



Health Canada Santé Canada

Break It Off: **Tobacco Cessation** **Creative Concept Testing**

Executive Summary

Prepared for Health Canada

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a series of focus groups conducted by Phoenix SPI on behalf of Health Canada. The research was conducted with young adult smokers July 24 through 26, 2018.

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HC.cpab.por-rop.dgcap.SC@canada.ca

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1 Executive Summary

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) was commissioned by Health Canada to conduct qualitative research to test creative concepts for the *Break It Off / Je te laisse* campaign.¹ A set of six in-person focus groups was conducted with young adult smokers in three locations: St. John's (July 24th, 2018), Montreal (July 25th), and Saskatoon (July 26th). The groups in St. John's and Saskatoon were conducted in English and the groups in Montreal were conducted in French. The target audience was smokers, aged 20 to 24. One group in each city was conducted with "occasional" smokers² and the other with "daily" smokers. More details about the methodology can be found in the Methodology section in the Introduction.

This research was qualitative in nature, not quantitative. As such, the results provide an indication of participants' views about the issues explored, but they cannot be generalized to the full population of members of the targeted audience segments.

1.1 Key Findings

Font treatments and taglines

Overall impressions of both concepts (*Be Done with Smoking / Fumer, c'est fini* and *Ditch Smoking / Adieu la cigarette*) tended to elicit lukewarm reactions ranging from neutral to mildly positive.

The message in *Be Done with Smoking* was routinely described as simple, straightforward, sober, and when compared with *Ditch smoking*, some characterized it as more age-appropriate. At the same time, the message was also sometimes described as cliché or slogan-like, with nothing new, provocative or particularly meaningful conveyed. Reaction to the design elements was more mixed. Some reacted positively to such features as the burgundy colour, the use of a crushed cigarette to depict the letter 'l', the font for the expression 'Be done with smoking' (most preferring Font B³, which some referred to as the more unconventional font), and the circle which reminded some of a stop sign, sticker, or a seal of approval. By contrast, many reacted neutrally or critically, describing the design in general as boring or bland, with nothing eye-catching or attractive in it. Some participants in Montreal said the burgundy colour and/or the burgundy dot reminded them of the logo and taste tags of the provincial liquor distributor. The most frequent suggestion for improving this concept was to use more vibrant colours.

The design features of *Ditch Smoking* were routinely described as attention-grabbing. These included what was referred to as the red graffiti or spray paint motif and the two different font types and colours. Many also liked the use of a crushed cigarette to depict the letter 'l'. Conversely, some described the design approach as 'juvenile' and felt it was targeted to a younger audience. Reaction to the message was more mixed. Some liked it, characterizing it as clear, definitive, dramatic, and categorical. Others, however, were more neutral or critical. Neutral reactions were based on the impression that the message is too slogan-like and contains nothing catchy or memorable and that it makes quitting sound

¹ The materials tested can be found in the Detailed Findings and in the Appendix.

² Smokers who have smoked a cigarette in the last 30 days, but who do not smoke cigarettes every day.

³ Participants were shown two different fonts for each tagline and asked which one they preferred. The image on the left uses Font A and the image on the right uses Font B. Graphics are presented in the Detailed Findings, as well as in the Appendix.

easy. Critical reactions were based on the impression that the expression 'Ditch smoking' targets a younger audience. This critical reaction to the message in 'Ditch smoking' applied only to the English version.

Social media

Generally-speaking, social media graphics incorporating the *Ditch Smoking* concept elicited more positive feedback than those incorporating the *Be Done with Smoking* concept. This included use of what was described as 'vibrant', 'bold', 'captivating' colours, more age-appropriate text, and better models. While the social media focus used in the *Be Done with Smoking* concept was described as relevant and easy to relate to, there was a widespread sense that the message targets a younger audience. And while the models were routinely described as age-appropriate, they were often characterized as looking sad or depressed. Examples of social media graphics elicited a range of reactions, but the one most likely to elicit positive reactions was *I Need Space to Breathe* and the one most likely to elicit critical feedback was *I crept tobacco on Facebook and what I found didn't look good*.

Overall reaction to the relationship theme as embodied in the social media graphics was also mixed. While most understood the relationship theme, many did not. Moreover, even when it was understood, its effectiveness in motivating people to think about quitting smoking was usually described as limited. By way of explanation, participants suggested that use of the relationship theme establishes no meaningful connection to themselves and their lives/lifestyles. In order to have an impact, campaign messaging must make them reflect on how their life will be impacted by quitting smoking. It was suggested that none of the social media graphic treatments focuses on the life changing consequences of quitting (e.g. feeling better/healthier, saving money). The most commonly made suggestion to improve the treatments in both concepts was to establish a more personal link to the message by suggesting why someone should quit smoking and how their life will change positively when they stop smoking.

Backdrop banners

The banner incorporating the *Ditch Smoking* concept was more likely to be described as attention-grabbing than the one incorporating the *Be Done with Smoking* concept. This was mainly because of its vibrant colours and font treatments. Despite the attention-grabbing features in either treatment, neither was viewed as likely to motivate participants to stop at the booth. The main reason given was that the banners are too generic and neither one contains a meaningful message that would draw them in or make them reflect. This was especially the case for the banner incorporating the *Be Done with Smoking* concept. It was described by some as having a limited connection to smoking (i.e. the most prominent feature, the photo, was felt to lack meaning and the tagline which does connect with smoking was considered too small).

Alternative font treatment and taglines

Reaction to the alternative font treatment (i.e. 'Split up with smoking') was mixed, but like the other two treatments, tended to be divided between neutral and positive impressions. The element in this treatment most likely to elicit positive reaction was the depiction of a broken cigarette as part of the letter 'K' in the expression 'Break It Off'. Indeed, many participants in St. John's and Saskatoon felt that this design feature should replace the depiction of a crushed cigarette used in the earlier versions. It was suggested that a broken cigarette works better than a crushed cigarette because it suggests that the cigarette was

destroyed rather than smoked. On the other hand, a few felt that it looked like a broken pencil. The French version of this tagline elicited similar enthusiasm for the depiction of a broken cigarette as part of the letter 'L' in the expression 'Je te Laisse'.

Additional taglines most likely to be preferred by English-speaking participants were those emphasizing freedom from cigarettes (i.e. 'Free Yourself From Smoking') being better off smoke-free (i.e. 'You're Better Off Smoke Free') and self-worth (i.e. 'You're Better Than Smoking'). The tagline most likely to be preferred by French-speaking participants was the one emphasizing self-worth (i.e. 'Je vaudrais plus qu'une cigarette').

Promotional items

Participants were shown examples of three promotional items that could be distributed at campaign-related events and asked about their usefulness and appropriateness. They included a stress ball, breath mints, and a card holder that fastens to the back of a mobile phone or device. Participants in all groups routinely described these items as both appropriate and useful, primarily as reminders of their efforts to quit smoking and ways to spread awareness of the campaign. The stress ball and mints were also described as helpful supports/distractions when trying to quit smoking – the ball by helping with stress relief and the mints by being a substitute for cigarettes. Participants suggested a host of additional promotional items, including fidget toys/devices, apps to help track their smoking cessation progress, wrist bands, pins, water bottles, stickers, key chains, and pens.

New website design

Most participants reacted positively to the proposed redesign of the landing page of the *Break It Off* campaign website, regardless of which of two alternative approaches they were shown first (i.e. 'Be Done with Smoking' or 'Ditch Smoking'). The few who were not positive were more likely to be neutral than negative. The landing page was often described as appearing to be welcoming, user-friendly/well organized, comprehensive, and appealing in terms of overall look, spacing, and colour schemes. The menus were described as clear and participants had no difficulty identifying sections they thought would contain useful information for them personally. Examples included 'Tell us why you're here', 'Share your quitting experience', 'Join us at an event', 'Call a quit coach', 'After you quit', 'Cost calculator', 'Some reasons for quitting', 'Start saving your money', 'Make a quit plan', and 'I want to help someone quit'.

Participants were divided when asked which version they preferred, with slightly more identifying the 'Ditch Smoking' version. Those who preferred this version described it as more attractive than the other version. In explaining why, they described it as 'more motivational', 'more fun-looking', 'more modern-looking' (i.e. like Instagram, BuzzFeed, or Snapchat), and 'more adapted to their age group', with some suggesting that it looks like it was designed by young people. By contrast, those who preferred the 'Be Done with Smoking' version described it as more sober, less distracting, and easier on the eyes/calmer, with some suggesting that the colour scheme is more appropriate to a smoking cessation website. Some also specified that they did not like the red 'swatches' used in the 'Ditch Smoking' version because it looks like dripping blood.

1.2 Conclusions and Implications

No clear winner emerged among the two concepts participants reviewed, and reactions to each tended to be similar, ranging from neutral to mildly positive. While positive impressions

of *Be Done with Smoking* were based more on the message than design elements, positive impressions of *Ditch Smoking* were based more on design elements than on the message. Overall reaction to the relationship theme used into both approaches was mixed. While most understood the play on the relationship theme, at least a few participants in every group did not. Moreover, even when it was understood, its effectiveness in motivating people to think about quitting smoking was usually described as limited.

Despite differences of opinion and overall lukewarm reactions to materials, participant feedback provides direction in terms of helping ensure that the *Break It Off* campaign continues to resonate with members of the target audience. While it is clear that there is no 'one size fits all' approach that will resonate with members of the target audience, feedback suggests that a new creative concept could be developed using preferred elements from the *Be done with smoking* and *Ditch smoking* concepts. Specifically, the following points should guide the development of creative concepts for the *Break It Off* campaign:

- Vibrant visuals clearly resonate with young adults and are crucial to ensuring the appeal of campaign-related materials. At the same time, young adults have a sense of sobriety and want to be taken seriously. As a result, a balance should be struck to ensure that design elements are appealing without detracting from the seriousness of the message or missing the mark by appealing to a younger audience.
- Messaging embodying the relationship theme should facilitate an immediate personal connection to the message that is consequential in order to be relevant (e.g. how my life will change positively when I quit smoking). Messaging that focuses exclusively on the relationship theme for the sake of the theme itself runs the risk of being perceived as clever or interesting rather than motivational.
- Use of age-appropriate models is important but not sufficient to ensuring effective messaging. While it is important that members of the target audience perceive models used in campaign materials as age-appropriate, other features are also important to effective messaging (i.e. non-stereotypical poses and facial expressions, meaningful backgrounds in banners and social media graphics, clear connections to smoking, and credible/believable text).
- Approaches that are light hearted or even humorous resonate with participants and are considered appropriate, but not if they detract from the seriousness of the topic. As a result, it is important that messaging not be perceived as silly, laughable, or lacking in credibility.
- Changes to the landing page of the *Break It Off* campaign website should focus on adjustments designed to achieve a balance between attractiveness/appeal and sobriety/seriousness. Specifically, the focus should be on making the site attractive and appealing without detracting from its seriousness as a smoking cessation resource or its appropriateness for the age group in question. In this sense, feedback on the website echoed feedback on other campaign-related materials: while visual elements (e.g. colour schemes, images) clearly resonate with young adults, they also want to be taken seriously.

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Alethea Woods
President
Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.