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Concept Testing of the “Online Child Sexual Exploitation” Ad Campaign

Summary

Prepared for Public Safety Canada

Supplier: EKOS RESEARCH ASSOCIATES INC.

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français

Canada The wordmark for Canada, with a small red maple leaf icon above the letter 'a'.

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This public opinion research report presents the results of online focus groups testing three proposed concepts for the Online Child Sexual Exploitation ad campaign. The research was conducted by EKOS Research Associates Inc. on behalf of Public Safety Canada.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre: Mise à l’essai des concepts de la campagne publicitaire « Cyberexploitation sexuelle des enfants

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SUMMARY

A. Campaign Background

The Government of Canada's National Strategy for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation was launched in 2004 and expanded in 2009. In 2020, the Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Voluntary Principles was released to provide a framework to combat online sexual crimes against children and coordinate action between governments and industry partners. Canada's Criminal Code serves to protect children from all forms of child pornography, the use of the internet to lure children, from sexual contact or touching, and the procurement of children for illicit sexual activity. Public Safety (PS) Canada has been leading the National Strategy. PS is preparing to launch a multi-year public education and awareness campaign on Online Child Sexual Exploitation. The campaign is a component of Budget 2019 that included \$4.9 million over three years to support efforts to suppress Child Sexual Exploitation online.

The purpose of the research is to test the creative concepts developed for the multi-year public awareness campaign. The creative testing research will help to identify messaging and creative concepts (images, taglines, etc.) that are more successful at conveying the components of the awareness campaign.

B. Methodology

A total of 16 focus groups were conducted online. Separate groups were conducted among parents of children 12 and younger, parents of children 13 to 17, in the Atlantic, Ontario, Quebec, the Prairies and BC. One group was conducted in each age range in these regions, with the exception of Quebec where two groups were held with parents of teens (i.e., 11 regional groups in total). Five additional groups were conducted with Indigenous parents (1), parents with lower levels of education and income (1), those more recently immigrated to Canada (i.e., last 10 years) (2; 1 in French and 1 in English), and in lone-parent households (1).

Each focus group was an hour and a half in duration. Groups with Quebec participants were conducted in French. All others were conducted in English. Because of lower turn out in a few groups, additional interviews were held (6). Participants logged onto a Zoom video meeting to generally discuss their children's online activity, their comfort as parents in staying up to date on their children's online activity, and to see and hear draft mock-ups of three proposed concepts for 30 second videos. They were asked to react to each one in terms of overall

impressions, clarity of message and appropriateness of the approach in getting parents to visit the Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) website. They were also asked to provide a series of ratings of each concept along similar dimensions.

Between six and seven participants were recruited to attend each discussion, using the Probit online panel, targeting Canadian parents of children between the ages of 5 and 17, keeping in mind a mix of participants in terms of gender, and socioeconomic status (recruitment screener can be found in Appendix A). In total, 78 individuals participated in the concept testing discussions, (see details in following table). Discussions occurred between November 23 and December 1, 2020.

**Table 1: Number of Participants per Region –
Concept Testing Discussions**

Group	Attended
Atlantic under 13	4
Atlantic 13-17	4
Ontario under 13	4
Ontario 13-17	5
Quebec under 13	7
Quebec 13-17	5
Quebec 13-17	5
Prairies under 13	5
Prairies 13-17	5
BC under 13	5
BC 13-17	6
Immigrant parents (English)	5
Immigrant parents (French)	5
Indigenous parents	4
Low income/education parents	4
Single parents	4

The focus group guide (provided in Appendix B) was developed by EKOS in consultation with Public Safety Canada, along with a rating sheet used to rate each concept and provide an overall rating and ranking of the top concepts to quantify the results and obtain an initial reaction from each participant prior to discussion. Participants received an incentive of \$100 for their participation. Video recordings, researchers’ notes and observations from the focus groups formed the basis for analysis and reporting of results.

C. Key Findings

Overall, there were a few overarching themes expressed by participants in discussing the three concepts:

- Statistics are useful in intriguing parents to pay attention and find out more. More likely to send parents to the website than actual scenarios presented.
- Parents expressed a desire to see diversity in age and gender of child, type of predator, and online activity (risk).
- Specific examples are useful for some to see “how” the risk occurs. Real is important for believability, including specific examples of how risk occurs, what the predator or victim “look” like.

The following table highlights positive and negative reactions to each of the three concepts.

Summary of Reactions to Concepts

Concepts	Positive Reactions	Negative Reactions
<p><u>People Like Me</u> Girl texting with “boy” (Online friends may not be who they think they are)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Concrete example of what and how it can happen › Recognizable situation (child on bed in room, or under blankets, texting) › Has shock value, appreciated the twist at the end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Showing only a girl victim. Less generalizable for some (e.g., parents of boys) › Predator too specific, difficult to present one predator (could be older/younger/good looking/innocuous looking) › Fear does not work well for some › Less solution-oriented for some › OCSE more than just sharing naked pictures › Narration confusing if that is the predators disguised voice. Was it the girls voice? Mentions “us”
<p><u>Never Alone Online</u> Children are never alone online (Learn the signs of OCSE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Powerful, even ominous, imagery “attention grabbing” › More opportunity to show diversity of victims – both ages and gender › Predator was illusionary, non-specific image › Shows different types of online activity, mention of gaming notable and eye opening for some › Children could have been in common and private household spaces › Generalizable to more parents, more ‘saw themselves’ in the concept. Flopping on the couch received good mention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Fear-based imagery does not work as well for some. › Generic – does not show specific examples of what/how OCSE can occur (what the actual risk is) › Could show female shadow as well › Call to action (learn the signs) not as strong for some as ‘learn how to protect your kids’

Concepts	Positive Reactions	Negative Reactions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Can understand the ad, even without sound. › “Learn the signs” call to action was noticed as motivating to look for (more) information 	
<p><u>The Talk</u> Something you should know (1 in 5 targeted are under 12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Child’s point of view is powerful for many (young person’s lived experience). Gut wrenching for some › Parents motivated to action by duty to guide/protect › Unknown terms known by child may compel some to investigate › Statistic is also a good hook, well noticed (facts, not blind fear) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Seen as bland for some, low key › Less believable for some (that child would come to parent with this) › Experience of girl only › Text is somewhat weak (making babies in French version. Confusion - is she a victim? If so, her tone is very neutral) › The statistic was misunderstood in French (inflated impression of numbers)

Ratings

Results of ratings provided by participants show the Never Alone concept to be more positively rated on tone & approach, clarity of message and garnering attention. It is tied with The Talk in terms of relevance. There is no clear “winner” in terms of the impact of going to the website: all three concepts are essentially tied on this dimension. In overall ratings of each concept there is also no clear winner, although People Like Me was ranked less often as the most preferred concept, and more often as the least preferred. This suggests that while the Never Alone concept is received more positively as the concepts are shown, one by one, when they are all presented, each of the three are seen to have merit in reaching parents and Never Alone and The Talk are viewed equally as positively.

Overall

As reflected in both the discussion and ratings, each of the three concepts has strengths that make it powerful, and attractive to parents. Results suggest that each of these concepts “will work” and each can benefit from the addition of some of the strengths of the other two approaches. This may be in part because parents have a strong appreciation and see value in a campaign of this nature. They believe the issue is urgent and that all types of parents can

benefit from increased awareness as well as information to better inform them. It may be for this reason that they appear to be particularly receptive to all viable approaches and that they see merit in other respondents' points of view.

D. Note to Readers

It should be kept in mind when reading this report that findings from the focus groups are qualitative in nature, designed to provide a richer context rather than to measure percentages of the target population. These results are not intended to be used to estimate the numeric proportion or number of individuals in the population who hold a particular opinion as they are not statistically projectable.

E. Contract Value

The contract value for the POR project is \$68,829.71 (including HST).

Supplier Name: EKOS Research Associates

PWGSC Contract Number: OD160-212095/001/CY

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To obtain more information on this study, please e-mail to ps.communications-communications.sp@canada.ca

F. Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of EKOS Research Associates Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research.

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 by:



Susan Galley (Vice President)