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Contracted Cost: \$128,543.15

Vaping Prevention Concepts Testing

Executive Summary

Prepared by:
Corporate Research Associates Inc.

Prepared for:
Health Canada

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For more information on this report, please email:
hc.cpab.por-rop.dgcap.sc@canada.ca



Suite 5001, 7071 Bayers Road

Halifax NS B3L 2C2

www.cra.ca

1-888-414-1336

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Executive Summary

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Background and Objectives

Health Canada is in the process of developing the Health Risks of Vaping Products Public Awareness Marketing Campaign. The campaign aims to increase awareness of the harms and risks associated with vaping product use by youth. Prior to campaign development, Health Canada was interested in assessing reactions from the campaign's target audience to creative concepts being considered, including three concepts each including layouts for signage and social media posts (Phase one) and three storyboards/moodboards and three additional signage layouts (Phase two). Research was needed to ensure that the concepts resonated well with the target audience and addressed prevention in an effective manner.

To achieve these objectives, a two-phased research approach was undertaken. The first phase entailed a total of ten in-person focus groups conducted from September 17 to 20, 2018 in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax. In each market, one group was conducted with youth 13-15 years old, and one group was conducted with non-vaper and non-smoker youth 16-18 years old who exhibited some of the 'at risk' behaviours defined in the Health Canada Peer Crowd Segmentation¹ research. Participants in the older age groups also included a few who had tried vaping in the past. Participants in the research included a mix of gender (45% female and 55% male) and ages, and ethnic background (where relevant) within each age group.

The second phase of the research entailed a total of six in-person focus groups conducted from November 26 to 28, 2018 in Montreal, Toronto and Moncton. In each market, one group was conducted with youth 13-15 years old while the second group was conducted with youth 16-18 years who do not currently smoke cigarette or vape. Each group included a mix of age and gender. Across both phases, all participants reported having lived in their respective markets for a period of at least two years.

The Montreal focus groups were conducted in French, while discussions in all other locations were conducted in English. Each focus group lasted approximately 1.5 to 2 hours and participants each received \$100 in appreciation for their time. A total of twelve (12) participants were recruited per group among the 16-18 years old youth (with a goal of 10 attending each session), and 10 participants were recruited per group among youth 13-15 years old (with a goal of 8 attending the discussion). Across locations, 92 participants actually attended the discussions during the first phase of the research while 54 youth took part in the second phase of the research.

¹ Health Canada *Peer Crowd Analysis and Segmentation for Vaping and Tobacco, 2018*



All participants were recruited per the recruitment specifications for the Government of Canada. Recruitment was conducted through qualitative panels stored on Canadian servers, with follow up calls to confirm the details provided and to ensure quotas were met. This report presents the findings from the study. Caution must be exercised when interpreting the results from this study, as qualitative research is directional only. Results cannot be attributed to the overall population under study, with any degree of confidence.

Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as a Representative of Corporate Research Associates Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the **Directive on the Management of Communications**. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed 

Margaret Brigley, President & COO | Corporate Research Associates

Date: October 5, 2018

Key Findings and Conclusions – Phase I

Findings from the first phase of the **Vaping Prevention Concepts Testing** suggest there is a need to reach out to youth about the potential consequences of vaping to inform their choices. Awareness and knowledge of vaping consequences was low among participants in the research, with youth vaping interest perceived as being most influenced by social peer pressure and curiosity. While vaping was seen by participants as increasingly common among youth, there were mixed opinions regarding whether vaping is a trend or if it is here to stay. Participants felt that the best channels for the Government of Canada to provide youth information about the risks associated with vaping product use were social media and movie theatre videos, and to a lesser extent schools and public transportation.

Of the three concepts tested during the focus groups, Concept A (“Is Vaping Worth the Risk?”) held the greatest appeal among youth across age groups and languages, for its original approach, graphic appeal, clear and consistent messaging across components (text and visuals), and personal relevance. Youth were considered the target audience, as teenagers are identified in the text and the concept refers to vaping aroma, something that was describe as being attractive to youth. At the same time, not showing youth in the images was seen as broadening the concepts’ appeal regardless of vaping behaviours. Despite the concept having some appeal and capturing youth’s attention, its call-to-action was considered moderate at best, and there is some risk of inducement with the concept as the appealing aromas invoked curiosity for some youth. A few graphic modifications were also suggested to improve the concept.

Concept B (“Is Vaping Really You?”) elicited mixed reactions, though it was generally seen as ineffective at engaging youth to self-reflect about their vaping choices. While some liked that the concept’s dark and sombre tone aligned with the seriousness of vaping consequences, others felt that the message was



unclear and that the concept lacked personal relevance to non-vapers. Participants believed that vaping does not define who they are, as implied by the headline, but is only something they might do. The concept was seen as focusing more on considering peer pressure in vaping decisions than on the health consequences of vaping. Further, the concept was seen as most relevant to youth who currently vape or those seriously considering vaping. Finally, the tagline, “Take a closer look” was considered uninspiring and not meaningful, thus further weakening the call-to-action.

Concept C (“It’s Your Life. Get the Facts.”) was the least preferred across locations and audiences for its generic design, vague and inconsistent messaging, lack of personal relevance, and weak call-to-action. According to most participants, the concept looked more like a generic, corporate campaign promoting an educational institution, than one warning youth about the risks of vaping. While youth illustrated in the images implied that teenagers were the target audience, their appearance did not align with what participants described as youth who are currently or considering vaping. Youth illustrated were too “clean-cut” and it was believed that vapers are more those who like to stand out and attract attention in some way shape or form. Despite the concept being described as bland, generic, and uninspiring, the tagline, “It’s Your Life. Get the Facts.” was well liked for recognizing that youth are responsible for their own vaping choices, while inviting them to seek information. Despite the appeal of the tagline, the overall concept did not provide a strong call-to-action.

Regardless of preferences, there were a few points that were considered important in ensuring that the final concept remains credible and relevant to youth. Seeing the Health Canada logo was perceived as important to enhance the concept’s credibility. At the same time, statements that are more definite (those that do not use conditional terms such as “can” or “may”) were considered more trustworthy. Information provided on vaping across concepts was seen as too vague to be compelling. It was believed that to be effective, information should speak of immediate consequences (youth brain development) as well as being more specific (providing statistics or strong imagery). Of the five alternative facts tested, the two that were chosen as most compelling for being specific and suggesting immediate consequences were “Vaping can expose you to harmful chemicals like aldehydes and metals. / Le vapotage peut vous exposer à des produits chimiques nocifs comme les aldéhydes et les métaux.” and “Nicotine can affect memory and concentration in teens. / La nicotine peut nuire à la mémoire et à la concentration chez les jeunes”.

Of the various taglines discussed during the focus groups, two were consistently chosen as being most compelling, across audiences and locations. These included “It’s your life. Get the Facts./C’est ta vie. Obtiens les faits.” and “Skip the myths. Know the facts./Oublie les mythes. Obtiens les faits”. Of the three URLs tested for the concepts, “Canada.ca/vapinginfo (Canada.ca/infovapotage)” was preferred for its simplicity and memorability.

Key Findings and Conclusions – Phase II

Findings from the second phase of the **Vaping Prevention Concepts Testing** reveal that the signage layouts and videos storyboards/moodboards being considered for the campaign caught the attention of young non-vapers, generally elicited positive reactions, and were considered effective at making teenagers reflect on their vaping behaviours if they were considering vaping.



Reactions to the three video storyboards were generally positive across locations and age groups as it shows young people in a familiar situation with fast moving visuals and upbeat music that captured attention. Situations and environments featured in the video storyboards were for the most part considered realistic, as they were generally reflective of when and where youth vape. More specifically, youth reported that vaping happens in social situation where peer pressure is involved. At the same time, apart from happening at parties, it was mentioned that vaping is most prevalent where teenagers ‘hang out’, including nearby schools and shopping centres, at parks, on the streets, and less frequently, at home. As such, the Storyboard 1 (arcade) scenario was the least compelling, as it was deemed unpopular and outdated among young people. Showing a non-vaper experiencing peer pressure helped youth relate to the scenario, as it was considered realistic. To enhance the video storyboards’ credibility, it was suggested that the scenario be modified to show the young male vaping first before passing on the vape to his friend.

There was no clear preference in terms of the video storyboards’ closing line, with each considered as communicating something different. “Why risk it? / Pourquoi prendre le risque?” was felt to be straightforward and causing viewers to question the worth of vaping, while being considered unclear about the risks of vaping. The closing line, “If you don’t smoke, don’t vape / Si tu ne fumes pas, ne vapote pas” positions vaping as a choice that is as foolish as smoking, although it could also imply that if you vape, you might as well smoke too. Finally, “It’s your life. Get the facts / C’est ta vie. Obtiens les faits” was felt to be directional and strong, putting the choice to vape or not squarely with the individual. That said, some believed that it was not strong enough to engage youth to take action.

The three signage layouts tested were neutrally-to-positively received and deemed effective at communicating the potential harmful consequences of vaping. The health warning/consequences message was considered most compelling to current vapers and those who are seriously considering it, and less so to non-vapers. While the signage did not entice youth to seek additional information, it appeared effective at making them think twice about their vaping choices. The simple, colourful design reminiscent of police crime scene tape attracted attention and introduced a cautionary tone relevant to the topic at hand. Of the three signage layouts shown, the Concept A (lung) layout was preferred for its simplicity and the image’s ability to convey the message, while the topic of the Concept C (question mark) (unknown long-term effects) grabbed attention as it is a less common topic related to vaping. That said, this message implies that long-term effects could either be positive or negative. Across age groups, the Concept A (lung) and Concept C (question mark) were equally preferred by youth ages 16-18 years old while those 13 to 15 years old expressed a slight preference for the Concept C (question mark) layout. While the Concept B (brain) was the least preferred approach, it was still deemed relevant for speaking of the immediate effects of vaping on young people’s health. In terms of identifying health risks on the signage, neither “lung damage” or “lung inflammation” gathered strong support to speak of the consequences of vaping on the lungs. On a related note, speaking of “unknown health impacts” was considered serious by some (implying negative risks) while it was deemed by others to be too vague to be worrisome.

Of the two taglines tested, Tagline A (It’s your life. Get the facts. / C’est ta vie. Obtiens les faits.) was preferred among youth ages 13-15 years old for empowering young people, not being judgemental, and



implying that they will bear the consequences of their own vaping choices. By contrast, Tagline B (Consider the Consequences / Considère les conséquences) was the preferred choice of youth ages 16-18 years old for being more direct, scarier, and better highlighting the negative risks from vaping.

Although considered memorable, the video storyboard concept was deemed too lengthy for youth to be likely to watch it until the end or have a strong call to action (such as information seeking or social media sharing). Although youth were generally aware there are health risks of vaping, including what was referred to by participants as lung and brain damage, they were unaware of the specific nature of those risks. Perhaps as a result, they were seeking more detailed information from the advertisement. Overall, the campaign was felt to remind or warn young people about the risks of vaping rather than inform or educate them.

