

Climate Action Awareness Campaign Public Opinion Research – Concept Testing & Advertising Campaign Evaluation Tool Report

Executive Summary

Prepared for Environment and Climate Change Canada

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Executive Summary

Background and Objectives

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) is dedicated to securing a clean and thriving environment and economy for both current and future generations. A population that is knowledgeable about and engaged in climate action is essential for the social and economic transformation necessary to exceed Canada's 2030 Paris target and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. To that end, ECCC launched its new Climate Action Awareness advertising campaign.

ECCC has developed this awareness campaign to both inform Canadians' climate literacy (i.e., the human influences on climate and climate's influence on individuals and society), and inform Canadians on the science behind climate change, adaptation and mitigation solutions and what a green future may entail so that these topics become an integral part of everyday societal conversations. The first phase of the campaign, which commenced in October 2023, consisted of a variety of advertisement placements that drew attention to the topic of climate change and directed Canadians to a website for additional information.

The overarching goal of this campaign is to empower Canadians with relevant and accessible information about climate change they need for everyday lifestyle choice and decision making, and to inform Canadians about individual and collective actions that can have a big impact on the environment and climate change. Ultimately, the campaign aims to build familiarity with pro-climate behaviours and collective efforts (Government programs and incentives that exist and what industry is doing) that can have a notable impact on the environment and climate changes and motivate Canadians from intention to action.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) was looking to support their Climate Action Awareness Campaign with public opinion research. Prior to finalizing the development of the advertising campaign, ECCC wanted to obtain feedback from key target audiences to ensure that proposed concept elements resonated with Canadian residents. This feedback would help identify which concepts should be further developed into the final campaign. Three concepts were included in the qualitative testing, in video format. Each video, presented in an animatic format, included different key messaging and use of imagery for testing. As mentioned, the main goal of this phase of testing was to determine which advertising materials best engage the target audience and are most effective in its call to action.

Specific research objectives related to the creative testing included:

- Evaluate the advertising campaign’s proposed creative concepts with campaign target audiences prior to going in market, in terms of:
 - How does the target audience feel after seeing these advertisements?
 - Do the target audiences identify the main message of the creatives?
 - What does the target audience think these advertisements are trying to achieve?
 - Do the creatives get the attention of the target audience? Do they find the creatives memorable?
 - Are the creatives missing anything?
 - Do the target audiences identify the “call-to-action?”
 - Would the ads motivate participants to do something/take action?
 - Which images does the target audience find the most memorable/did they like the best and which ones are the least memorable/did they like the least?
- Provide insights to assist the department in selecting a creative concept for production, based on the response from target groups.
- Identify potential modifications to the selected creative concept based on insights outlined in the top-line report.

In addition, this research sought to evaluate the success of the advertisement campaign through a before/after measure of the campaign’s objectives and awareness/recall of the advertisements amongst Canadians, particularly the campaign’s target audience. The research was conducted using the Government of Canada’s Advertising Campaign Evaluation Tool (ACET). ACET evaluations are required to help improve the Government of Canada’s ability to consistently evaluate major advertising campaigns, and to assist departments in complying with a key requirement in the Communications Directive.

The following criteria was used to measure the effectiveness of the Climate Action Awareness advertising campaign:

1. Pre-Campaign Evaluation using the standardized ACET Baseline online survey, with the objectives being to assess pre-campaign awareness of the subject matter, including:
 - Recall of Government of Canada advertising on environmental initiatives; and
 - Baseline assessment of the measures related to the advertisement’s objectives.
2. Post-Campaign Evaluation using the standardized ACET Post-Campaign online survey, which helped determine if:
 - An increase of recall of Government of Canada advertising on environmental initiatives relative to pre-campaign has been achieved;

- There is strong aided recall of the campaign’s creatives (main measure of research). This includes where Canadians saw the advertisements and whether they can identify them as from the Government of Canada (GC);
- Measurement of ads motivating respondents to do something/take action after seeing the ad; and
- Strong improvement in the measures related to the advertisement’s objectives.

Qualitative: Research Methodology

To achieve these objectives, a qualitative research approach was undertaken. A total of eight focus groups were conducted, with Canadians that fall on the spectrum of “supporters” and “allies”, using a self-selection segmentation question provided by ECCC. Specifically, four groups were conducted with those classified as “Committed” or “Supportive”, and four sessions with those classified as “Ambivalent” or “Indifferent”. In each group, recruited participants included a mix of locations, urban/rural communities, age, gender, household type, and ethnic background. Four regions were represented, namely West (encompassing British Columbia, Yukon, and Northwest Territories), the Prairies (encompassing Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba), East (encompassing Ontario, Nunavut, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador), and francophone groups (encompassing Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick). Group discussions were held in English, except for the francophone region, with all groups being conducted from August 15 to 17, 2023. Sessions each lasted approximately one-hour and forty-five minutes and the participation incentive was \$100 per attendee. Across all groups, a total of 80 individuals were recruited, with 68 attending a session. All participants were recruited in accordance with Government of Canada specifications. 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 techniques are used in marketing research as a means of developing insight and direction, rather than collecting quantitatively precise data or absolute measures. Results cannot be attributed to the overall population under study, with any degree of statistical confidence.

Qualitative: Key Findings and Conclusions

The following summarizes the key findings and conclusions from the focus groups on the **Climate Literacy Advertising Campaign Concept Testing**.

General Perceptions

Participants generally lack confidence in their understanding of climate change, notably among those in the Ambivalent/Indifferent segments. This is in part due to the topic of climate change

and adaptation being considered highly complex in terms of its causes, impacts, and how to best combat the issue going forward. At the same time, conflicting expert advice, and the perceived lack of a neutral trusted source of information affect participants' confidence. That said, understanding the causes and effects of climate change is considered important to engage action.

Concept Testing

Participants were presented with three concepts for a national advertising campaign, each including a mock-up for a video (presented in a still animatic format). The concepts are referred to as, Concept A (Outdo You), Concept B (New Normal), and Concept C (Childhood Champs). The order of presentation of concepts was rotated across focus groups to avoid order biases. For Concept B (New Normal), an alternative script was presented following the initial concept discussion, that included an alternative opening and ending to the video.

Some of the comments received applied to all three concepts. Specifically, the concepts do not effectively convey the need for collaboration, as they focus on the role played by individuals and/or small businesses. There lacks proper explanation of the responsibility of governments in addressing climate change. At the same time, large corporations are viewed as having a significant contribution on climate change, and as such, their role, and responsibilities in addressing the issue should be recognized in the final video. All three concepts provide ideas of individual climate actions. While this is appreciated, the suggestions are generally deemed as generic and already known, or difficult to implement. As such, more novel ideas should be introduced, and attention should be paid to provide a variety of actionable ideas to align with people's circumstances (e.g., parents, rural residents). Finally, while the provision of ideas suggests that climate action is needed, the concepts do not properly explain how small individual actions can contribute to making a difference towards climate change. The relationship between energy efficiency and climate change also lacks some clarity.

The following provide feedback specific to each of the three concepts.

Concept A (Outdo You)

Through the doubling effect used, Concept A (Outdo You) clearly conveys the idea of 'taking the extra step' towards climate change. Moreover, it is the concept that most clearly communicates that actions taken by both individuals and small businesses are desired when looking to address the issue of climate change. That said, it fails to effectively capture attention and engage participants and offers a weak call-to-action due to proposed actions being seen as outdated or impractical. While the tone is positive and the creative approach is viewed as conservative and aligned with what is expected of a government ad, opinions are mixed with

regards to the usage of humour given the seriousness of the topic. In addition, some believe that it is negatively pressuring people to do more by discounting actions already taken.

Concept B (New Normal)

Despite its overall graphic appeal, positive tone and clear messaging, Concept B (New Normal) appears focused on small business actions with the help of government subsidies, and therefore is seen as lacking relevance to the general public. While participants understand the intent of the ad is to encourage small, pragmatic changes towards becoming more energy efficient, the relationship between energy efficiency and climate change is not always clearly demonstrated in the examples shown and the overall the call-to-action is seen as relatively weak.

There is a general preference for the alternative script for this concept. While seen as somewhat vague, participants appreciated the acknowledgement of government's role and responsibility in addressing climate change, and found the alternative text offered a more specific call-to-action when it comes to encouraging people to find out more information.

Concept C (Childhood Champs)

Overall, participants felt the ad clearly conveyed the concept of taking small climate action now to benefit future generations; however, the negative tone underling the concept (Childhood Champs) poses a risk. While the focus being on children is seen as attention getting to some, its competitive and shameful tone is felt to be misaligned with the idea that climate change requires a joint effort. As such, despite this concept being preferred among French-speaking participants, this is the concept that poses the greatest risk.

Preferred Concept

Of the three concepts evaluated, all seemed to have room for improvement, noting the need for a more compelling argument and having a weak call-to-action. Across regions and audience segments, opinions are generally mixed as to which concept is most likely to make people reflect on their influence on climate change; the one that is most effective at communicating that taking on climate actions together can help fight climate change; and the one that is most likely to encourage them to visit the website for more information on climate actions (understanding that the final concept would include a URL). While French-speaking participants voice a general preference for Concept C (Childhood Champs), English-speaking participants lean towards Concept A (Outdo You) or Concept B (New Normal). Either Concept A (Outdo You) or Concept B (New Normal) should be further developed, with some modifications. By contrast, Concept C (Childhood Champs) should be discarded as it poses a risk due to its tone.

Overall, however, the feedback obtained allowed to identify useful aspects for the development of the final ads.

Quantitative: Target Population

The Statement of Work identifies that the target population of the research includes individual Canadians that fall on the spectrum of “supporters” (Committed and Supportive groups) and “allies” (Ambivalent and Indifferent groups). As well, those who tend to oppose climate action (Resistant group) were included in the research for comparison purposes with the target population. These groupings were derived via the Program of Applied Research on Climate Action (PARCA) segmentation that found an individual’s likelihood of pursuing pro-climate behaviour is more aligned with beliefs and perceptions than other more traditional demographics.

Quantitative: Methodology Summary

A pre-campaign online survey of the Canadian general public was undertaken from October 6 to 18 2023, while a post-campaign online survey was undertaken from February 12 to 19, 2024. The pre-wave survey required a mean average of approximately 8.8 minutes to administer (combined English and French), while the post-wave survey required a mean average of approximately 12.5 minutes to administer (combined English and French). The post-wave had a median average length of 10.2 minutes.

The derived tabulation for the Completed Survey Rate among Panelists Known to Have Accessed the Survey was 48.1% for the pre-wave, and 54.9% for the post-campaign wave. There was a total of 2,002 usable surveys completed in the pre-wave, and 2,000 usable surveys completed in the post-wave.

Quantitative: Research Usage

As articulated in the Statement of Work, the proposed research activity entailed pre- and post-advertising campaign evaluations, exploring the impact of advertising on public knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. This evaluation took the form of measuring (and comparing) awareness of the subject matter with the audiences in question.

Contract Value

The study overall entailed an expenditure of \$97,824.10, including tax.

Consent

Narrative Research offers this written consent allowing the Librarian and Archivist of Canada to post this report, in both official languages.

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I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Narrative Research that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity and 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 leader.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter MacIntosh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent upward stroke at the end.

Peter MacIntosh
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March 28, 2024