A Cross-cultural analysis of anti-smoking campaigns in Australia and South Korea

-- Comparative study of how young audience responded

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Smoking is a leading cause of preventable deaths in the world, and the vast majority of these smokers started smoking during adolescence or early adulthood (WHO, 2018). Therefore, many public health campaigns commonly target young audiences. However, research shows that conventional anti-smoking campaigns commonly encounter communication failure with young audiences (Ferguson & Phau, 2013), which manifests in the audiences responses of feeling unrelatable, fatigued by the ever-surrounding cliché message appeal, and can even trigger psychological reactance and the boomerang effect (Kim & Shin, 2017).

Aside from these universal resistances, the youths living in different parts of the world could respond differently towards public health campaigns targeted to their national cultures (Quester, 1999). To achieve positive outcomes, campaign producers should tailor their messages to appeal to young audiences under different cultural context. In this paper, two successful anti-smoking campaigns released in South Korea and Australia will be taken as examples to address the question about how a successful public campaign would look. The “FingerBand” is a nationwide campaign launched by South Korean Ministry of Health & Welfare (MOHW); whereas the “Your future is not pretty if you smoke” campaign was published by Queensland State Government targeting young females. Both the campaigns generated huge engagement and noticeable behavioral changes.

It will firstly introduce the campaigns and examine their effectiveness respectively by comparing their media and message strategy applying the protection motivation theory (Maddux & Rogers, 1983), fear appeals and social norms (Devlin et al., 2007); and then will apply the cultural dimension theory (Hofstede, 1983) to provide further cross-cultural analysis and enhance the effectiveness of the examination. The conclusion will illustrate how an effective anti-smoking campaigns looks and how it can be improved in the future when targeting young audiences. From these two campaigns we will generate two recommended commentary follow-up campaigns, based on the existing positive implications and future trends.
CAMPAIGN DESCRIPTION

Campaign 1: “Your future is not pretty if you smoke”

Launched by the Queensland government in 2014 and costing 1.5 million AUD, “Your future is not pretty if you smoke” was the first experiential campaign targeting 16-25 year old female Queenslanders who already knew the risks of smoking (Ricki, 2014). The audience insight was based on a government survey result: most of the young females are more concerned with their looks than health (Midena, 2014). In this regard, this campaign applied a well-integrated media mix to present how terribly tobacco can damage a young females’ physical appearance: In the audience aspect, users can upload their photos to the campaign webpage and then the aged version will be shown by algorithms (see Figure1); they can also go to the physical “mock” beauty bar located at a premium shopping center in Queensland, the makeup experts will apply cosmetics to “make-under” their face so they can see the smoking version of themselves in real life (see Appendix 1). From the messenger side, the government also collaborated with celebrities: Four popular Australian beauty YouTubers were partnered to produce “make-under” tutorial videos to show their “ugly-smoking” faces (such as vlogger Chloe Morello; see Appendix 2), the Australian Miss Universe Rachael Finch was partnered to posting her “make-under” selfie on her Instagram as the campaign ambassador (see Appendix 3). As a result, this campaign reportedly generated massive organic conversations with a 35% conversion rate and hit 14.1 million PR reaches with around 325,000 AUD media value created (Ricki & Juniorcru, 2014).

Campaign 2: “The Fingerband”
The “FingerBand” was the 2015 Korean national anti-smoking campaign launched by MOHW targeting domestic teen-smokers. This five-month long campaign received three international PR campaign rewards in 2016 (FleishmanHillard, 2016). The “FingerBand” campaign was primarily based on digital platforms especially Facebook, to encourage teenagers to challenge their peers by tagging them with the hashtag #fingerband. Each participant would receive an actual wristband afterward so they can band their index finger and middle finger implying “no smoking”, and then post pictures on social media (see Figure 2). To reach more Korean teenagers, the FingerBand campaign also enlisted a young K-pop (Korean hip-hop) idol Zico to hold a theme song creation competition through both online and offline auditions (see Appendix 4). The campaign logo of the wing-like FingerBand gesture soon became a fashion icon symbolising the new non-smoking culture amongst the young Koreans (SpikesAsian, 2016). This campaign also collaborated with Naver (the largest Korean portal) to co-produce a “web-toon” (online comic) embedded a set of fully-fledged non-smoking recommendations, and a web-drama series starring several popular Korean TV drama idols (FleishmanHillard, 2016). The “FingerBand” campaign successfully built a remarkable social following, engaging an audience of over 284,000 with around 200,000 wristbands distributed during the whole campaign period; and ended up with an overwhelmingly positive public opinion and WOM advocated by more than 218 media coverages (WARC, 2016).
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

There are both similarities and differences between these two campaigns, since they have a similar target audience which is young people. However, there are still a few salient differences between a “young Australian woman” and a “South Korean teenager”. Table 1 outlines the key points of the comparison between these two campaigns, which will be further discussed in the aspects of media strategies and message strategies. A cross-cultural analysis will be also presented after this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign</th>
<th>Your future is not pretty if you smoke</th>
<th>The Fingerband</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media strategies</td>
<td>Digital platforms (websites, YouTube), social media, offline events</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government official website</td>
<td>Fashion websites, portal websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message strategies</td>
<td>Entertaining, creative, relatable, snackable, shareable, visual, KOLs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Simple key message</td>
<td>• Comprehensive key message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Loss frame &amp; Fear appeals</td>
<td>• Gain frame &amp; Social norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Experiential</td>
<td>• Musical &amp; Inspiring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Invoking</td>
<td>• Informative instructive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supermodel, vloggers (Influencers)</td>
<td>• K-pop rapper, actors/actresses (celebrities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness evaluation</td>
<td>Viral content, co-creation and production</td>
<td>• Reshape the perceptions of smoking and peer acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The best point of “U-shape” fear appeal</td>
<td>• Influencing power from idols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Crack the previous barrage; resonate with young females</td>
<td>• Referencing power from peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Topical</td>
<td>• Phenomenal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(Table 1: An overview of the comparatives analysis between campaign 1 and 2   Source: original)

Media Strategy Comparison

Digital approaches especially social media platforms were largely employed in both the two campaigns, which is the fundamental factor for their successes. According to the selfie phenomenon theory, self-portrait, self-presentation, self-branding and gathering positive feedback are the important components of young people’s daily social life (Lim, 2016). Hence, social media is an effective and imperative channel which is heavily used worldwide when targeting young people.
As for the difference, it is noticeable that Instagram was used as the core media platform by the Australian campaign whereas Facebook was the main media channel of the Korean campaign. Research by Roy Morgan revealed that women aged 14-24 is the most active social media user group in Australia with 877 minutes per week; remarkably more than 528 minutes by males at the same age (2018). In addition, the young Australian females prefer Instagram for its graphic attributes although Facebook is the most-used social media in general (Rayner, 2015). Meanwhile, Facebook has beaten the domestic social media KakaoStory and become the most popular social media among the young Koreans (Statista, 2015). Aside from these, in the form of makeup tutorial videos on YouTube and the pop-up beauty bar, campaign 1 accurately targeted young Australian females who care about their body image. Similarly, Naver as the most-used Korean portal site along with the collaborative fashion online shopping websites are also powerful and effective communication tools when planning a pan-national public campaign.

By implementing the appropriate media strategies, both of the campaigns have significant user-generated content (UCG) and interactions: Over 60,000 photos were uploaded to the Queensland government website for getting “make-under” (Juniorcru, 2014); and the “web-toon” and the web-drama along with the campaign theme song co-created by both the audience and Zico has became a reusable media asset. The sustainable media assets enabled the FingerBand gesture to continue being used as an identification statement even after the campaign period (WARC, 2016).

**Message Strategy Comparison**

The message design is another main driver to their success, as they both succeeded “mirroring a self-portraits” for the target audience to consequently lead to the attitudinal and behavioral changes. Firstly, in the media utility aspect, Instagram is an image-based platform whereas Facebook is relatively more textual, so they cater for carrying different message appeals. Regarding this, the key message is one decisive factor to determine the media utility. In campaign 1, the key message is simple and straightforward as a “loss-framed” message: Smoking makes you unattractive. Thus, the effective way to convey this message is visually presenting the ugliness such as wrinkles, saggy eye-bags, uneven skin-tones, dry hairs and so on; which can also explain why Instagram is the right tool to carry the message, as is the beauty bar. Also, according to the prospect theory, people are more likely to change behaviors to avoid minor losses (Rothman et al. 2006); here the loss is only the appearance deterioration instead of those heavy health-damaged implications, which is surely a relatively “minor” loss in the smokers’ perception. In comparison, the key message of campaign 2 is more comprehensive and can be interpreted hierarchically as a “gain-framing” progress: The core of the message is “not smoking is the right thing to do”, afterward it gradually extended to express the communication objective as
“quitting smoking makes you a better person”. This would require a long-term progress to decode this message through generating a discourse among the social network. Thus, Facebook as a textual social media platform is more suitable to create conversations in purpose to build up public discourse overtime.

Secondly, a fear appeal of aging faster is applied in campaign 1, whist campaign 2 majorly employed the social norms message strategy; and both of them can be proven to be suitable for the audience. The protection motivation theory (PMT) can be applied to examine the effectiveness of the fear appeal utility in campaign 1, as previous studies have proven that it can be well-suited in anti-smoking advertising especially when targeting females (Smith & Stutts, 2003). In the PMT model, there are two perceptive pathways to determine the ultimate protection behaviors by the message receivers: the threat appraisal pathway composed of perceived rewards (such as the excuses to smoke) and threats (severities and vulnerabilities such as consequences of smoking); and the coping appraisal referred to response-efficacy, self-efficacy and the perceived cost of the responses (Maddux & Rogers, 1983). Noting that the smoking intention of young Australian females was reported to be different with other smokers, as they commonly consider smoking could control weight and mood (WHO, 2018); also the health-related implications caused by smoking are known but not currently concerned by them due to a hedonistic mindset, that is one of the explanations of the underperformed feedback from the conventional anti-smoking campaigns (Ussher, 2014). Understanding this, the application of PMT in campaign 1 is as illustrated in figure 3. Finally, the correlationship graph of the fear appraisal shows that the most persuasive fear appeals should be at the midpoint of an inverted “U-shape” curve (Maloney et al., 2011). As mentioned previously, the anxiety of appearance deterioration as a minor loss could be considered as a medium fear appeal, and it was also moderated by the beautiful campaign casts as the Miss Universe and vloggers. These are the effectiveness analysis of campaign 1 from the message strategy perspective.
The message strategy tailored for the young Koreans is mainly based on the social norms rather than fear appeals, which suits for the young South Koreans in the aspect of reshaping their perception of smoking. The social norm messages in a public communication are mostly aiming to persuade the audiences to make changes from the reference groups’ stance (such as peers and idols in campaign 2) derived from societal acceptance or expectations (Devlin et al., 2007). Previous studies also revealed that social norms message in anti-smoking campaigns appear to be more effective for those other-directed smoker who usually smoke for socialising purposes; which is to a large extent, the smoking beginners especially teenagers (Miller et al. 2007). Leveraging the significant influencing power of the K-pop celebrity, the FingerBand campaign has been delivering the message that no smoking is a societal expectation, and it would be part of the pop culture in the future. It is also a cognitive reconstruction because smoking scenes were frequently shown on many Korea movies in the past which has proven to be a trigger of smoking action among teenagers (Sohn & Jung 2017). Secondly, being tagged and challenged by peers on social media is based on the rationale of referencing power, implying the present peer acceptance has also changed from smoking together to no smoking. Finally, collaborating with variant mainstream media is also another approach to embed the key message in a fashionable and modern way, as it permeated the anti-smoking message into many scenarios in order to cultivate a new lifestyle. In addition, the post-action of posting the FingerBand photos on social media is also a response of seeking peer acceptance. The analysis above addresses the effectiveness of campaign 2, and the cultural analysis section will further discuss why smoking in South Korea is an other-directed behaviour whilst it is self-directed for the young Australian women.
**CROSS-CUTURAL COMPARISON ANALYSIS**

The cultural insights can enhance the effectiveness analysis drawn from the last section, and it will be primarily addressed by the individualism index and long-term orientation index of Australia and South Korea since they are two of the most striking cultural differences between these two countries (see figure 4; 2018).

![Figure 4 Cultural comparison of Australia and South Korea](https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/australia,south-korea/)

*Source: https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/australia,south-korea/)*

**Smashed-Avocado & the “Fitspo” generation in Australia**

As figure 4 presented, Australia is a highly individualistic society with an indulgent and short-term oriented societal attitude, which can explain the effectiveness of the image-based, single key message and self-centric campaign. In 2016, a public debate about “smashed-avocado” went viral among the mainstream media publications globally; which was about the budgeting philosophy and it could well-reflect the national culture and the distinctively different life attitude of the Australian millennial: A Baby Boomer commentator was considered being offensive by the young Australians for questioning the phenomenon that young people freely spend over $22 AUD on a smashed-avocado dish yet they are commonly suffering the financial pressure from the housing price (Schwarz 2017). The young Australians responded to this through social media in an overall entertaining and ironic tone without denying that it is a short-term oriented and indulgent manifestation; and some of them emphases that it is a reasoned action from escaping the pressures from schools and families (Connellan, 2016). Analogously, the young Australian female smokers would not deny the long-term implications of their health, but they care more about the immediate enjoyment of puffing cigarettes. Theoretically, a short-term oriented audience would be more responsive by showing a quick result (Hofstede...
Insight, 2018), which is exactly the fast-spreading Instagram posts of aging selfies after 15 years, compared to a longer time result of diseases and deaths.

The phrase “Fitspo” can be a reflection of the Australian-characteristic individualistic national culture, as well as a manifestation of the contemporary selfie phenomenon. According to Hofstede Inside, the individualistic people tend to take more care of themselves (2018), and more responsive to the self-centered messages (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2013). With over 30 million selfies featuring the hashtag #fitspo on Instagram, “Fitspo” is an abbreviation of “fitspiration”, originally referred to the trend on social media that females posting their gym selfie to pursue a fit body shape and healthy lifestyle; however this pursue has seem started developing towards an unrealistic level (Holland, 2016). A youth survey report also pointed out that the body image is of the top three concerns by the youths (Mission Australia, 2017), meaning that young Australian females are increasingly concern about the self-presentation. As a result, showcasing the appearance damages can be directly invoking for the young females since it is what they are currently concerned about.

Understanding this, the future approaches targeting this group can still focus on similar appears but probably present it in a more short-term oriented way.

**Korean Wave & The Unique Fandom Culture in South Korea**

Scoring 100 in the long-term orientation dimension with a remarkably low individualism index, South Korean is a typical collectivistic and pragmatic society, which results in the effectiveness of the other-centered message embedded with social norms. Firstly, loyalty and the sense of belonging of a certain group can therefore generally depict a South Korean mentality; thus the referencing power from peers and influencing power from idols are powerful under the unique Korean fandom culture system. Aside from the solid loyalty, another unique attribute of the present K-pop followership and fandom culture is the way that they idolising the celebrities, which can interpret the young Korean’s self-presentation manner: They are talented and motivated with building the positive public relations for their idols, so that the idols’ reputation can reversely better represent their identification. Plenty of the fan philanthropies have been reported in the recent years: building schools and bookstores domestically; planting rainforests in Brazil, funding for the African children, donating rice to the Salvation Army and so on, all those philanthropic behaviors were voluntarily done by the K-pop fans in their idols’ name (Hemmeke, 2017). In this way, the younger K-pop fans have been showcasing a “maturer” fandom differentiated with the previous reportedly aggressive or stalkerish extreme fandom, and it explains the why a gain-framed message is more effective to the young Koreans. From the national culture perspective, this public relationship building progress by the young Koreans obviously requires a long-term oriented and collectivistic social mentality. Additionally, the collectivistic spirit also facilitates the
overwhelming popularity of the Korea Wave in the worldwide especially the entire Asia, which is derived from a strong patriotism and a sense of cultural pride (Choe, 2007). Therefore, young Korean smokers are more likely to take up or give up smoking by looking at their reference groups. As a result, campaigns aiming to change behaviors should be tailored to firstly mirror an expected collective image of a certain group and match their shared value, so that it can consequently influence the individuals.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As analysed above, key insights of creating anti-smoking campaigns targeting young audiences should be able to mirror themselves an innovative, interactive, invoking, and inspiring way. And the national culture plays the role to further decide what specific messages should be carried by what media platform. Firstly, the quick, simple and direct reflections are more effective under a short-term oriented culture whist comprehensive and profound key message can be better conveyed in a long-term oriented society. Secondly, self-centered messages suit well to a individualistic society whereas group-centered messages can better prompt changes among the collectivistic countries (regions). Based on this conclusion and supported by other recent-published young generation studies and industry reports, future anti-smoking campaigns are recommended to generate in the following ways.

*For the young Australian women*

Future campaigns can be done in a shorter-term oriented manner based on featuring self-tracking and socialising functions, and still focusing on the self-presentation aspect but in a motivating way. Regarding this, “appearance enhancement” such as cosmetics and beauty/fitness services might be more invoking to be an indicator for the young women rather than appearance deteriorations in campaign 1. IbisWord reported that the Australian beauty, fashion and luxury industries are growing steadily in the next five years driven by the increasing consumption power and intention (Lo, 2017; Richardson, 2018); Over 22 billion AUD was spent on personal beauty and grooming and it is increasingly occupying a larger percentage of Australians’ disposable income (Dent, 2017). Inspired by the positive performance of the Australian quit-smoking application “My QuitBuddy” (Thornton et al., 2017) and a successful Canadian social media anti-smoking campaign “BreakItOff” (Poole & Moore, 2015), it is also recommended to apply smart phone application as the main platform and then it can tailor personal smoking quitting plan according to the user profile (prototype see Appendix 5).
For the South Korean teenagers

The future anti-smoking campaign in South Korea should still leverage the influencing power from more K-pop artists and productions, as well as the referencing power from the peers, but could attempt to involve some moderate-level fear appeals in order to convey the message such as “smoking is outdated and not cool, smokers might not be embraced by their peers and fan clubs”. Firstly, South Korean government and some domestic Korean chaebols will continue to support the K-pop culture as a pillar soft-power development in the next several years (Choe, 2007), as a result the mainstream social value among teenagers would still be moderated by this pop culture. Secondly, the effectiveness of a proper amount of fear appears to have been proven to be viable in the previous analysis, and considering the FingerBand campaign would still remain influential among the Korean teenagers for a certain time period as discussed; it is therefore recommended to generate a follow-up loss-framed campaign from the negative side to echo with the previous theme and enhance the existing effectiveness. In this way, the no-smoking behavior is more likely to accelerated and escalated from a group commitment level to a social norm level.

Word count: 2848 (exclude. executive summary, table of contents and bibliography)
REFERENCES


APPENDIXES

1. The “mock” beauty bar in Queensland

[Image]


2. “Make-under” tutorial video by Chloe Morello:

“Me In 20 Years Time As A Smoker! Aged Makeup Tutorial (for Halloween?)”

[Video]

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpmePKHHVfY

3. Model Rachael Finch’s “make-under” Instagram post
4. The “FingerBand” anti-smoking Theme song official music video

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6oK8ah2GV8
Image via http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2018/03/688_216605.html

5. Mockup of the future anti-smoking campaign idea