A content analysis of health publicity posters in Hong Kong, 1950-1979

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Content analysis of health promotion posters in Hong Kong, 1950s-80s

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International Communication Association Regional Conference, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, September 18-20
Outline

- 1. Background
- 2. Method
- 3. Results
- 4. Discussion
1. Background

- Health promotion plays an important role in public health, and is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health.

- Health promotion through the media has been recognized as a driving force in changing people’s knowledge, attitudes, as well as behaviors related to health decisions.
1. Background

- Many researchers have studied health promotion employing mass communication tools, such as television, radio, internet, and mobile phones.

- **Poster** was used as an effective low-tech and low-cost vehicle for health promotion before the broadcast era.
1. Background

☐ In colonial Hong Kong during the 1950s to 1960s, the living conditions were sub-standard and the public medical services were limited.

☐ Public service announcements (PSAs) were widely used in outdoor medium and government facilities.

☐ **Health promotion posters** were considered to be the most popular medium in *health promotion campaigns* during the 1950s to 1980s in Hong Kong.
1. Background

- PSAs in Hong Kong
  - Public Relations Office, 1946
  - Information Service Department (ISD), 1959

It helped build bridges between government and the community through the dissemination of news, information and policy.
1. Background

Key health promotion campaigns

1) Clean Hong Kong

1.1) Community hygiene campaign

Time: 1958

Cartoon character: Miss Ping On
1. Background

Key health promotion campaigns

1) Clean Hong Kong

1.2) Keep Hong Kong clean campaign
    Time: 1972
    Cartoon character: Lap Sap Chung
1. Background

Key health promotion campaigns

2) Anti-narcotics

Narcotics Advisory Committee 1959
The first public education campaign

Action Committee Against Narcotics 1965
The sole source of all aspects of anti-narcotics strategies
1. Background

Key health promotion campaigns

3. Anti-smoking

The Smoking Ordinance 1982
The beginning of anti-smoking campaign
Council on Smoking and Health 1987
A series of education and publicity programmes
2. Method

2.1 Data collection


A search of posters of the Archive and Library Collection from 1950 to 1989 generated 320 posters. Among the 320 posters, 96 were related to health.

- 91 posters ➔ Online resources
- 5 posters ➔ Government Public Records Office
2. Method

2.2 The coding frame

1) Language features
   (Wu & Chan, 2007; Wu & Chung, 2006)

2) Visual components
   (Banerjee, Greene, Hecht, Magsamen-Conrad, & Elek, 2013)

3) Communication strategies
   (Latimer et al., 2010)
2. Method

2.3 Coding procedure

- One of the authors used the coding frame to manually code all health promotion posters.
- Another author coded every one out of six posters independently.
- Using Perreault and Leigh (1989) measure, the inter-coder reliability scores of all items ranged from 0.87 for “literary parallelism” to 0.95 for “persuasion strategies”.
2. Method

2.4 Data analysis

- The time period was divided into two sections, i.e. 1950s-60s and 1970s-80s.

  [Hong Kong’s epidemiological transition began to change in the late 1960s (Lewis & Macpherson, 2007)]

- Chi square test was conducted to compare the language use, visual presentation, and communication strategies between the two time periods.
## 3. Results

### Table 1 Health issues featured (N=96)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean Hong Kong</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-narcotic</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-smoking</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infectious disease prevention</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical treatment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood donation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Results

Figure 1: Health issues featured by time period

- Clean Hong Kong
- Anti-narcotic
- Anti-smoking
- Infectious disease prevention
- Others

N

1950s
1960s
1970s
1980s

0 10 20 30 40
### Table 2 Language and its function by period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>1950s-60s</th>
<th>1970s-80s</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Chi-square value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<0.01; ***p<0.001
3. Results: language features

- **Imperative linguistic feature**
  - (Say no to drugs, don’t be tempted by your peers)

- **literary parallelism linguistic feature**
  - (Repair walls, prevent rats and worms)
3. Results

*First/Second person pronouns* were never used in the 1950s-60s. In the 1970s-80s, nearly one in four posters used this feature.
3. Results

3.3 Visual components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>1950s-60s</th>
<th>1970s-80s</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Chi-square value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual element</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-specific</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key visual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal/Insect</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<0.01; ***p<0.001

A majority of the posters featured one human figure, either male or female. He or she most likely was an adult, featured neither as an expert nor a patient.
## 3. Results

### 3.4 Communication strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1950s-60s</th>
<th>1970s-80s</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Chi-square value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Message frame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain-framed</td>
<td>23 65.7</td>
<td>31 50.8</td>
<td>54 56.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss-framed</td>
<td>12 34.3</td>
<td>30 49.2</td>
<td>42 43.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PB emotional appeal</td>
<td>8 22.9</td>
<td>26 42.6</td>
<td>34 35.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB emotional appeal</td>
<td>3 8.6</td>
<td>17 27.9</td>
<td>20 20.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational appeal</td>
<td>24 68.6</td>
<td>18 29.5</td>
<td>42 43.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PB: Person-based; SB: Social-based

**p<0.01
The change of health issues featured in the health promotion posters is consistent with the *epidemiological transition* in Hong Kong.

**“Third world”:** epidemics, famines, and poor living conditions are the main health issues.

“*Infectious disease prevention*” and “Clean Hong Kong” are the two primary health issues featured in **1950s-60s**.

**“First world”:** non-communicable diseases prevalence and need for lifestyle modifications.

“Anti-narcotic” and “Anti-smoking” became prevalent in **1970s-80s**.
4. Discussion

- Posters using **English only** increased significantly from none in 1950s-60s to 36.1% in 1970s-80s.

  It indicated the important of recognizing health promotion posters as the official government publicity tools by using the official language of English. It also suggested English had become an acceptable medium for social and cultural expression.

- The **mixed language use** was also increased, and reflected **cultural hybridity** in the process of globalization.
4. Discussion

- The increased use of first/second person pronouns feature and involvement function of language during 1970s-80s are noteworthy.

  It indicated that these posters want to arouse the people’s feeling of intrinsic self-relevance and affect people’s level of involvement.
4. Discussion

- The type of **visual element** health promotion posters has significantly changed in time.

Illustration \[\rightarrow\] Photograph

An ad would receive higher readership scores if it had a **photograph** rather than an **illustration** (Diamond, 1968). It might be desirable to use a photograph in designing a health promotion poster.
4. Discussion

- **Informational appeal** was the dominant persuasion strategy use in the 1950s-60s, posters in that time were mainly used to convey health information to the refugees with low health literacy.

- In the 1970s-80s, **emotional appeal** was more widely used. This can be contributed to the emphasis on the community and individual involvement in the process of health decisions.
Thank you!