

Increasing Voluntary Enrolment for a Smoking Cessation Programme

Department/Organisation: Health Promotion Board (HPB), Temasek Polytechnic Student Support and Career Services (SSCS)

In a Nutshell

Behavioural Insights (BI) was employed to increase the voluntary enrolment rates to a smoking cessation programme offered by Health Promotion Board within Temasek Polytechnic. The team increased the visibility of the smoking cessation programme and the ease of sign-ups in three ways: (a) posters about the programme at identified smoking hotspots within the campus; (b) email to the student population with carefully designed messages; and (c) putting up signages around the Lifestyle Coaches office where the programme is conducted. The awareness of the smoking cessation programme amongst the general student population and the voluntary enrolment rates to the programme were increased through these interventions.

Understand

Since April 2015, Health Promotion Board has stationed Lifestyle Coaches, who are qualified nurses, at the Student Support and Career Services department to run several health-related programmes for the student population, including the smoking cessation programme (SCP). However, most students enrolled into the SCP are those who were caught smoking and were required to attend the SCP, while students who enrolled in the SCP voluntarily are rare.

To better understand the reasons for the low voluntary enrolment rates, the team conducted interviews of students who are smokers, performed an environmental scan of smoking locations within the campus, and undertook a simple user-journey mapping (i.e., asked students to try signing up for the programme). Through the interviews and user-journey mapping, the team found that the visibility of the smoking cessation programme was very low, as most students have not heard of it before and it was difficult for students to enrol into the programme due to limited information. Additionally, the physical location of the Lifestyle Coaches offices was not very prominent and there were no indication that they offered a smoking cessation programme. Through the environmental scans, smoking hotspots within the campus were identified. Moreover, through the interviews with students who are smokers, there were three interesting themes that emerged: (a) the students who smoke mentioned that the financial cost of smoking was very important for them, (b) there is a misperception that the smoking cessation programme is not anonymous (i.e., school authorities and parents will be notified when a student enrol into the programme), and (c) the students who smoke think about quitting smoking most often when they are in the act of smoking.

Solve – Ideate

Four BI interventions were used. Firstly, an enrolment page that made it easy for students who wish to enrol to leave their contact details. Secondly, posters (*Figure 1*) were placed at identified smoking hotspots within the campus. The posters were designed to make enrolment to the smoking cessation programme easy by providing different channels of enrolment (i.e., WhatsApp number, QR-code for enrolment site).

Thirdly, signages were put up around the Lifestyle Coaches' office to indicate its location and to indicate the availability of the smoking cessation programme. Lastly, emails were sent to students to provide information about the smoking cessation programme and with a message that reminded students about the financial cost of smoking.

Figure 1. Poster on the Smoking Cessation Programme.



Solve – Implement

The study design and project timeline are summarized in *Figures 2 and 3* respectively. Prior to implementing the BI interventions, the team conducted a straw poll (207 students) to find out if students were aware of the smoking cessation programme offered on campus. The posters at smoking hotspots and signages around the Lifestyle Coaches' office were placed up immediately after the straw poll concluded. Emails were sent to students on the same day that the posters and signages were put up. Students were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: (a) No email baseline, (b) Neutral email with no infographic, (c) Email with gain frame infographic, and (d) Email with loss frame infographic (*Figure 4*). Another reminder email was sent to the students two weeks later with the same message. Two additional straw polls was conducted at Week 2 (316 students) and Week 4 (213 students) respectively. The final voluntary sign-up numbers for the smoking cessation programme was tallied at the end of Week 4.

Figure 2. Project design.

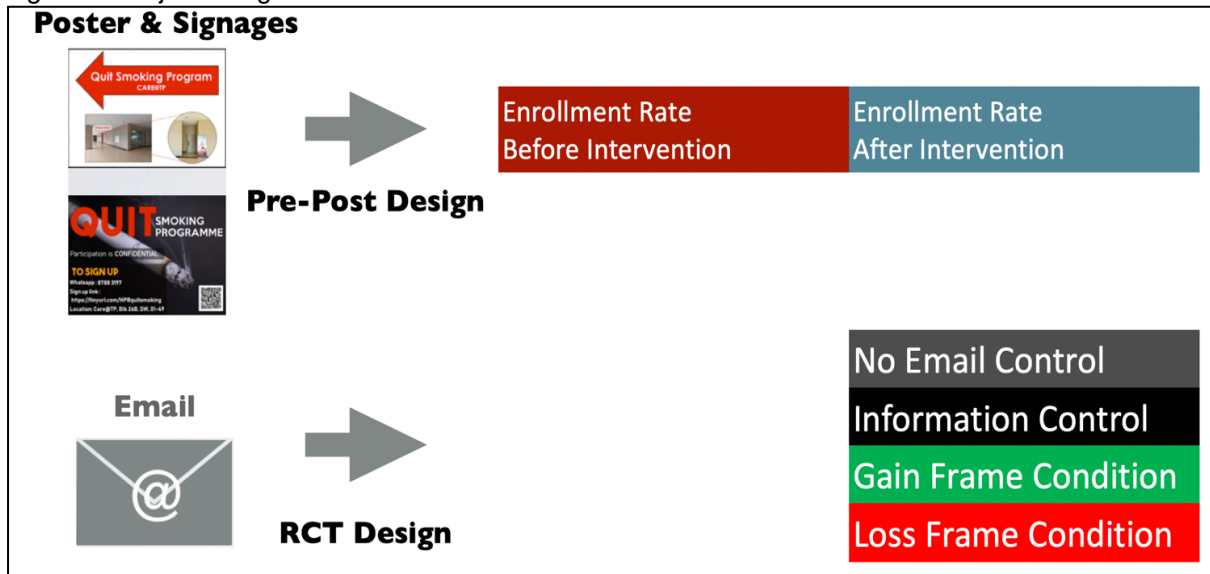


Figure 3. Project timeline.

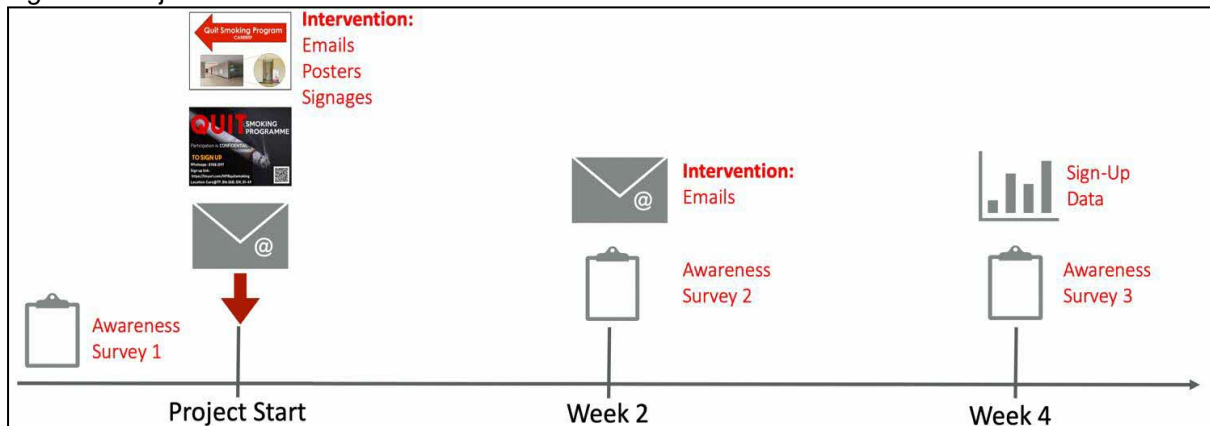


Figure 4. Infographics used in emails.

The figure compares two email infographics: **Gain-Frame Email** and **Loss-Frame Email**.

Gain-Frame Email: Features the text "For every pack that you DON'T smoke, you GAIN \$10." and "At 10 packs, you GAIN \$100." and "At 100 packs, you GAIN \$1000." Each statement is accompanied by an image of a 10 Euro banknote. At the bottom, it says "Participation is Confidential" and "TO SIGN UP" with contact information: "Whatsapp: 8788 3197", "Sign up link: tinyurl.com/HPBquitsmoking", and "Location: Care@TP, BK 268, SW 01-53".

Loss-Frame Email: Features the text "For every pack that you smoke, you LOSE \$10." and "At 10 packs, you LOSE \$100." and "At 100 packs, you LOSE \$1000." Each statement is accompanied by an image of a 10 Euro banknote being disintegrated into particles. At the bottom, it says "Participation is Confidential" and "TO SIGN UP" with the same contact information as the Gain-Frame email.

Evaluate

Students' awareness levels of the smoking cessation programme increased after the BI intervention (*Figure 5*). There was also an increase in the number of voluntary sign-ups for the smoking cessation programme compared to other similar time-periods in the past (note: the BI interventions were implemented in Term 2 of the April Semester in AY2018/2019; *Figure 6*). Unfortunately, the small number of voluntary sign-ups did not allow for a suitable statistical test to be conducted to determine which email condition resulted in a higher probability of voluntary sign-ups.

Figure 5. Level of awareness for the Smoking Cessation Programme.

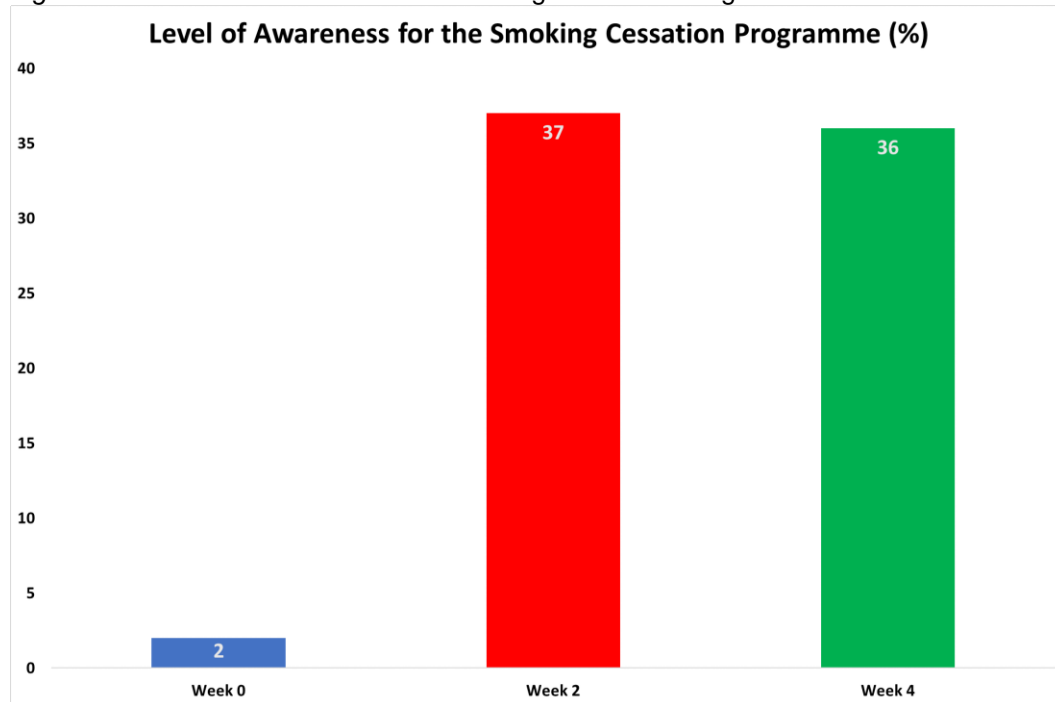
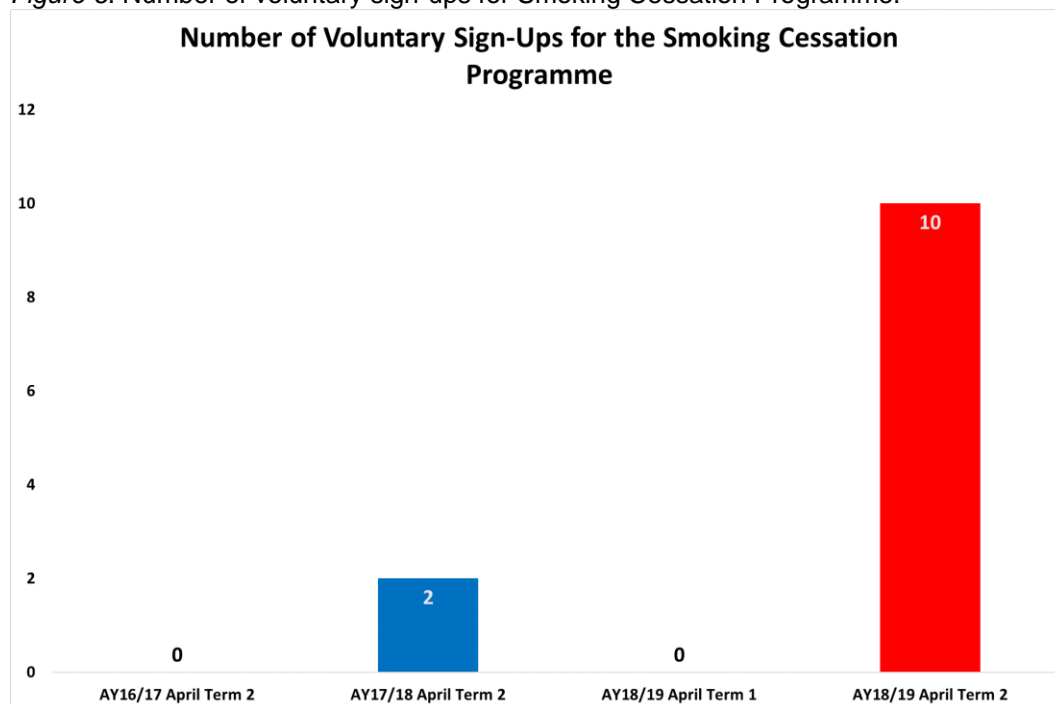


Figure 6. Number of voluntary sign-ups for Smoking Cessation Programme.



Lessons Learnt

Reducing friction for sign-ups and raising awareness about the smoking cessation programme increased the number of voluntary sign-ups. Prank sign-ups were experienced in the early stages of the project. There were some non-smoking students who were upset by the content of the email. They mistakenly thought that they received the email as they were deemed as smokers. If these interventions were to be scaled up, these issues must be anticipated and dealt with.

Next Steps

There are plans to use other types of messaging (e.g., social messaging) to see if it better increases sign-up rates.