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The Effectiveness of ‘Tak Nak’ Anti-smoking Campaign towards Young Adults (A Case Study in Bandar Sunway institution)

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Abstract

This paper investigates the effectiveness of anti-smoking campaign towards youth in Bandar Sunway institution. Based from the Ministry of Health, Malaysia and the national newspapers in the country reveal that the campaigns were not effective enough to curb smoking in Malaysia. In the past, from the year 2004 to 2014, the Malaysian Health Ministry were determined to curb the smoking issue that were arising in the country especially among the youths. “Tak Nak” smoking campaign was launched and broadcast on all forms of media in Malaysia. The campaigns are to educate and create an awareness to encourage people to quit smoking besides discourage non-smokers from starting to smoke. The main objective of this research is to investigate and study the concept, storyline and appeal of ‘Tak Nak Merokok’ advertisement campaigns from 2004 to 2014. Data from questionnaires and focus group discussions indicate that the advertisement contained fear and emotional appeal with good concept and storyline are more appealing and effective compared to the humour and informational rational appeal. This research could be a guideline for advertisers who want to come up with creative anti-smoking campaigns in Malaysia. In the future, the focus group can be expanded and more feedbacks and reviews could contribute to marketers and advertisers to determine the most suitable advertisements to tackle this smoking issue.

Keywords: Effectiveness, anti-smoking campaign, young adults, Bandar Sunway institution.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

About 10,000 Malaysians die each year in results of smoking (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013). According to ITC project (2012), smoking prevalence is still very high as 46.4% of all men smoke whereas 1.6% women smoke. “Smoking prevalence among young people continues to increase, which would lead to future deaths and disease due to smoking” (ITC Project, 2012). Even with the government’s effort in imposing very strict regulations and requirement for tobacco advertisements to control smoking in Malaysia, tobacco advertisements are marketed in other ways such as sponsorships and during events.

From 2004 to 2009, Ministry of Health heavily promoted “Tak Nak” campaign on most traditional media. The campaign’s aim is to create social norms which are less supportive of smoking. Hence, it is to encourage people to quit smoking and discourage non-smokers from

starting to smoke (ITC Project, 2012). According to the International Tobacco Control project (2012) which is also known as ITC project, the “Tak Nak” mass media campaign is highly successful in reaching smokers whereby 93% of the smokers were aware of the campaign.

Nevertheless, there is no direct results or evidence that proves smokers quit because of the advertising campaign. The campaign was evaluated in ITC project and it was discovered that smokers are aware of the campaigns and the message, but there isn't any action being taken by smokers to quit smoking because of the campaign (ITC Project, 2012). Thus, to create an impactful campaign strategy, the “Tak Nak” should be evaluated from tonality and the appealing aspect so that government could produce a more effective advertisement to tackle this smoking issue.

1.2 Statement of Problem

In 2012, Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) found out that 23.1% Malaysian aged 15 and above smokes and it continues to increase yearly. In the past, from the year 2004 to 2010, the Malaysian Health Ministry were determined to curb the smoking issue that were arising in the country, especially among the youths (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013). “Tak Nak” smoking campaign was launched and broadcast on all forms of media in Malaysia.

The advertising mediums include poster billboards, government premises, newspaper, magazine, television and radio (Tan, 2013). However, this campaign was evaluated throughout the years and was found to be efficient in creating awareness, but not effective enough to encourage people to quit smoking. About 43% of the smokers in Malaysia have seen or heard about the campaign and stated that they were influenced by the campaign. Hence, they would quit smoking, but there was no evidence or proof that stated whether those smokers really quit or not (Tan, 2013).

Smoking among youths is on the rise (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013). Conversely, female smokers are also on the rise. According to ITC project (2012), “beliefs related to smoking are important predictors of smoking behaviour among youths”. According to the Malaysia Ministry of Health, here are the facts why young adults smoke:

Why do young adult smoke?

a) Identity

Malaysian youth believes that most of the popular people smoke. Based on ITC Project (2012), “over 40% of Malaysian youth stated that smoking makes them look more mature, stylish and makes young men look more attractive” (ITC Project, 2012).

b) Environment

Based on ITC Project (2012), this applies to both male and female. Tobacco industries have targeted Asian women and associate women to glamour, wealth and liberation. All of these are the perceived benefit that makes smoking acceptable among women.

c) Influence of peers

The most common reason why teen smoke is because teens want to feel the sense of belonging therefore, they would smoke to fit in especially into a group that smokes.

d) Family factors

Youths who have witnessed their family members smoke may feel that smoking is acceptable. Since their family member is smoking, what is wrong with youth smoking?

It was reported that youth are also influenced by adults to smoke, especially if their parents smoke. Regular smokers had more parents that smoke compared to parents who do not smoke. The research stated that there was an association between the smoking habits of a father and the smoking habit of youth. Mothers who smoke were also likely to influence their children to smoke. The association is stronger for females when they see their mother smoke (Bindah & Othman, 2011).

e) Coping with stress

Youth's stress relates to issues like dating, getting into college and being socially accepted by peers (Teens Smoke to Relieve Stress, 2014).

The government spends a lot of budget on advertising to educate the public and hope to curb smoking issues in the country especially among youths. It is a major element for marketers to evaluate in terms of advertising effectiveness (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013).

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Identify the effectiveness of 'Tak Nak' anti-smoking campaign to young adult in Bandar Sunway institution.
2. Determine the suitable tone and appeal for the anti-smoking campaign.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate and study the concept, storyline and appeal of anti-smoking campaign to determine the effectiveness of the campaign.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Advertising Campaign

The advertising campaign is a detailed course of action designed to advertise the company, cause or product that employs an intentional and carefully coordinated series of marketing tools in order to reach the target audience (Tatum & Harris, 2014). The advertising campaign's purpose is to boost the awareness of a subject matter and generate demand (Tatum & Harris, 2014). The structure of the campaign would depend on the nature of the product, cause and the intended target audience.

The tools used in advertising campaign could vary. It would range from traditional media (television, radio, newspaper or magazine) and with the current trend; internet was also used to generate attention through an advertising campaign. Medium for electronic media could range from online advertisement banners or email advertisements (Tatum & Harris, 2014). These are some forms of advertisements that could vary in a campaign:

a) Newspaper and Magazine

An advertisement which is placed in newspaper and magazines is a traditional method to reach the target audience. The advertisements are more likely to appear in print media that caters to the specific interest of consumers.

b) Television and Radio

Television commercial was designed to amuse and make an impression on the viewers to influence their behaviour towards the brand. Short commercial radios were used to catch the ear of the listeners and help form images that create demand for the product.

c) Text Messaging or Email Advertising

With the emergence of technology and the internet, advertisers could advertise their product via text messaging or email advertising. Social media is also an emerging trend nowadays. Furthermore, the majority of people nowadays are connected to social media such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. Marketers could make use of that platform to promote their products or services.

2.1 Public Service Announcement

Public service announcements (PSA) are designed to inform and educate the public rather than promoting a product or service (Suggett, 2014). The objective of the PSA is to educate, change public opinion or raise awareness related to a problem. PSA advertisements are related to charity, governmental issue, environmental issues, health and safety issue and many more (Suggett, 2014).

Suggett (2014) stated that guerrilla-style advertisements were able to convey powerful messages about the consequences of smoking through controversial street demonstrations. An example would be the smoking campaign that was conducted by Ogilvy and Mather in Thailand. 'Tak Nak' anti-smoking campaign was the Health Ministry's effort in curbing the issue of smoking in Malaysia.

2.2 'Tak Nak' Anti-Smoking campaign

The Malaysian government has made an effort to reduce smoking since the year 2004. The government launched a "Tak Nak" campaign in order to curb smoking in Malaysia. The campaign was designed to get people to stop smoking and also realize the harmful effects of smoking but the results were not encouraging (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013).

The message of the advertising will become more effective if the target audience experiences a feeling of involvement towards the anti-smoking advertisement. However, youths may have an optimistic bias in the advertising campaign because youths are overconfident and they have high self-esteem about themselves. Thus, the campaign would be a failure because it does not convince the youths to quit smoking (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013).

The numbers of smokers are increasing year by year including female smokers. The numbers of youth smokers are also increasing (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013). From 2004-2008, the "Tak Nak" campaign became less aggressive. In 2009, the government introduced a new television commercial featuring the gory effects of smoking, but the results was once again not positive in curbing smoking among smokers (Brand Consultant Asia, 2009).

The government introduced some strategy as part of 'Tak Nak Merokok' anti-smoking campaign. One of those strategies is by using graphic warning. Although only 14% of smokers reported that the graphic warnings were more likely to make them quit smoking, around 45% reported that they gave up smoking a cigarette because of the photos.

Choosing the right medium to get the advertisement across is crucial. According to Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh (2013), an advertising campaign is considered to be effective if it reduced the number of smokers. Finding of GATS showed that 87.1% adults noticed anti-smoking campaign on broadcasting media like television and radio. Therefore, broadcasting media are effective in providing information to the intended audience (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013). Researchers suggest using social media platforms to promote anti-smoking campaign targeted to youths (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013).

Based on findings from Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh (2013) concluded that the Internet was the best medium followed by the poster and the least effective medium would be newspaper.

According to Tan (2013), “Other efforts to discourage smoking and decrease cases of second-hand smoking includes banning the practice in public areas like healthcare, educational and government institutions, public transport, air-conditioned eating places, shopping centres and workplaces, airports, stadiums, places of worship, petrol stations, fitness centre, and public places like toilets, lifts, theatres and libraries”.

Tan also stated that “government has also made available facilities to enable smokers to get the help they need to quit smoking. These include the nationwide Quit Smoking Info line, Quit Smoking Clinics in every state, and the availability of drugs that help smokers decrease their dependence on nicotine like nicotine replacement therapy, varenicline and bupropion in community pharmacies” (Tan, 2013).

The Sun Daily (2012) reported that the health ministry will intensify the anti-smoking by encouraging all patients at government clinics and hospitals who are smokers to undergo a quit-smoking programme. The programme is free of charge and Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai encourages smokers at governmental hospital or clinics to participate in the programme.

In early June, the Ministry of Health has decided to stop being polite and show the public the illness caused by smoking. According to Mahpar (2009) the warning advertisements which only appeared in print form shows the real negative effects of smoking.

Some people felt that the images were gruesome and it frightens the kids while some people welcome agreed and welcome this measure from the Ministry of Health (Mahpar, 2009). Mahpar (2009) also reported that there is a plan to have a more integrated campaign that uses online and out-of-home media.

Most anti-smoking campaigns have not really shown positive results. Alphonsus (2012) founded that fear is not effective in curbing smoking. Government should work with non-governmental organisations to effectively curb smoking. School children, teachers, youths and smokers should be the target audience of the campaign (Alphonsus, 2012).

According to Brand Consultant Asia (2009), the initial anti-smoking campaign was launched in 1991 in conjunction with the National Health Life Style Campaign. The television commercial featured gruesome images of mouth cancer and gangrene caused by smoking. This article stated that by using shocking image and graphic elements on old mediums such as television commercial, print advertisement and outdoor advertising are not effective (Brand Consultant Asia, 2009). Commercials that contain chilly or emotionally disturbing fundamentals are proven not to be effective (Brand Consultant Asia, 2009).

People have become immune to gory and gruesome appeal and images displayed in anti-smoking campaign. What's worse is that the campaign is encouraging people to smoke instead. According to Looi (2005), the campaign poster that showed a crushed cigarette reminds smokers to smoke.

Apparently, smoking could only be reduced when smoker's own personal health is at risk (Brand Consultant Asia, 2009). "Even failing health may not persuade a smoker to reduce or even stop smoking because smoking is linked to a lack of psychological wellbeing and often failing health results in psychological decline" (Brand Consultant Asia, 2009). A long term effort is required to curb smoking in Malaysia.

Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (2014) argued that the government is not really serious about their anti-smoking campaign. The government puts more interest and emphasis on the tobacco industry. The reason for the argument is because of the ban on all small packs of cigarettes. Originally, enforcements on small packs of cigarettes were supposed to be effective in July but it was postponed to June 2006 (Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society, 2014). Furthermore, Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (2014) also stated that smaller packs of cigarettes (with lesser cost), makes cigarette even more accessible especially to children.

Singh (2010) stated "The very fact that cigarettes and tobacco products are made available easily around us indeed aggravates the situation". Gruesome images that were implemented on the cigarette box no longer scare the public (Singh, 2010). Once again, this shows the ineffective measure done by the government of Malaysia.

Sim (2005) reported after receiving feedbacks such as the campaign is lack of direction, the government will review the results of the anti-smoking campaign. Looi (2005) stated that there was a lack of infrastructure such as counselling for those who had quit smoking. There were no follow up action after smokers have quit.

"These billboards were placed at locations where there is a lot of traffic and many drivers reported that they do not even dare look as they might be involved in accidents," said Health Minister Datuk Dr Chua Soi Lek (Looi, 2005).

2.3 Appeal of advertisement

a) Fear appeal

According to Adsoftheworld (2014), fear appeal is persuasive and it increases viewer's interest in the advertisement. Moderate level of fear is sufficient enough to make an impact (Adsoftheworld, 2014).

Based on the findings from Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, (2013) concluded that fear appeal is no longer effective in promoting anti-smoking advertising. The audience has become immune to this appeal.

b) Humour appeal

Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh (2013) suggests using humour appeal in approaching the audience for an anti-smoking campaign. Humour appeals are often easily remembered and effective in attracting audience's attention. (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013). According to Adsoftheworld (2014), humour appeals are used in 30% of all advertisements. However, the humour used must not empower the intended message and should be emphasizing the audience benefit directly.

c) Emotional Appeal

Advertisements with emotional appeal generate higher awareness compared to rational because emotional appeals appear to strongly influence the attitudes of the target audience (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013). The advertising message generally encourages consumption rather than discourage consumption. Furthermore, cessation messages are not offering realistic quitting strategies (Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh, 2013).

d) Rational Appeal

Rational appeal focuses on practical, functional or utilitarian need of a product or service (Adsoftheworld, 2014). Rational appeal normally provides people with reasons to use a certain product or service.

e) Informational Appeal

According to Bortle (2012), informational advertisement contains clear and concise information in the advertisement. However, too much information would not appeal to the audience as well. The advertisement would be perceived as being too boring and too wordy lengthy.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative approach is being used to further investigate the effectiveness of ‘Tak Nak’ anti-smoking campaign based on youths in Bandar Sunway institution.

The aim of this research is to obtain primary data on the effectiveness of an anti-smoking campaign based on the opinions of youths from age 18-27 years old. The concept, storyline, tone and appeal will be measured in the methods. Therefore the discussion group was made from two institutions in Bandar Sunway area; Monash University and Sunway University. A total of 120 correspondents has been selected for group discussion of a total of 60 correspondents in each institution.

Secondary data content analysis is from the journals and newspaper reports of ‘Tak Nak Merokok’ campaign and the researcher has gathered 32 news items from year 2005 to the year 2014. The newspapers selected for the studies were The New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia, Berita Harian, The Sun and The Star. These newspapers are the major newspapers in Malaysia.

3.1 Chosen advertisements

The chosen advertisements are all video advertisements that were broadcast on mainstream media. The advertisements are “Tak Nak Merokok campaign in 2009”, “Signs of Time” and “Public Service Announcement 2013” all by Ministry of Health. Based on these advertisements, respondents will provide their feedback on the concept, storyline, tonality and appeal for each advertisement.

a) First advertisement- Television Commercial of Anti-Smoking Campaign 2009

This advertisement's target general audience, but at the conclusion of this advertisement, the young Indian youth decided to throw the cigarette away because he does not want to disappoint his mother. Besides that, this advertisement contains emotional and fear appeal that is going to be discussed as a topic in the focus group.



b) Second chosen advertisement- Signs of Time

This advertisement is targeted to general publics and also youths. The appeal for this commercial an informational appeal as people in the video educate the public to express their rights and stop secondhand smoking. This appeal will also be determined to find out if this is the most suitable appeal for anti-smoking campaigns.



c) Third Chosen Advertisement – “Tak Nak Merokok”

The concept of this advertisement is different from the other anti-smoking advertisements in Malaysia. The advertisers used children to educate adults regarding the future if smoking continues.



d) Fourth chosen advertisement- The Homecoming

This is a different appeal and the concept used by the advertisers. Humour appeal is used to curb the issue of smoking in this country. As Hong, Soh, Abdullah, Khan & Teh (2013) stated, the researchers suggest a humour appeal to tackle the issue of smoking in this country.



4.0 FINDINGS / RESULTS

4.1 Findings

After conducting eight sessions of focus group, there were certain areas that advertisers could work on to create an effective and impactful advertisement to young adults (smokers and non-smokers).

a) Concept

The idea of imposing fear and emotional element by showing gory and scary images works in terms of discouraging majority of the focus group audience from smoking. About 70% of the smokers stated that they would think twice before smoking after they watched this advertisement.

b) Storyline

The respondents found that the first advertisement, which is the 2009 TVC commercial to be the most effective in delivering the most effective storyline. The majority of the respondents did not understand the storyline of the fourth advertisement (The Homecoming) and they found it to be cliché and poorly executed.

c) Tone

Based on the first advertisement, respondents feel describe the images to be gory, explicit, ugly and horrible. Most of the respondents find the horrifying and gruesome images to be effective and they have second thoughts about smoking. Some were motivated to quit. Only one or two stated that the images were exaggerated therefore it did not appeal to them.

Images that contain a humour element would get the audience attention, but in terms of the effectiveness, it may vary. The fourth advertisement that featured yellow teeth entertained most of the focus group participants, but the humour element was not effective in terms of discouraging them to smoke. The advertisement was just made to make people laugh.

c) Appeal

Out of the four advertisements, participants find the advertisement that contain emotional and fear appeal the best. Participants stated that they could relate to their family and the hardship that their family will go through if any of the participants were to experience diseases from smoking.

However, as mentioned in the literature review, people are getting immune to this appeal therefore fear appeal may not be as effective anymore. The participants from focus group suggested the advertisements should use a different appeal instead because the fear appeal has been used over and over in the past for anti-smoking campaigns.

Humour appeal does not appeal to the majority of the focus group participants. They feel that humour does not highlight the seriousness and significance of smoking. However, humour is effective in terms of entertaining because it has funny elements and good at getting attention, but did not work for an anti-smoking campaign.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This research study has achieved its aim and the study concludes that the combination of fear appeal and emotional appeal works best. The majority of the respondents preferred the first advertisement which is the TVC advertisement 2009 released by the Ministry of Health. The respondents stated that after watching this advertisement, they have thoughts about their family and also increased knowledge of the effects of smoking and changed (youth) smokers' perception, attitudes and behaviour of smoking to stop smoking.

Overall, the advertisements in Malaysia could still be improved to bring a more significant impact. Advertisers should be more creative in designing an anti-smoking campaign to gain youth's attention and make them remember the advertisement. Instead of just using the mainstream media, perhaps advertisers could try other forms of advertisement such as ambience

advertisement. It catches attention and if it is placed and executed properly, it would be able to serve as a reminder and thus impact people. Youths only find one advertisement out of the four to be the most appealing, the rest were not really that effective to them. So, advertisers should also probably try different tactics and concepts to create awareness to the youths.

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