

case study



Kaiser Permanente

Ad Test

Background

Kaiser Permanente, America's largest not-for-profit health plan, wanted more complete information before launching Saturday, one of the boldest ads in their ongoing Thrive campaign. Saturday's message was a marked departure for the Thrive campaign as it focused on chronic care and really emphasized the mind, body and spirit approach to treating illness. In early research, focus group reaction to Saturday was positive, but there were a few concerns about its portrayal of a woman living with cancer.

Kaiser decided to do a quick disaster check. When scoping out the project, Kaiser knew they really wanted both data and in-depth feedback from their consumers. Specifically, they wanted the ability to tease out underlying thoughts and ideas from consumers to get more comprehensive insight surrounding the commercial.

Why iModerate?

Kaiser had used iModerate's hybrid approach in the past and knew it would be ideal for the job. The live, one-on-one conversations within their survey gave Kaiser the ability to engage their respondents and get beyond the numbers. Kaiser was able to focus on specific issues and clarify why consumers felt a certain way. Moreover, iModerate was able to get Kaiser the results they needed quickly so they could stay on course with the commercial's target air date.

Our Objectives

- Understand conversations overall reaction to the ad
- Explore any negativity surrounding the ad with particular attention paid to inappropriateness and offensiveness
- Probe on the "why" behind respondents' positive reactions to the ad
- Get a sense of the intensity among those who may feel uncomfortable with the ad

Our Approach

The project consisted of 300 quantitative completes and 34 one-on-one conversations. Respondents were non-Kaiser Permanente members living in the Denver metro region. All respondents were eligible for the iModerate conversations and were exposed to a rough cut of Saturday. In order to really hone in on certain consumers, iModerate created a “negative responder” group to capture any individuals who described the ad as annoying, offensive, irritating, inappropriate to air or who said the ad gave them a worse impression of Kaiser Permanente.

What We Discovered

The results of the study were in many ways consistent with earlier findings in that the reaction to the commercial was overwhelmingly positive. Overall, respondents found the message to be clear, poignant and full of optimism. However, the commentary captured in the one-on-ones gave Kaiser the added confidence that respondents had very limited concerns about the appropriateness of airing the ad on TV. In fact, many respondents characterized the presentation of the topic as strong and tactful.

Mod: I noticed that after seeing the ad you said you felt it was very appropriate to air this commercial. What specifically about the ad makes you feel this way?

Guest: It isn't aggressive in the presentation, especially with a very emotionally charged topic. It also sends a positive message that she may make it through the treatment.

A small number of respondents did express various degrees of negativity. However, the sessions revealed that their negativity about the ad had nothing to do with Kaiser's portrayal of cancer or their insensitivity regarding that topic. Moreover, respondents were not suggesting the ad might be found offensive or contain inappropriate content for viewers.

In the conversations, respondents' negative comments focused on the lack of specific information about what Kaiser offers in terms of products and services and a general feeling that the ad didn't accurately “sell” Kaiser's services. Some of the negativity was also attributed to a certain amount of disbelief that Kaiser could play such a significant role in the fullness of a cancer patient's life. This information gave Kaiser the peace of mind they needed to move forward.

Mod: Earlier in the survey, you indicated that you thought the commercial was pointless. Thinking about what we've talked about so far, what specifically did you see or hear in the ad that makes you feel it was pointless?

Guest: It really doesn't explain about the coverage which is what I would be interested in knowing, it implies that cancer treatment would be covered.

Mod: So, in addition to more details about coverage, what would you need to see or hear that would make you feel better about this ad?

Guest: More information would be the best thing for me. I don't respond to ads which seem to be about the touchy/feely stuff. I want to know what I'm paying for and how it benefits me.

Another finding brought to life by the one-on-ones was that Saturday appeared to be effective at strengthening Kaiser's image. Several respondents explained that the commercial gave them a more favorable outlook toward Kaiser because it enhanced their perception that the company provides their patients with comprehensive care to help them live normal lives when coping with serious medical issues.

Mod: Now keeping this in mind, what do you think was the main message the ad was trying to communicate to you? And what aspects sent this message?

Guest: The main message to me was that the company was more than the usual, uncaring organization. This was shown in the video by subtle suggestions such as the actress's portrayal of a very normal human being with cancer.

Mod: Thinking back to your survey, I see you said you learned something new about Kaiser Permanente. What was that new info that you learned?

Guest: The new information I learned was that not all insurance companies treat their clients like numbers and dollars.

Why it Mattered for Kaiser

The research conducted for Saturday gave Kaiser the data they needed and the voice of the customer they craved. The commentary from the iModerate conversations helped reinforce Kaiser's commitment to the commercial and its message. The study alleviated fears of a negative backlash and proved that the commercial was an appropriate framework for tackling a sensitive issue. Today, Kaiser's ad tracking initiatives as well as anecdotal evidence suggest that the commercial as well as the overall Thrive campaign continues to be very well-received.