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Advertising Concept Pretesting 2017-2018 National Campaign

Executive Summary

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Prepared for:
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Executive Summary

Corporate Research Associates undertook the **Advertising Concept Pretesting 2017-2018 National Campaign** on behalf of Parks Canada. The research aimed to assess citizen reactions to proposed creative concepts being considered for a new national campaign, to ensure the concepts resonate with the target audiences, motivate residents to consider visiting Canadian national parks and historic sites in 2018, and create national awareness and pride of Canada's natural and cultural heritage. A total of nine online focus groups (real-time, over the phone and online) were conducted across Canada on December 6th and 7th, 2017. Six to nine participants attended each group (68 total participants), with each discussion lasting approximately 90 minutes. Parks Canada plans to use the results of the study to revise the campaign's creative concepts before launching it across multiple media platforms in 2018.

Summary of Key Findings

Research findings show that none of the three concepts tested effectively address the campaign objectives, although the **Anthem** concept holds greater appeal and is best at conveying the message of building long-lasting memories at National Parks, as well as motivating visitation, eliciting pride in Canada's National Parks, and conveying a conservation message. That being said, none of the three concepts effectively communicates the conservation message, in part due to a lack of understanding of the need for conservation and the unclear link between visitation and conservation.

If one of the three concepts tested is further developed, consideration should be given to choose the **Anthem** concept, with some modifications. Although deemed a more predictable creative approach and one typically associated with government advertisements, this concept had the widest appeal and the strongest brand identification. Despite showing diversity, its focus on history and heritage created confusion about the focus on National Parks visitation and conservation. As such, showing more outdoors activities associated with National Parks (e.g., swimming, camping, hiking, canoeing) may help strengthen the concept's focus. At the same time, more visuals of people interacting with nature should be shown and the locations featured should be identified (either National Parks or provinces where they are located) to inform viewers and underscores Canada's diversity.

This concept was best at representing Canadian icons, such as its scenic beauty and grandeur, as well as featuring its people's values (respect, pride, inclusion). With this in mind, Parks Canada should ensure that the narrative remains humble and aligns with the visuals shown, and consider reducing its length for added clarity. The original and alternate taglines held appeal but were deemed problematic. Consideration should be given to changing the tagline to, "300,000 km² worth exploring. Celebrate our heritage".

While the originality of the creative approach of the **Time Lapse** concept was appreciated, the time-lapse special effect held mixed appeal. While the passing time effect related to memory building and implied that National Parks can be used year-round, it caused confusion when combined with a seasonal activity, such as kayaking. At the same time, the single focus of this concept – one activity, one family type, one location – did not properly convey the diversity participants readily associate with National Parks. At the same time, the choice of activity and setting did not strongly align with preconceived



perceptions of National Parks, thus weakening brand recognition. The credibility of the tagline was questioned, as both memories and nature are viewed as being in constant evolution over time. A suggestion was made to use another tagline, namely “When preserving them, memories last forever. Let’s help our National Parks stand the test of time” to better align with the creative and strengthen brand identification.

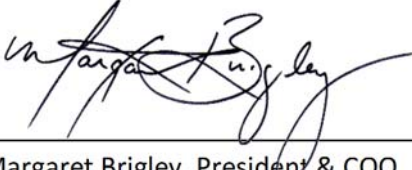
Finally, the **Technology** concept was deemed the least effective at meeting campaign objectives. Given that the creative approach and use of technology implied a narrow target audience (young adult), this concept should be avoided for the current campaign, despite its originality. The focus on technology overshadowed the focus on nature, creating message confusion. This was further exacerbated by the lack of clearly identifiable National Parks icons in the visuals (e.g., inland natural settings, impressive scenery). Altogether, these elements created message confusion, with some believing that this was an ad for communication devices (smartphone or app) or to promote specific outdoors activities. While some believed it suggested that National Parks are easily accessible, others felt it implied that you can learn about or experience National Parks online without having to visit in-person. Only a few felt the concept invited viewers to leave technology behind and go experience National Parks in-person. The use of the words ‘force’ or ‘power’ in the tagline was problematic, as it references extreme natural occurrences (e.g., hurricanes, heavy rain) which cannot be controlled, and do not need protection. Words such as, ‘grandeur’, ‘beauty’, or ‘wonder’ were deemed more appropriate.

The **Advertising Concept Pretesting Study** employed qualitative techniques which are used in marketing research as a means of developing insight and direction, rather than collecting quantitatively precise data or absolute measures. Due to the inherent biases in the technique, the data cannot be projected to any universe of individuals. Qualitative discussions are intended as moderator-directed, informal, non-threatening discussions with participants whose characteristics, habits and attitudes are considered relevant to the topic of discussion.

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Signed _____


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