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Side 1 af 3

Danish: På røven – undgå klatgæld English: Broke – avoid petty debts

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A summary

Background

In 2008 and 2011 the Money and Pension Panel carried out several studies which revealed the need for more information on the personal finances of young between 18 and 25 years of age with a poor financial situation in order to prevent these young people running up debts beyond their means. A total of 26 per cent of young people find it difficult to administer their finances and about one out of every four often spend more money than they have got. Moreover only one in five young people know the price of consumer instalment and quick loans. On the other hand the figures also showed that most young people have a savings account and about 30 per cent have consumer loans. Therefore the studies implied that a small percentage of young people need more advice and information about achieving a healthy financial situation.

In the autumn of 2011, the Money and Pension Panel launched the campaign "På røven – undgå klatgæld" to teach the target group about private finances and create awareness amongst them on how to avoid petty debts and expensive consumer loans.

Challenge

The media picture presented to young people contains an overwhelming amount of information. Furthermore previously unsurpassed resources are being spent on communication directed towards young people. Breaking through this wall of communication poses a challenge. Moreover, during the last decade the media landscape has evolved in a more dynamic and socially oriented direction which demands that young people are activation through self-interest; preferably through dialogue and interaction. The fact that personal finances are not exactly the primary area of interest for young people then poses quite a challenge. Finally consumer spending and identity are closely related, and the target group is of an age where identity is a sensitive subject. Therefore encouraging less spending, less debt and more focus on a healthy economy is particularly challenging.

Inspiration

Previous studies have indicated that young people are resistant towards educational campaigns and most young people already know that being in debt is unwise. Young people are unfortunately ignorant to the costs connected with debt, and rational argument does not necessarily determine their financial decision-making. For this reason the campaign was created with inspiration from the Social Norms Theory, which focuses on young people's perceptions of the attitudes and behaviours of other young people. This thinking suggests that, to a large degree, young people are guided by misconceptions about the thoughts and actions of other young people, particularly when it comes to risk-behaviour. The theory states that a gap often exists between what young people perceive

others to be doing and thinking, and the reality. The best opportunity for intervention lies within this gap between perception and reality. The idea is that correcting these misconceptions will stimulate behavioural changes towards less risk taking. This correction is focused on through young people sharing their personal stories, experiences and especially their attitudes towards personal finances. The message of the campaign is that in general young people have their financial situation under control despite low income, and that consumer loans are NOT a solution. The solution on the other hand is budgeting, saving up, advice and dialogue with other young people and professionals. The campaign combined this approach with cost information on debt, particularly consumer loans, as well as general financial guidelines.

Solution and result

The main message of the campaign is "På røven – undgå klatgæld". The message sums up the point that, when you have no money (you are broke), you should not try to rectify the situation by taking out quick loans (avoid petty debts).

The design of the campaign draws upon several media; together creating a synergetic effect embracing information on private finances, communication from young-to-young on the social media, traditional wide-reaching media and close dialogue between the ambassadors of the campaign and the target group. The specific elements are described below.

Workshops

During the campaign period from 29 September to 3 December 2011, three workshops were held at the Metropolitan University College in Copenhagen, at the University College Campus in Slagelse and at EUC (centre for business and education) in Holbæk. These were hosted by the two celebrity radio hosts Huxi Bach and Karen Thisted, who guided the young people through a text message vote and a debate on the consumer habits, dreams and attitudes towards private economy amongst the young people. The event included a welcome lunch, workshop sessions with votes, debate, introduction of the På røven-Facebook page and finally a closing session at which the young people received a diploma with their name on.

The three workshops were attended by around 100, 120 and 150 people respectively. The high attendance meant that the text message voting system proved a particularly good tool for engaging the young people. Moreover they appreciated the humorous angle applied by the hosts. The participants found it very interesting to learn about what other young people think about financial matters. Cooperation with the educational institutes is also worth noting because of their constructive and positive contribution. The institutes helped with meeting rooms, IT and event information. EUC in Holbæk even went as far as to include the campaign in teaching, making attendance compulsory. In this case the school allocated two scheduled lessons, 150 students, 2 interpreters and 4 teachers.

Facebook

The purpose of the Facebook page www.facebook.com/paaroeven was to meet the target group on a media where they were already active. Moreover Facebook is the platform which best engages the target group over time and where the message spreads throughout their network. Furthermore involvement in the workshops is continued and the target group is given the opportunity to communicate about the issue. Activities have been directed towards the target group, focusing on involvement and communication between the young people rather than at them.

During the campaign around 2.5-3 million people were exposed to the campaign messages through the Facebook page and web advertisements. The total viral reach of the messages was close to 100,000 people (e.g. Facebook users who have copied and shared the campaign messages to their Facebook network/friends). The Facebook page received more than 1900 fans and 300,000 people a day were exposed to its contents i.e. figures on young people's financial situation, advice on saving money and maintaining healthy finances and so on.

The Facebook site has been successful in almost all areas. There has been a level of engagement and dialogue between users as well as from youth to youth. In just one month there was a huge increase in "likes"; exceeding expectations and the norm for most Facebook pages. Furthermore the users have been good at sharing the message in their own networks, which will only happen if the contents are interesting.

Advertising

While the campaign was running advertisements generated attention and traffic for the Facebook page. Therefore advertisements were segmented according to age and sex, creatively shaped to directly hit the target group, and placed on websites popular with the primary target group. The advertisements have definitely contributed to the wide-reaching scope and exposure on Facebook of the campaign.

Press

The campaign included press efforts to spread the message, advice and recommendations of the campaign. Through well coordinated press activities, the campaign and the Money and Pension Panel were on TV2 NEWS (a national TV network), Ritzaus Bureau (a news bureau), Go' Aften Danmark (a national TV programme), Finans.tv2.dk (a financial website), the Danish national newspapers Politiken and Berlingske and many others, including several regional media. There was a good deal of positive publicity in the media and this also generated traffic for the Money and Pension Panel website and the Facebook site.

Summary

The Money and Pension Panel has had a very positive experience from participation in various workshops and cooperation with the educational institutes. Meeting the young people and entering into dialogue about private finances has been interesting and enlightening for both sides. In addition the creativity of the advice from the young people on Facebook has been inspirational and it is a pleasure to see the level of interest from friends and acquaintances in pictures and videos from the workshops as well as the involvement on Facebook in general. The good results were achieved through a combination of the four efforts, and have all in all created successful workshops with dialogue and interaction between the young people, and high involvement on Facebook as well as relevant press exposure.