

Focus Groups on Health Canada's Healthy Eating Visual Look and Feel for Children and Teens (HCPOR-20-11)

Executive Summary

Prepared for Health Canada

Prepared by Narrative Research
PSPC Contract Number: HT372-203672/001/CY
Contracted Value: \$101,304.50
Contract Date: November 26, 2020
Delivery Date: January 2021
POR number: 064-20

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Background and Research Methodology

Health Canada is developing sub-brands of its recently-released Canada's Food Guide (CFG), specifically aimed at supporting awareness, knowledge and use of the CFG and long-lasting healthy eating habits among two priority populations, namely children (8-12 years) and teens (13-18 years). These distinct branding efforts, built on the existing CFG look and feel, are intended to appeal to children and teens directly, promoting CFG in a youth-friendly manner, and will be applied in a series of print, digital and collateral pieces.

The main objective of this research was to inform the creative development of the two distinct sub-brands by leveraging successful and recognizable components of the CFG brand, while at the same time, ensuring that the look and feel of any new activities, tools and resources are relevant and relatable to these younger target audiences.

Specific research objectives related to the sub-brand development included:

- To gather feedback on the expanded brand concepts, including visuals, and identifiers;
- To explore overall reactions to the sample creatives (graphics, images, worksheets/factsheets);
- To assess the general effectiveness of the graphics/images used;
- To test whether the creative approach/content is deemed appropriate and relevant to each target audience;
- To determine if the creative approach and colours are attention-grabbing and engaging the target audience;
- To determine overall memorability and appeal; and
- To elicit suggestions for potential changes to ensure creatives engage and resonate with the target audiences.

To achieve these objectives, a qualitative research approach was undertaken. This entailed a total of 24 online focus groups conducted on December 16-17, 2020 and January 5-7, 2021 across six locations (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, British Columbia, and North (including territories and northern areas of provinces)). In each location, one focus group was conducted with each of the following four audiences: children 8-10 years old; children 11 or 12 years old; teenagers 13-15 years old; and teenagers 16-18 years old. Each group included a mix of ages (within range), gender, household income, household



situation and locations (mix of urban, rural and remote areas). Where possible, a mix of cultural or ethnic background was included.

Group discussions were held in English with the exception of those in Quebec which were conducted in French. Sessions with children aged 8-12 lasted one hour and participants were each provided an incentive of \$75, while sessions with teenagers 13-18 years old lasted 90 minutes, with an incentive of \$100 being provided. Across all groups, a total of 192 individuals were recruited and 155 participated. More specifically, participation totalled 60 children 8-12 years old and 95 teenagers 13-18 years old. One additional participant was incentivized as a standby respondent who did not take part in the session.

All participants were recruited per the recruitment specifications for the Government of Canada. 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 research is intended to be directional only. Results cannot be attributed to the overall population under study, with any degree of confidence.

Political Neutrality Certification

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: January 26, 2021

Key Findings and Conclusions

The following summarizes the key findings and conclusions from the *Focus Groups on Health Canada's Healthy Eating Visual Look and Feel for Children and Teens* (POR-064-20) research study.

Healthy Foods and Beverages

For both children and teenagers, parents and school are important sources to help inform nutritional choices. Teenagers also rely on other significant adults' opinions, such as coaches or other family members. In addition, many teenagers (and a few children) base their choices of healthy foods and drink on the product labels (including the nutritional facts table and the list of ingredients), promotional materials, social media, as well as their own investigations online.



Familiarity with Canada's food guide varies, and increases with age. Children 8 to 10 years old exhibit limited awareness of the guide, while for the most part, older children and teenagers report having heard of the guide as part of the school curriculum. The food guide is, however, less frequently used outside of the school setting to reference nutritional choices. That said, many teenagers mentioned that their current food and drink choices are influenced, either consciously or not, by food guide concepts they have learned in the past.

Brand Concepts for Children

Of the two brand concepts presented to children, Approach 1 was slightly preferred over Approach 2 because of the strong visual appeal of its food and drink imagery, inclusion of a real person, and its mix of real imagery and animation/drawings. Showing a slightly older child and the addition of bolder, brighter colours would broaden this concept's reach.

The Approach 1 concept's cheerful and playful design was appealing to children, as was the use of a variety of fruits and vegetables. The varied water bottle designs/ visuals and the completeness of their colour design held particular appeal, while reinforcing and encouraging water consumption. The mixture of real images and animation/drawings was well liked by most, and contributed to the concept effectively grabbing attention. While the faces on the fruits were considered cute and attractive, some felt they were childish and appealed to a younger audience. Showing a real boy in the poster created personal relevance, especially for the younger cohort, while older children felt the boy reflected someone younger than themselves.

Approach 2 was well liked for its sketching design and vibrant colours, although its sporadic and unstructured use of colour received a mixed reaction. While the use of both real imagery and drawings was criticized by some, this concept held a broader age reach. Many children enjoyed seeing the drawings of people, fruits and vegetables, although some questioned why the drawings were left uncoloured. Across locations, some children preferred to see cartoon drawings of people, since a drawing could be anyone. Others felt the concept would be more effective if it showed real people.

Of the two different colour schemes proposed, children voiced a preference for the brighter, bolder colours included in Approach 2. These colours were closely associated with freshness, happiness and healthy foods, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables. By contrast, the more earthy, darker tones of Approach 1 were reminiscent of spoiling or unappealing food, or unhealthy options.

Overall, opinions were mixed when considering the two different fonts, although the younger cohort was more likely to prefer the Mikado type for its bolder design, which made it easier for them to read.

When considering the two identifier options, children generally voiced preference for the green / multi-colour version for its varied colour presentation and bold colour contrast, making it easier to read the text. Having the word 'kids' printed in yellow over a dark background created an impact, and more effectively drew attention to the fact that the food guide was for children.



Brand Concepts for Teenagers

Of the two brand concepts presented, Concept B was preferred and deemed more age appropriate across teenagers regardless of age, although more strongly by those in the 13-15 years old cohort. The images featuring cooked dishes were attractive and inspirational to some who liked to cook, although a few felt intimidated by the appearance of complexity in cooking preparation. The concept helped to convey that healthy eating should be looked at in a more holistic and broader approach, rather than focused on single food items. In addition, this concept was felt to introduce the notion that ethnic or culturally different foods are in some instances considered healthy. Images of simpler dishes that appeal to teenagers (such as tacos and burgers) could be useful in addressing feelings of intimidation.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of Concept B was that it was perceived as being a little bland, in part due to its more muted colours. The colour palette was viewed as lacking cohesion, and the purple used for the identifier was considered as not in tone with the other colours chosen for Concept B. Further, the colour scheme used for the identifier did not appeal to teenagers, who found that the purple, teal and yellow were not visually pleasing together and lacked proper contrast to read the content.

By contrast, Concept A elicited mixed reactions. The bright and cohesive colour scheme appealed to teenagers on its own and made the concept stand out enough to be noticed. That being said, when combined with the simple abstract graphics (solid colour shapes and backgrounds), it lacked relevance and appeal to teenagers and suggested that the target audience was primarily elementary-school children and pre-teens. This impression was further reinforced by the illustration of single food items or simple dishes that are more reminiscent of the basic healthy food concepts learned in elementary school. Showing single food items that looked unrealistic (e.g., the avocado and egg) was also considered unnatural and unappetizing, as well as not effectively demonstrating how healthy food choices should be considered in the context of a meal or dish that combines food items, rather than based on each food item or food type individually. To some, however, showing simple foods or dishes helped convey the message that eating healthy is easily achievable.

The Concept A identifier that included a single background colour with white lettering for the words “Canada’s Food Guide” and either teal or yellow for the word “teens” was preferred for being visually pleasing while placing the focus on the word “teens”. By contrast, the option that included all three colours – purple, yellow and teal) was least liked for being too visually busy.

Mixed opinions were expressed by teenagers regarding the font options, with only a slight preference for the ease of reading offered by the Neue Haas Grotesk font. Indeed, those who preferred this font felt that the thinner letters that are closer together made the font look more refined, serious and less ‘aggressive’ than the alternative font. By contrast, those who liked the Graphik Wide font found that its bold and bulky style and the spacing between the letters made it stand out and be easier to read.