



Executive Summary

Testing of Bilingual Health Warning Notices for Tobacco Industry Print Advertising

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This summary presents the findings of qualitative research to test proposed bilingual health warning notices. The overall objective of these groups was to evaluate the proposed bilingual warning notices that would be placed on print tobacco advertising. Specifically, the groups evaluated three components: colour, layout, and size. To meet these objectives, Decima conducted six focus groups in three cities between October 15 and 17, 2007. Focus groups were conducted in:

- Toronto (English sessions)
- Ottawa (Bilingual sessions), and
- Montreal (French sessions).

Two sessions were held in each city. One session was held with smokers and the other one with non-smokers in each location.

The key findings from this research are presented below.

- **Colour contrast between the warning and the ad is the prime driver of ensuring that the warnings get peoples' attention.** Discussions revealed that participants indicated that colour contrast was the most prevalent reason why certain warnings were more noticeable than others. As a result, people tended to differentiate in their preferences between black and white ads and colour ads. Red warning notices (with black and white ads) and black warning notices (with colour ads) were the colours that were most likely to accomplish this contrast in the testing.
- **An almost equally important driver was an emotional sense of urgency or danger with the warning, most often conveyed by the colour red.** Again, a red warning notice (with black and white ads) and a black warning (with colour ads) were the colours that were most likely to accomplish this in the testing. Red was seen as

suggestive of danger, urgency, and risk. Black was seen as being suggestive of death or something that was serious.

The layout of the warning notices was tested in two different ways. The first way was presented as top and bottom (or banner style) and the second way was tested as a side by side.

- **While there was no clear consensus overall, in general, the majority preferred the side by side approach to the headline.** English participants tended to prefer the top/bottom version of the headline, feeling that the warning message was more clearly conveyed in that format. French participants clearly preferred the side by side approach, feeling it did a better job of conveying the message. Most bilingual participants preferred the side by side approach, and were less accepting of the top/bottom approach. This is primarily because when the French is on “the bottom”, it was perceived as the French language being secondary to English. As a result, French and bilingual participants were more consistently supportive of the side by side approach.
- **It is worth noting that the headline “warning text” that had individual words or short phrases tended to work better in the side by side format, whereas sentences tended to work better in the top/bottom format.** This was true in all three cities. Having said that, if the sentence were to be longer than one line, the side by side approach worked better. While it wasn’t the mandate of this project to discuss the headlines themselves, it was clear that certain types of headlines worked better with certain layouts.
- **Warning layout preferences tend not to change from the larger to the smaller ads.** For a handful of people, layout preferences shifted (not in a consistent way), but for the vast majority, they did not change.

- **However, in smaller ads, irrespective of format and colour, the warnings tend to be less noticeable relative to the advertisement,** even though the proportions were the same between the warning and the ad in the small and the larger ads. This view pervaded groups in all three cities. The side by side warnings were slightly more noticeable, in part because there was more colour space between words and the side of the ad, which helped draw attention in the smaller ads.

The layout and the positioning of the www.gosmokefree.ca / www.vivezsansfumee.ca website and Health Canada name in the warning notices were tested in all groups.

- **There was a preference for the English website and Health Canada name to be put together, and the French website and Santé Canada name to be put together underneath the warning.** It was seen as cleaner, and was more attractive because the slashes “/” were visually distracting in the other format. This was consistent among most participants.
- **There was a sense that the Health Canada name and website were not very noticeable in the warnings, particularly the smaller warnings.** Some suggested that giving more profile to the name and website (through different fonts, different colours, or other methods) would be helpful. This finding was consistent among all participants.

For further information about POR 154-07, conducted by Decima Research, please contact por-rop@hc-sc.gc.ca.