RESEARCH SUMMARY

Title: Safer Travel at Night communications development

Objective: How young women decide how to get home late at night and how aware they are of the risks of their late night travel options

Date: March 2009

Methodology: Qualitative: 4 x observation sessions (Inner and Outer London), 8 x auto-ethnographies and 8 x friendship group discussion sessions with women aged 16-34 who use illegal cabs either regularly or occasionally

Key findings:
- The focus is on the fun and not the getting home. This is coupled with the false sense of invulnerability that being drunk and in a group creates
- When it comes to getting home the key needs are: immediacy and accessibility; warmth and comfort; and, door to door, private transport
- Most claim they are not knowingly putting themselves at risk, especially when travelling alone. There is a huge grey area of misperception – there are many scenarios where it feels ‘legitimate’ to be taking a cab, people are genuinely surprised at the truth of what is legal and illegal behaviour. Even if badges, stickers and licenses were looked for (not a widespread behaviour), this is undermined by the fact that some licensed cabs also behave illegally
- In addition, cabs (most kinds) and drivers feel like a safe haven
  - Women feel there are worse threats on the streets/on public transport
  - They feel they have enough instinct and safety measures in place to protect themselves e.g. their mobile phone
  - Even an unlicensed cab can still seem like a safer option
- Communications and marketing activity can go some way to raise awareness of the threat of sexual assault and causes a reaction at the time of viewing. However, information about safer options to get home, e.g. Cabwise, could potentially have more impact if communicated clearly, separately and closer to the point of decision making, e.g. at nightclubs
- However, even with effective marcoms this will not necessarily be translated into behaviour at the crucial point of decision making when: rationality is blurred; the most expedient, convenient option will always be the most desirable; the threat feels too far removed from the current situation
- The challenge is how to make it easier for young women, late at night, to choose legal minicab options that don't require walking, waiting or advance planning

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