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both phase I (qualitative) and phase II
(quantitative) of the research

2017-2018 Education and Skills Youth Campaign Research and Evaluation (Phase I: Creative Testing)

Executive Summary

Prepared by:
Corporate Research Associates Inc.

Prepared for:
Employment and Social Development Canada

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

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Executive Summary

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Background and Objectives

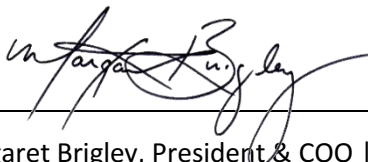
To inform the final development of a youth advertising campaign aimed at increasing awareness and uptake of its youth-related programs and services, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) commissioned a series of 12 *Netfocus* groups (simultaneous online and telephone discussions in real-time) with Canadian youth 18 to 24 years old (including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences) and key influencers (including parents, caregivers, teachers, youth group leaders or coaches, and high school career counselors). Of those, eight groups were conducted in English with participants from various locations across Canada, while four groups were conducted in French with Quebec residents. Group discussions were conducted from August 22nd to 28th, 2017. Each focus group lasted approximately two hours and a \$75 token of appreciation was provided to youth participants, while key influencers received \$100 in appreciation for their time, as per standard market research practice. A total of 83 participants took part across groups.

The research assessed overall reactions to three advertising concepts being considered in terms of message clarity and comprehension, the creative's impact in retaining attention, and the overall relevance to the target audiences. 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 statistical confidence. The total contracted value of the research was \$112,169.45 (taxes included) for both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the research combined. This report presents the findings from the qualitative research only.

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: August 31, 2017



Key Findings

Findings from the *ESDC Education and Skills Youth Campaign Research and Evaluation (Creative Testing)* suggest that the 'Our Way' campaign should be further developed with some modifications. The positive, upbeat and empowering tone of the concept holds strong appeal, particularly among English-speaking participants and when looking at all of the campaign components together, the message of young people taking control of their future with the government assisting in the process is compelling with the target audience. That being said, the video on its own, and to a lesser extent, the social media post, do not clearly convey the campaign message at a glance.

At the same time, visuals of young adults that look more like they are in their twenties, and the idea that young people have determined that 'old ways' are not working for them, imply an older audience leaving high school students and recent graduates feeling excluded from the campaign. This issue could easily be addressed by featuring a broader age range of individuals in the campaign visuals, and using in the video action shots that are more relevant to them personally. This may include visuals of groups of peers interacting, usage of technology such as mobile phones or tablets, feature common activities like biking or travelling, and set the scenes in familiar settings such as school or workplace. This approach should also reinforce the message communicated by the narrative by visually indicating that the reference to 'trace your path' relates to education and employment. These modifications would enhance the concept's appeal and relevance among the French-speaking residents, thus making this concept the best approach to reach audiences across languages.

In terms of having a broad appeal, the 'Our Way' campaign was best at showing Canada's ethnic and gender diversity. That being said, consideration should be given to showing ethnically diverse groups of people rather than focusing on any individual culture. At the same time, adjusting the sequence of the presentation of people featured in the video would alleviate any discomfort that exists with focusing on more evident cultural signs. The use of live actors rather than animation will also allow for a more realistic representation of ethnic and age diversity, in addition to making the ads more compelling.

In terms of the other two campaigns, the 'Mute the Noise' idea was also well received, particularly among French-speaking participants. Despite the campaign being liked, it requires more extensive creative edits to ensure appeal and relevance to the broader target audience. On a positive note, the concepts' realistic account of young people's questioning and anxiety, as well as the video's clear messaging strongly resonated with the target audience. That said, the stressful tone of the video, the negative stereotypical portrayal of a young 'flustered' girl, and the fact that it is perceived to target primarily high school students are seen as important challenges to overcome. While expanding the scenarios outside of the school system may prove effective in widening the target audience, care should be taken in how youth react to adults so as to avoid portraying them as disrespectful or rude. Another issue with the campaign is the inability of the website to stand on its own without the video. Indeed, visuals included on the website lacked context to be fully appreciated and meaningful.

Findings clearly demonstrate that the 'Your Move' concept should not be further developed. This concept holds minimal appeal and is most relevant to a niche audience of young people who play video



games. At the same time, the campaign's graphic appeal of the three scenarios presented was deemed most appealing to youth in elementary or junior high school. Though the message is clearly communicated by the campaign, the gaming aspect overshadows it, thus reducing its effectiveness. In terms of the website search function, findings suggest that the 'Google-style' approach is well liked for its flexibility, though it lacks clear direction to begin the search and its appeal is highly dependent on the quality of the algorithm. Likewise, reactions were positive towards the 'drop-down' menu approach as an easy way to find out about the website content, despite not providing as much flexibility as the Google-type search engine. Given these findings, it is recommended that the 'drop-down menu' search engine be implemented, inclusive of a comprehensive list of options. The 'step-by-step' search function held minimal appeal.

Young people are open to the idea of the government using Internet tools on the website to personalize the user experience, notably Internet cookies. They are also agreeable to sharing personal information on the website, as long as it is pertinent to personalizing the experience. Finally, young adults and influencers are comfortable with being re-directed to third-party website from the government website to access programs and benefits, as long as a warning is posted.

Finally, the five terms that were briefly discussed, namely programs, resources, information, services, and tools, were considered similar in nature, despite each having a unique focus.

In conclusion, research shows that both youth and key influencers strongly endorse the concept of a youth targeted campaign and consider the presented concepts to be a notable improvement over the current website applications. While two of the three concepts offer notable potential, findings suggest the 'Our Way' Concept is most easily adaptable to effectively meet youth's needs. That said, results show that care must be taken to ensure any search engine effectively communicates what the website includes in a clear, concise, yet comprehensive manner. Further, given that the needs and expectations are vastly different for those in or graduating from high school, those in post-secondary, and those entering the workforce, any concept must include messaging and scenarios that are mindful of the various needs and realities of young people, while still being relevant and compelling.

