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Attitudes towards Government's Green Living campaign among Chinese youth

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Background

- **Hong Kong faced pollution problems**
- **2005 Policy address: We shall make Hong Kong a green city and an ideal place to live**
- **Government's publicity campaign enjoyed free airtime on broadcast medium (radio and TV)**

Youth is the target



**They have good environmental knowledge and awareness;
They are more ready for innovation
They have the long lifespan to practice green living**

Government's initiatives



Green Living PSAs

- I love Hong Kong, I love green
- Launched in 2007
- Promote green lifestyles
- Two versions: Green living: City and Green living: Nature

Green living: City



Green living: Nature



Research objectives

1. Do young people understand the purposes of PSAs?
2. Do they believe PSAs?
3. Do they like PSAs?
4. What are their responses to the Government's Green Living PSAs?

Method

- **Qualitative study of 34 Chinese youth aged 17-22**
- **Face-to-face interview by HKBU students**
- **First ask general Qs about PSAs**
- **Show the two PSAs on a laptop computer**
- **Ask them the overall impression of the PSAs and the specific elements they liked or disliked**

Interviewees and procedure

- All Chinese
- Equal proportion of M/F
- All full time students
- Intro “Most of the commercials we come across on TV are selling products. There are some messages that are related with our daily lives, such as road safety and anti-theft. We call them PSAs”

Purpose of PSA

What do these messages want us to do?	Frequency
To follow the specific actions in the ad	18
To demonstrate ways to be a good citizens	9
To educate the public on certain issues	8
To encourage people to participate in charitable causes	3
To establish the reputation of specific government departments	1
total	39*

* Multiple answers

- **I think that these public service advertisements aim to persuade us to adopt recommended behaviors in our daily lives. When we are exposed to these advertisements repeatedly, we are expected to internalize the recommended messages and change our behaviors accordingly**

Female, age 19

- **They tell us citizens' rights and obligations to the society or promote some moral lessons and civil education, so that we know what we should do to contribute to a better society**

Male, age 22

Do you believe these messages? Why?	Freq
Yes, I believe them, because the government is a credible source	13
Yes, I believe them, because the messages are reasonable, positive, and are based on common sense	7
Yes, I believe them, because there is no commercial intent	4
Yes, I believe them, because these messages are similar to my view	2
No, I don't believe them, because the messages are propaganda	6
No, I don't believe them, because they are different from my view	2
total	34

Do you like or dislike these messages? Why?	Freq
Like, they are interesting, funny, or creative	9
Dislike, they are dull, boring, or uncreative	10
Like, they have good intention	8
Dislike, they are one-sided, or too imposing	6
Like, because of specifics such as catchy slogans, good cinema graphic	3
Dislike, too much repetition	1
Total	37*

* Multiple answers

Overall impression of Green Living PSAs	Freq
X unrealistic or idealistic	9
X irrelevant	8
X message not clear	4
refreshing, enjoyable, positive	15
good production	4
Total	40*

* Multiple answers

“The commercials seem fake to me. I have never seen so many trees around the tall buildings. Neither have I seen such a beautiful natural environment in Hong Kong. They look fictitious and therefore, they become not convincing.” (female, age 19)

“The Green Living – Nature advertisement looks so irrelevant to the topic. I would have mistaken it as an advertisement for eco-tourism had I not seen the slogan at the end shot. The scenery doesn't look like that in Hong Kong at all.” (female, age 21)

The advertisements did not have concrete instructions [about green living]. I did not get their points.” (male, age 21)

Specific elements like/disliked

Liked	freq
People	11
Green scenery	11
Themes/words	9
Background music	8
slogan	2
Total	41*

Disliked	freq
Unrealistic visuals	18
Uninformative message	13
Total	31*

* Multiple answers

Discussion

- **Young viewers are aware of the persuasive intents of PSAs and trust their sponsors**
- **They found some PSAs too propaganda-oriented or high sounding**
- **Like/dislike based on mainly entertainment value**
- **Interviewees appreciate the soft-sell approach of green living**
- **However, they posted questions of reality and relevance**

- **How is this Hong Kong?**
 - Wild nature out of touch
 - Green lifestyles pretentious
- **Recommendations:**
 - Construct acceptable discrepancy between the desired and current states
 - Conduct formative research on degree of discrepancy

- **What am I suppose to do?**
 - How to put green living into practice?
- **Recommendations:**
 - Direct audience to a website for tips for green living
 - Engage viewers e.g. by asking them to guess the location of the green sceneries and find out the answer from a web site

Thank you!

- Q&A