



Business Recovery Response Plan Ad Campaign Testing

Executive Summary

Submitted to:
Department of Finance

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This public opinion research report presents the results of online focus groups conducted by Narrative Research on behalf of Finance Canada. The main objective of this research was to evaluate Finance Canada's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan advertising campaign concept to see if it is attention-grabbing, memorable, clearly understood and raises interest. A total of 6 focus groups were conducted on January 27, 2022 including one group with business people in the personal care industry, and one group with businesspeople in the tourism and hospitality industry, in each of three regions: Atlantic/Ontario, Prairies/West, and Quebec.

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Background

The Department of Finance has implemented an umbrella advertising campaign to support the Government of Canada's response plan to help small and medium businesses recover from the financial burdens the COVID-19 pandemic has brought upon them. Ultimately, the campaign aims to continue to inform Canadians and increase awareness and take-up of key initiatives and programs for businesses within the Government of Canada's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan. As the pandemic situation evolves, there is a continued need to inform Canadians of the efforts put in place by the Government of Canada to sustain the economy, including what resources and support are available to them. As such, as the programs evolve, it is important to assess the awareness of programs and services as they are introduced.

This research has two components: a qualitative creative testing followed by a quantitative campaign evaluation. The qualitative creative campaign testing aimed to examine reactions to a proposed advertising concept. The overall objective of this testing was to ensure that the advertising materials resonate with the target audience and meets its overall communications objectives prior to launch. The quantitative research component utilized the Government of Canada's Advertising Campaign Evaluation Tool (ACET) to evaluate the campaign before and after it is run in the media. Results from the quantitative ACET study are presented under separate cover. This report provides an overview of the findings from the qualitative creative testing, along with corresponding conclusions and recommendations to direct the final development of campaign creative.

Research Methodology

A total of six focus groups were conducted on January 27, 2022 with small and medium-sized business owners or managers in the personal care and the tourism and hospitality sectors. One online focus group was conducted with each sector in each of three regions: Atlantic/Ontario, Prairies/West, and Quebec. In total, nine people were recruited for each session, to ensure at least six participated. From 54 recruited individuals, 49 took part across all sessions. Each group



discussion lasted about 90 minutes and participants received a cash incentive of \$200 in appreciation of their time.

Qualitative discussions are intended as moderator-directed, informal, non-threatening discussions with participants whose characteristics, habits and attitudes are considered relevant to the topic of discussion. They are used in marketing research as a means of developing insight and direction, rather than collecting quantitatively precise data or absolute measures. As such, results are directional only and cannot be projected to the overall population under study.

Political Neutrality Certificate

I hereby certify as a representative of Narrative Research 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, CEO & Partner | Narrative Research

Date: March 14, 2022

Key Findings and Conclusions

The following summarizes the key findings and conclusions from the focus groups on the **Business Recovery Response Plan Ad Campaign Testing**.

Across audiences and locations, there was low recall of any advertisements relating to financial support programs for businesses.

Prior to sharing creative concepts, participants were asked what, if any, advertising campaigns they have seen or heard concerning COVID-19 financial support programs for businesses.

Results show that there was low recall of any advertisements relating to financial support programs for businesses, though participants were certainly aware of the various programs



offered throughout the pandemic. Information on such programs was primarily obtained through the news, word-of-mouth, or through other professionals (e.g., bankers / accountants / business associations) rather than through media channels.

The proposed campaign was well received and considered generally clear at communicating the availability of assistance programs.

Participants were presented with one advertising campaign concept that included three distinct components (namely a 15-second radio ad, a 30-second video, and four social media advertisements).

Overall, the campaign received mixed reactions, though mostly positive. Overall, the campaign was well received by participants in the Tourism/Hospitality sector, but not received as well by participants in the personal care sector due to perceived relevance. Those in Tourism and Hospitality could relate to the imagery and messaging, whereas those in Personal Care, particularly those working in home-based businesses and without employees (i.e. single person businesses) did not feel that the programs or proposed advertising was targeted at them. Not relating to ‘bricks and mortar’ establishments shown in the imagery, many of these participants felt excluded. That said, negative reactions were most evident among English-speaking participants, and most notably among freelancers/those operating sole proprietorship businesses and those operating businesses out of their homes.

The advertising concept was deemed credible by nearly all participants due to the visible affiliation with the Government of Canada. Additionally, the messaging of the ad concept was clearly understood by most, as well as the call-to-action in visiting the website to learn more about the economic recovery programs. The call-to-action was particularly evident in the social media posts (due to them being seen as a single click to access more information).

While the positive and uplifting tone of the concept was appreciated, some felt it was ‘too happy’ and did not demonstrate empathy towards business owners who are experiencing severe consequences from the pandemic.

The use of animation received a mixed reaction. While some felt that ‘cartoons’ were too impersonal, making light of a trying time, others appreciated its light approach and the diversity shown. Differences were especially noted across sectors, with personal care sector participants



being far more critical of the use of animation. For them, the use of real people would better reflect who could benefit from the programs and services, as well as allow them to better see themselves in the campaign. Most notably, ‘personal touch’ business (massage, physio, etc.) felt that small businesses were not included in the programs offered, particularly if they had few employees or worked out of their home. Conversely, Tourism/Hospitality participants were more inclined to describe the campaign’s visuals as calming, attractive and showing diversity. These participants also felt the music in the advertisement was soft and hopeful. They felt the visuals represented a wide range of individuals and businesses that could qualify.

The concept was felt to portray a clear message that the Government is offering support programs for small businesses. Very few, if any, raised problematic or confusing aspects of the advertisement messaging. A few acknowledged it is unrealistic to target every business but using different imagery could make better clarify the message regarding who qualifies. Participants in both the hospitality/tourism and personal care sectors stated it would be ideal to see specific sectors mentioned and visualized – such as hotel, restaurants, massage therapy – rather than broad categories.

Many participants felt they would remember and seek out the link Canada.ca/coronavirus to learn more information about the recovery programs. A few suggested more specific links to highlight the various economic recovery programs being offered for different businesses.