a rise in hits to these pages. Furthermore, online is also a less relevant media for our target audience, which could explain why this activity in October was not accompanied by an increase in calls to Consumer Direct, as it was in the summer months.
- 6.7 Partnership with Age UK generated another opportunity to seek press coverage for the issue of rogue traders, and was highly relevant to the target audience. However, without a celebrity spokesperson available for interview, and with no significant new news hook, it proved difficult to get print and broadcast coverage for this story, which is why OFT agreed to also pursuing online media opportunities for the second story idea.

Leaflet orders

- 6.8 From 1 July to 1 November 2010 almost 90,000 pieces of 'Your Doorstep, Your Decision' campaign collateral were sent out from the mailing house. This is lower than for campaign bursts in 2009. However, unlike in 2009, the materials were not new and so it is possible the partners already had supplies of materials. Furthermore, we had no above the line activity driving people to these materials, as has been the case in previous years.
- 6.9 We do not have formal evaluation of how all this material was used but qualitative feedback suggests that partners made these materials available at various community outreach events targeting both the primary and secondary audiences for this campaign.
- 6.10 The table below provides a breakdown of leaflet orders during the campaign period.

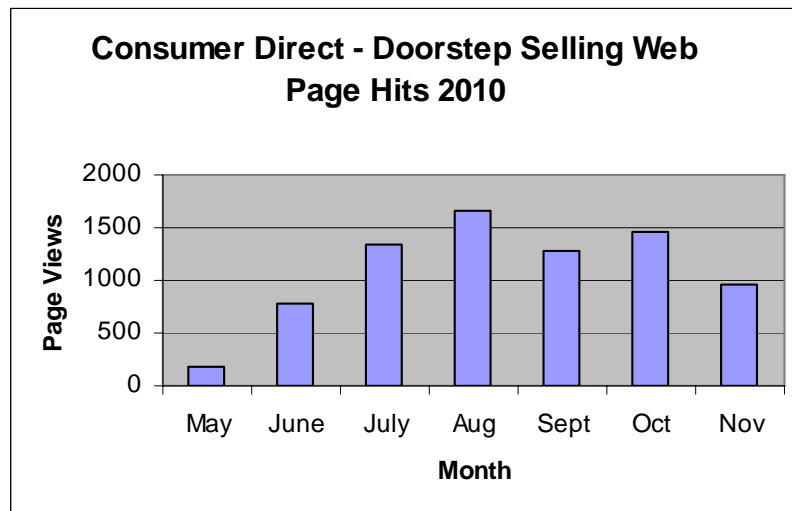
Leaflet	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	Total Distributed
YDYD - Target Audience Guide	8,522	13,079	4,338	3,447	29,386
YDYD - Target Audience Guide (W)	501	100	200		801
YDYD - Friends and family guide	9,900	11,971	688	2,573	25,132
YDYD - Friends and family guide (W)	501		200		701
YDYD - Door Hanger	11,372	14,257	4,188	3,554	33,371
YDYD - Door Hanger (W)	1	10	150		161
Total	30,797	39,417	9,764	9,574	89,552

Web stats

- 6.11 Between May and November 2010, the Consumer Direct campaign page received 7,678 hits. Top site referrers were Trading Standards advice pages as well as Money Saving Expert.
- 6.12 Between May and November 2010, the OFT campaign page received 1,787 unique visitors. July and August saw the majority (941) of total visits. Some referrer activity was driven by GMTV, Payplan and Greater Manchester Police.

6.13 Although campaign activity ran throughout the summer, peaks were in July and October. This is not reflected in the hits to the OFT website. However, it's important to remember that the primary call to action for this campaign was the CD phone number, as many of our target audience do not have access to the web. That said, since October's PR activity was largely online based, with links to CD and OFT, it is disappointing not to see a spike in web visitors during October.

Figure 6.4: Consumer Direct Doorstep selling web page traffic



The impact on behaviour and reports to Consumer Direct

6.14 Excellent PR coverage and high numbers of leaflet orders are irrelevant if they do not impact on the behaviour and experience of our target audience. As already mentioned, measuring behavioural change for this campaign will always prove challenging, since many of our target audience do not recognise themselves as likely victims. In addition, no research tracking for this campaign was possible in 2010 because of the marketing freeze.

6.15 To analyse the effectiveness of 2010 activity, we therefore referred to Consumer Direct stats. Interpretation of these is also challenging.

CD stats are used to indicate the scale of problems within a market. A rise in complaints can be seen to reflect a rise in problems within the market. However, the OFT doorstep selling campaign encouraged consumers to report problems to Consumer Direct, so one would expect campaign activity to coincide with an increase in complaints to Consumer Direct.

- 6.16 In the two months following the launch of the July campaign, there was a 19 per cent increase in the number of complaints regarding uninvited doorstep selling when compared with the same months last year. During October and November 2010, complaint volumes reduced by 1 per cent and 9 per cent respectively on the previous year. This could suggest a link between strong print and broadcast coverage and awareness of CD as a complaint route.
- 6.17 However, it does appear that complaint volumes are also being driven by non-changing seasonal trends. In 2010, the number of complaints about doorstep selling increased to 13,401 from 12,496 in 2009. Complaints once again peaked in July and September as in previous years. A peak in complaints in July could be linked to promotion of Consumer Direct as a complaint route. However, September saw a very low amount of coverage, but once again a peak in doorstep selling complaints. This would suggest that this peak relates to an increase during September in the scale of the problem, not simply to recent promotion of the CD service. The complexities in interpretation noted above highlight the need for alternative sources for campaign evaluation than purely CD data.

Figure 6.5: Number of uninvited doorstep selling complaints to Consumer Direct by year (2007 – 2010)

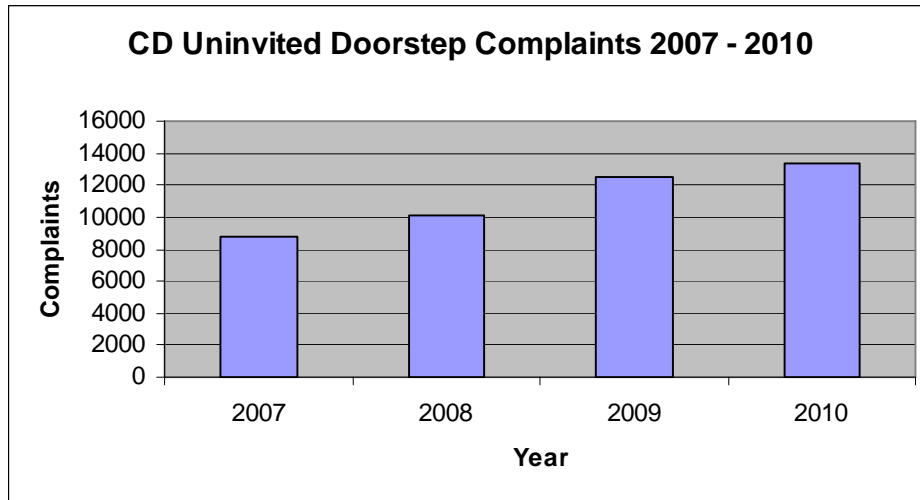
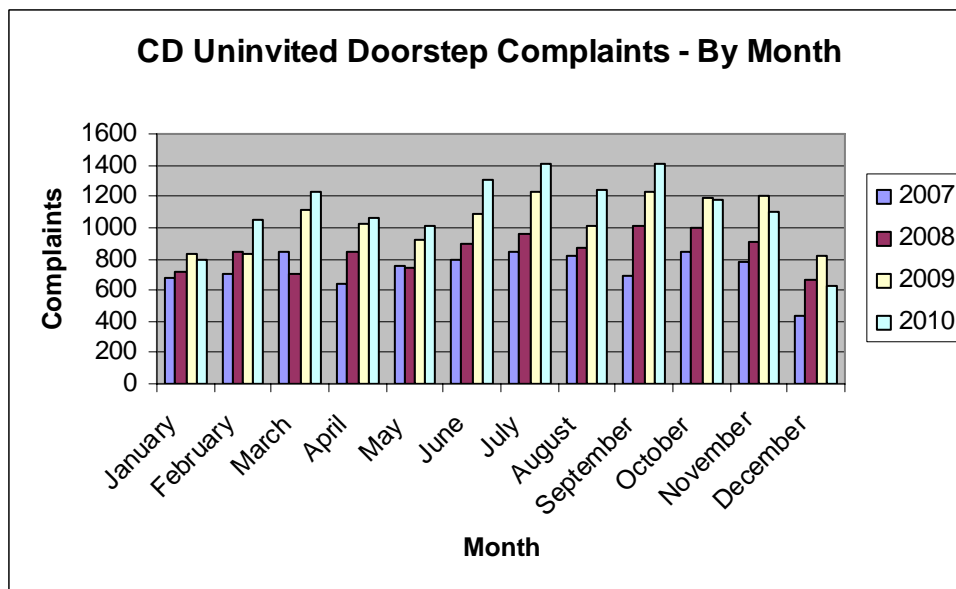


Figure 6.6: Number of uninvited doorstep selling complaints to Consumer Direct by year and month (2007 – 2010)



7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIVITY

- 7.1 PR activity proved effective and provided an excellent return on investment. Its success is largely due to celebrity support and case studies. Without this, it would prove difficult to get coverage for this campaign issue. 2011/12 activity will therefore need to ensure celebrity support, as well as providing enough case studies to satisfy media demands. Given the continuation of the marketing freeze, it seems sensible that 2011/12 activity should focus on PR, in conjunction with an update to advice materials. Our PR agency, 3MC, delivered excellent value, and without the time they put into media sell-in we would not have been able to secure much of the coverage achieved. Expectations for the 2011/12 campaign activity will need to be adjusted if the campaign is to be delivered using in-house resource that has other priorities to deliver.
- 7.2 Our focus for doorstep selling activity has always been offline and the results of our online PR activity in 2010 seem to support this approach. Whilst online opportunities should not be ignored because of their relevance to our secondary target audience, 2011/12 focus should continue to be offline.
- 7.3 Radio advertising has proved successful in the past at driving awareness. Should it be possible to get an exemption from the marketing freeze for doorstep selling activity, this should be explored going forward.
- 7.4 Consumer Direct stats are very helpful in providing some measurement of problems experienced with doorstep sellers. However, OFT needs to continue to use these stats in conjunction with qualitative feedback from Trading Standards and the Police, and tracking research which shows claimed behavioural change.