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SAFETY IN NUMBERS

How license plates accelerated nationwide airbag recall

CHALLENGE



The safety of a nation's people is a primary focus for governments.

When faulty Takata airbags were found to have caused deaths and injuries in multiple accidents world-over including Australia, the Australian Government implemented a compulsory vehicle recall. The scale of the recall, to be administered by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, was huge.

A requirement of the compulsory recall notice demanded that each manufacturer implement a national advertising campaign, including television, radio and print, to help vehicle owners identify if their vehicle was fitted with faulty airbags and how to take rectification action. Alternatively, manufacturers could embark on a joint industry advertising campaign.

A joint industry campaign could provide the clarity and clear messaging, something that would otherwise be lost to repetitiveness if more than 20 vehicle manufacturers ran individual campaigns.

The Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) took the responsibility for a joint communications campaign on behalf of its member manufacturers.

With more than 2.3 million vehicles to be identified and rectified as well as a recall deadline of December 2020, the FCAI faced a seemingly insurmountable task. Public nonchalance had to be swayed and a sense of urgency to this potential life-or-death threat instilled. And there needed to be a simple solution for checking each vehicle, as the difficulty of finding a vehicle's VIN and accurately transcribing a lengthy number – and then knowing what to do with it – was an obvious stumbling block.

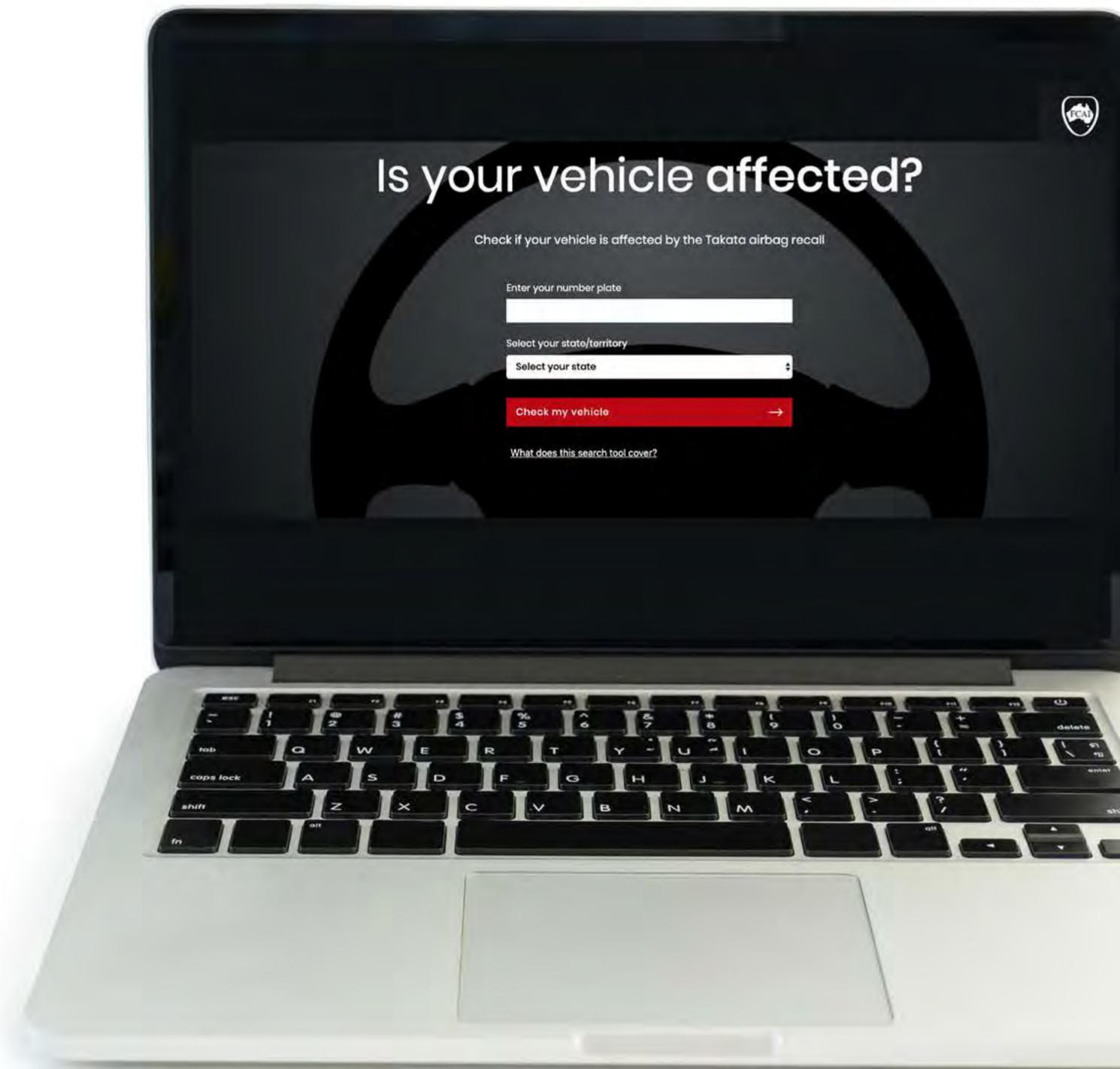
WHAT ACCENTURE DID

The FCAI teamed up with Accenture Interactive, The Monkeys (an Australian creative agency Accenture acquired in May 2017) and IHS Markit to influence people to take action and create a simple and quick way to check each vehicle and ultimately save lives.

Crucially, a one-stop solution was needed for all vehicle owners to find out if their vehicles were fitted with faulty Takata airbags. But vehicle information was stored on a number of different databases, making it dauntingly complex to track down.

The team conjured and designed a new digital tool that seamlessly connected multiple databases onto a single easy-to-use platform. The innovative tool integrates vehicle sales, recall and registration data from multiple organizations. All information is obtained securely in real time through a connected, responsive and multichannel platform.

Using the tool, people could quickly find out if their vehicles were at risk simply by inputting their vehicle number plate and state/territory of registration. Once a number is entered into the system, it is cross-referenced via Motorweb with the National Exchange of Vehicle and Driver Information Systems (NEVDIS) database to find the corresponding VIN number. That number is checked against the IHS Markit database, which provides the vehicle make and model. Finally, the vehicle is checked against a list of more than 3 million vehicles to determine whether it is affected by the recall.





WHAT ACCENTURE DID

If the vehicle is affected by the recall, the owner is instantly notified and provided with a link to the relevant vehicle manufacturer to enable arrangements to be made for the faulty airbag to be promptly replaced free of charge. The vehicle manufacturers affected by the recall were closely involved in the development of the tool. A tool of this sort had never before been developed in the Australian automotive industry.

Before taking it live, the FCAI and its partners were required to satisfy the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission that the website was easily accessible, could handle heavy loads and provide accurate information to vehicle owners.

The web tool, housed at www.ismyairbagsafe.com.au, is secure, protected and can perform at any bandwidth. Fully automated dashboards show how many users have visited the site. Each manufacturer can also verify the number of vehicles checked for their brand and identify the number affected.

In parallel to this, people needed to be made aware of the dangers of the faulty Takata airbags which could be fatal or seriously injure vehicle occupants. A provocative public outreach campaign and website was launched. The headline “Faulty airbags? Don’t Die Wondering” was gripping and had a powerful effect. It asked owners directly, reiterating the potential danger without inciting panic.

National publicity saw the message spread across television, radio, newspapers and magazines as well as at the cinema, on outdoor billboards, gas station screens and on social media. This was complimented by regular news releases. The FCAI and Accenture Interactive soon had people’s attention.

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

While collaboration between the FCAI, Accenture Interactive and other project partners was key to the project's success, so too was the human-centric approach.

During the course of the project, the team needed to connect with broad audiences on a vast scale and provide solutions that could be quickly adopted by all.

The project had to reach every single vehicle owner in Australia, regardless of location, age, level of connectivity etc. The goal was to inform the public of the potential risks, but also to ensure vehicle owners grasped the urgency of the task. Plus, it was important to reassure them of the simplicity and ease of using the new website – in all, a delicate balance to strike.

None of this would have been possible without a deep understanding of Australia's diverse communities and cultures. Communications were developed in multiple languages to ensure the message would quickly engage people from myriad backgrounds and nationalities. The website's interface was designed to be simple and user-friendly, ensuring anyone could use it to learn exactly the status of their vehicle.

The campaign was publicized across all forms of media. The wall-to-wall coverage on prime time television, smartphones and even foreign-language newspapers generated awareness and created a sense of expectation that everyone is and should be checking their vehicles – or else remain a danger to themselves and fellow vehicle occupants.

The message reached millions of people, triggering a shift in the public mindset and initiating proactive behaviour. Worried but equally encouraged by the ease of resolving the issue, people flocked to the new website to find out if their vehicles were affected. Businesses, fleet & leasing companies and car dealers also used the website to ensure the safety of vehicles they were providing employees, clients and selling.





VALUE DELIVERED

In just nine weeks after launch in July 2018, the number of unique registration checks on the digital portal had reached nearly 3 million. This exceeded expectations by more than 300 per cent.

By August 2020, Australians had made more than 11.2 million vehicle searches. Of those, more than 1.8 million were for vehicles whose faulty airbag(s) needed to be replaced. That put the project well ahead of its target of finding outstanding affected vehicles.

The website continued to attract strong interest through 2020 despite the impact of COVID-19 disruption.

The collaboration between Accenture Interactive, FCAI and other project partners hinged on the provocative public outreach campaign that drove awareness alongside the user-friendly digital solution that made it easy for vehicle owners to take action. The results prove this multi-pronged approach was hugely effective.

The intersection of creative communications and cutting-edge technology largely broke through the barriers blocking consumer communication and response, garnering nationwide interest and provoking action.

By combining the public awareness outreach with a slick digital experience offering an instantaneous answer, Accenture Interactive and the FCAI have raised the bar for behaviour change campaigns and problem-solving digital solutions.

Through the application of Accenture Interactive's innovation in solving complex business challenges and their end-to-end capability, the FCAI and its project partners were enabled to exceed their ambitious goals and safeguard millions of Australian people.