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National Defence Advertising Pre-Testing 2021 – Women’s Campaign

Department of National Defence

Executive Summary

April 2021

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This public opinion research report presents the results of 8 online focus groups conducted by Quorus Consulting Group on behalf of the Department of National Defence. The sessions were from March 8th to March 11th, 2021 with women from two segments of the general population, women 18 to 24 years old, and women 25 to 34 years old. One online focus group with each of these segments was held with participants located in the following cities and surrounding areas: Toronto, Moncton, Calgary and Montreal.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Mise à l'essai des campagnes publicitaires de 2021 de la Défense nationale – Campagne ciblant les femmes

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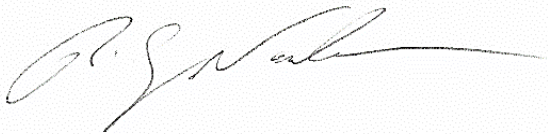


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I hereby certify as Senior Officer of Quorus Consulting Group Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the [Policy on Communications and Federal Identity](#) and the [Directive on the Management of Communications - Appendix C](#).

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:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Nadeau", is centered within a rectangular area that has a light gray, dotted background. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rick Nadeau, President
Quorus Consulting Group Inc.

Executive Summary

Background and Research Objectives

The Department of National Defence (DND) oversees a variety of advertising campaigns. One of these campaigns is the women's recruitment campaign, which is being developed to support a priority and commitment made by DND and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to increase the number of women in the CAF from 15% to 25% by 2026.

The Women's campaign is expected to launch in October 2021, and will include television, digital and social media tactics, print and out-of-home tactics. The key objective of this campaign is to raise a greater level of awareness among women between the ages of 18 and 34 about CAF employment opportunities, how the CAF is an employer of choice, how a career in the CAF can fit various lifestyles, while addressing key barriers. Moreover, it will aim to promote the challenge, purpose, empowerment, fulfillment and mastery involved in CAF careers, while addressing barriers related to freedom and flexibility.

DND commissioned Quorus to pre-test the campaign creatives to ensure they resonate well with the target audience. The advertising pre-testing explored how the primary target audience (Canadian women between the ages of 18 and 34 years of age) responded to the new creatives for the campaign.

Methodology

This report is based on eight online focus groups that Quorus completed with women from two segments of the general population in Canada, between March 8 and 11, 2021. Focus groups were composed of women 18 to 24 years old ("Gen Z/Job seekers"), and with women 25 to 34 years old ("Millennials/Job changers"). One online focus group with each of these segments was held with participants located in the following cities and surrounding areas: Toronto, Moncton, Calgary and Montreal. In total, 59 individuals participated in the focus groups. English sessions were held with participants living in different provinces across Canada except those living in Quebec. Two French sessions were held with individuals living in Quebec. More details can be found in the Methodology section of the report.

Research Results

There were a total of 3 advertising concepts to test, each with 2 different versions, for a total of 6 ads. These concepts were tested in a storyboard (photomatic) format. The concepts included a closer look into the lives of each of the CAF members featured, from each environment (Army, Navy and Air Force).

Reactions to Concept A – Army – Olga – Version 1

Overall, participants were fairly evenly divided regarding appreciation for this first concept. There was a somewhat higher acceptance among younger participants compared to older ones.

Among participants who liked it, the following was shared:

- Travelling is appealing – Many felt this was appealing since it is a way to see other places while working. Participants felt young women would be more interested in this type of benefit, and some young participants indeed showed interest in this aspect. Images liked included the polaroid pictures as well as the scenery in mountains, hiking, and the waterfall.
- Meeting new people is appealing – Participants felt this was an interesting and appealing point, just as the social aspect from any job would be seen as important.
- The Canadian Flag in uniform is patriotic - A few participants liked the fact that the Canadian flag was shown in the uniform of one of the characters in the video, since it gives a sense of patriotism.

Participants who disliked this version of the concept explained:

- Information on career choices was too general - Participants felt the information on the variety of jobs available at the CAF was too basic, whereas more information would be appreciated when considering looking for a new job.
- Flat tone of narrator – Many participants felt there was a lack of excitement and assertiveness in the tone of the narrator throughout the ad.
- Some content shows insecurity or uncertainty - There were sentences suggesting insecurity in the personality of the narrator, for example “I didn’t know anything about the military”, and the tone used when saying “I’ve done really good”.
- Benefits are not unique to the CAF - “Learning a lot” or “meeting new people” were seen as experiences that are not all that different from what could be experienced in other jobs. As such, the CAF does not come across as particularly unique.

The message perceived was that working at the CAF would offer the opportunity to travel; however, there was a lot of uncertainty of what the main message was other than to work at the CAF.

Opportunities for improvement mentioned by participants included:

- Add a website at the end to find out more about the jobs that CAF would be interested in filling;
- Make the ad more specific, showing what kind of experiences could be gained by travelling, or the places that would be visited.

Reactions to Concept A – Army – Olga – Version 2

This concept received a range of ratings, with a great concentration at the higher end of the scale (7-8). There was a somewhat higher acceptance in the younger groups compared to the older groups.

Among participants who liked it, reasons included:

- It is more specific – Participants were able to see some information for a career, including the types of professions that are being hired (i.e. the medical field).
- Lively tone – Participants perceived a more passionate tone in the voice of the narrator, making the ad more interesting and inspiring.

Participants who disliked this version of the concept explained:

- Some content shows uncertainty - “I never thought I would end up here” seemed to discredit the content of the ad and the main character.
- Concepts are not in a continuous storyline - Some participants felt there was no continuity in the story, and that it was not clear how the character got to where she is in the ad.
- Benefits are applicable to other jobs - “I like helping people” seemed to several participants a common feature of many jobs and did not distinguish the CAF.

In terms of a message, participants felt this version was also telling them about the opportunity of a professional experience in the CAF featuring travel and meeting new people, however with more specific information about the occupations women could have in the CAF, and that the travelling comes from deployments.

Some older participants felt both versions of the ad target young people since they would be looking to travel and meet new people. This version suggested the target audience was specifically individuals interested in medicine.

Opportunities for improvement mentioned by participants included:

- Reduce the passive approach for something more empowering that shows the success of the narrator (such as “breaking barriers”).
- Be more specific about how opportunities in the CAF (helping others, travelling, meeting new people) are different from other employers.

Reactions to Concept B – Air Force – Caylen – Version 1

This concept received a range of ratings, with many at the mid-high end of the scale (6-8). There was a somewhat higher acceptance from the older groups compared to the younger groups.

Among participants who liked it, the reasons included:

- Family-oriented angle - Showing images of the featured character as a mother and with her mother was important for several participants, particularly older ones with children at home.
- Motivating phrases – The phrase “don’t limit yourself” caught the attention of several participants, as it seemed encouraging and represented how women can do jobs in the CAF that are typically done by men (i.e. a mechanic).
- Continuous growth - A few participants took note of the reference to continuous growth, thinking it is an important message for entry levels, and mobility within the organization.

Participants who disliked this version of the concept explained:

- Too family oriented - Younger participants, who may not be thinking about having a family in the near future, found the ad too family oriented.
- Too many topics – Some participants felt that the ad was trying to convey too many benefits or messages at once, including a focus on family and the potential to not limit oneself.
- The female mechanic – Younger participants expressed that highlighting jobs typically done by men done by a woman is important, however a female mechanic is not that rare anymore.
- Stereotype of childcare - Some participants did not appreciate the stereotype of women having to take care of the family or the children and that a similar approach would not be used to recruit men.

Participants felt the ad was telling them about the opportunity to have a work-life balance in the CAF. Many felt the ad targets women with children, some felt it targeted women of colour or who are looking for a job typically associated as a job for men.

Opportunities for improvement mentioned by participants included:

- showing how the CAF creates that work-family balance other than being with a baby;
- adding more details of the featured character's job, so that there is a clearer picture of the opportunities available.

Reactions to Concept B – Air Force – Caylen – Version 2

This concept received a range of ratings, with most concentrated at the high-end of the scale (7-9).

Among participants who liked it, the reasons included:

- It has a better flow – Compared to Version 1, participants felt this version was more like a story as opposed to several messages put together without any flow.
- Language is positive - The words used do not sound like the narrator is putting herself down; they seem more upbeat and encouraging, making the message more appealing.
- Not too family focused - The importance of a family-work balance is displayed in a more subtle way, showing only the baby carriage instead of the baby.
- It is reassuring – Participants acknowledged that this ad does a better job of conveying how everyone can be a bit hesitant or reluctant, and that the CAF can help women who join be more confident.
- Empowering to see a female mechanic – Participants felt this ad portrayed a more encouraging and empowering message by showing a woman who can do a male-dominated job.
- Motivating phrases – The phrase “don't limit yourself” caught the attention of several participants, and the manner in which it is used in this ad encouraged them to be different in any way and be accepted.

Participants who disliked this version of the concept explained:

- Benefits are applicable to other jobs - Some felt the elements highlighted in the ad are not unique to the CAF, i.e., working and having a family, being a mechanic, or being a woman.
- Unclear language – Some participants said it was unclear if the mention of benefits referred to group benefits, but made them curious to know what those benefits may be.
- Women stereotypes - A few participants felt the stereotype of women portrayed as mothers was too strong and they did not appreciate it.

- Image of mother - For some participants, the role of the mother's advice in the decision to join the CAF was unclear, since they couldn't see any connection between the mother and the armed forces.

In terms of the main message, participants felt the ad was telling them that it is "ok" to be non-traditional and still succeed in the CAF. However, some felt making a woman who is a mechanic and has a family so "unique", gives viewers the wrong impression that the CAF is targeting people who don't fit anywhere else.

Opportunities for improvement mentioned by participants included:

- to use the mother as the influencer, but showing that she had some relationship with the military (if that is the case);
- to show other influencers, such as her own colleagues, who have been accepted for a long time at the CAF as women, who are a credible source, and who have also been successful in the CAF.

Reactions to Concept C – Navy – Meagan– Version 1

This concept received a range of ratings, with most concentrated at the mid-high end of the scale (5-8). There was a somewhat higher acceptance from the older groups compared to the younger groups.

Participants who liked this version liked the following elements:

- Good welcoming message – Participants had a feeling the ad started with a positive and inviting tone.
- Tone of voice – Some participants said there was a feeling of excitement about a career in the navy in the way the information was provided throughout the ad.
- Encouraging phrases – "You don't have to be an athlete to do this" was well received as it seems to demystify the notion of having to be physically fit to join the CAF.
- Team sport image used – The image of the main character playing field hockey conveyed a sense of camaraderie among colleagues and team building.
- Travelling is appealing – For this ad, participants felt the images about travelling and meeting people were inspiring. Both younger and older respondents agreed with this perspective.
- Diversity is important – "We have different strengths and weaknesses" was perceived by some participants as a way to promote diversity in the workplace.

Those who disliked this version pointed out the following elements:

- Too set up – Some participants felt the friendships portrayed in the images of the ad seemed artificial, particularly playing hockey.
- Discouraging phrases – “Helping people who can’t help themselves” was perceived as something that would discourage anyone who feels good about themselves to join the CAF.

The main message perceived by most participants is that jobs at the CAF are for everyone, however the ad seemed too general, and it was somewhat confusing for many as to what it was trying to convey. The ad is seen as targeting all women, not only members of the LGBTQ community.

Opportunities for improvement mentioned by participants included:

- highlighting the leadership role the featured character plays could help make the featured job more appealing;
- highlighting the career advancement or progression made by the main character to a leadership role would make it stand out compared to the other concepts.

Reactions to Concept C – Navy – Meagan – Version 2

This concept received a range of ratings on the scale from 1 to 10, with most concentrated towards the middle of the scale (5-7). There was a somewhat higher acceptance from the older groups compared to the younger groups.

Participants who liked this version pointed out the following elements:

- Diversity is important – Participants liked hearing that the CAF’s leadership is getting younger, since this seems to be conducive to diversity and inclusion.
- Shows a culture of inclusiveness - Most participants appreciated the effort to convey a culture of inclusiveness and diversity, portraying a progressive organization.
- Images of nice scenery - A few participants also liked the natural scenes mixed in the ad, including the images of the featured character with her partner and dog at the beach.

Participants who disliked this version of the concept explained:

- LGBTQ2+ term in spoken language – Participants felt the full term LGBTQ2+ sounded unnatural or rehearsed, making it too bold and uncomfortable. Some participants felt members of this group refer to themselves as their orientation/identity, or at least without the “plus”.

- Script and tone seemed unnatural – Several participants felt the words in the ad sounded forced and rehearsed, as if they were coming from someone straight.
- Issues are not addressed – Participants felt the ad did not address concerns about LGBTQ in the military, and to a few it seemed contradictory to what recent news headlines communicate about sexual abuse in the forces.

The message perceived is that women will be accepted in the CAF even if they are a member of the LGBTQ2+ community. All participants felt the message targets people in the LGBTQ2+ community.

Opportunities for improvement mentioned by participants included:

- be inclusive but not so direct about it, for example, not using LGBTQ2+, but rather just LGBTQ, or “lesbian” or “queer” or just make it visual and more subtle;
- the narrator’s job seems interesting, and it could be described in more detail;
- show how the organization has achieved change, where the cultural change can be seen.

Other Suggestions to Address the Campaign Objectives

All participants showed interest in knowing more about the career choices offered by the CAF, even when they did not consider the CAF as an employer. Several wished the ads could show a link where they can see the type of jobs available at the CAF or links to see other videos/testimonials.

Participants were also interested in learning more about the qualifications needed to join the CAF, which could also help demystify that jobs at the CAF are only for women with a specific profile or background. Finally, some would have liked to have seen the extent to which higher ranks and roles in management and leadership are accessible to women, for example, through the story of a woman who has reached higher ranks.

Qualitative Research Disclaimer

Qualitative research seeks to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively projectable measures. The purpose is not to generate “statistics” but to hear the full range of opinions on a topic, understand the language participants use, gauge degrees of passion and engagement and to leverage the power of the group to inspire ideas. Participants are encouraged to voice their opinions, irrespective of whether or not that view is shared by others.

Due to the sample size, the special recruitment methods used, and the study objectives themselves, it is clearly understood that the work under discussion is exploratory in nature. The findings are not, nor were they intended to be, projectable to a larger population.

Specifically, it is inappropriate to suggest or to infer that few (or many) real world users would behave in one way simply because few (or many) participants behaved in this way during the sessions. This kind of projection is strictly the prerogative of quantitative research.

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