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

FU Hang, PhD student

School of Medicine and Health Management, Huazhong University of Science & Technology

Kara Chan, Professor

Department of Communication Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University

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.
-

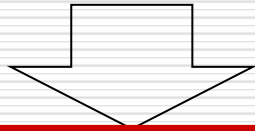
1. Background

- ❑ 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

1. Clean Hong Kong
2. Anti-narcotics
3. Anti-smoking

Key health promotion campaigns

1) Clean Hong Kong

1.1) Community hygiene campaign

Time: **1958**

Cartoon character: Miss Ping On



1. Background

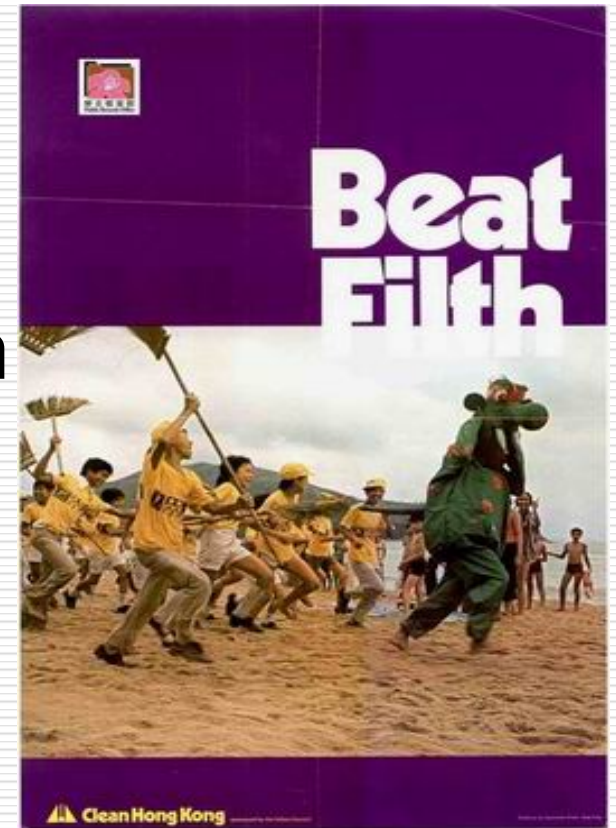
Key health promotion campaigns

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

Government Records Service of the government of the HKSAR website (<http://www.grs.gov.hk/ws/english/home.htm>)

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)

Appendix 1

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.
-

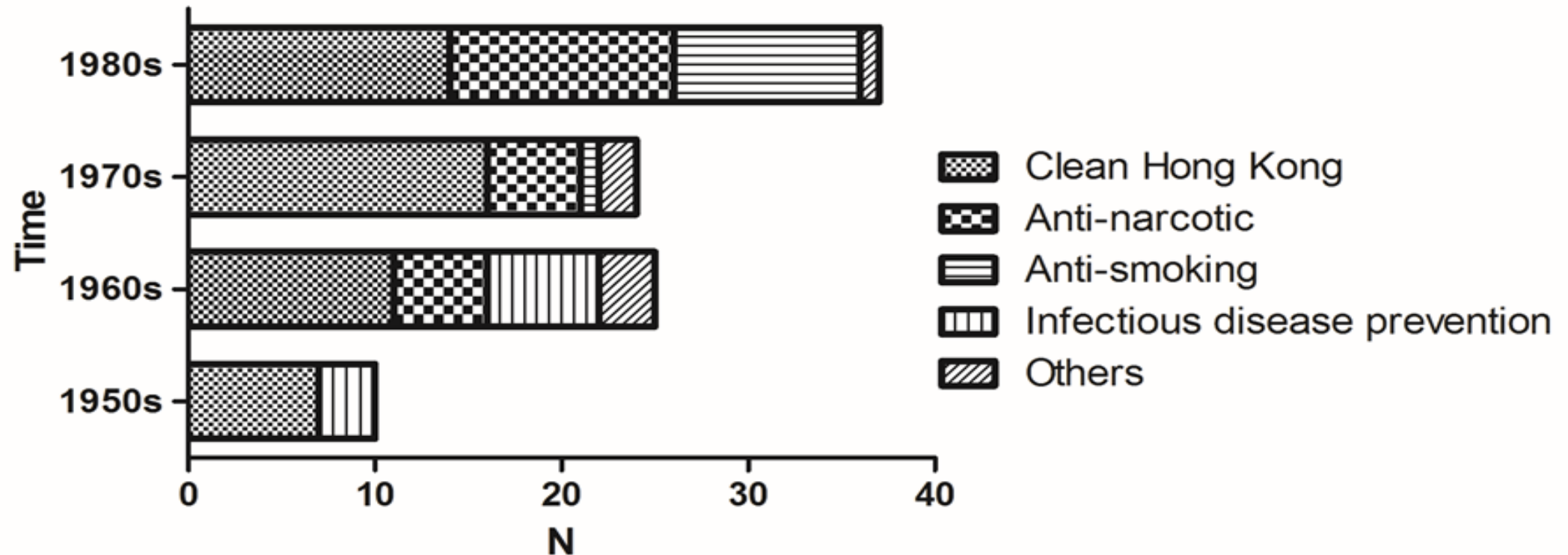
3. Results

Table 1 Health issues featured (N=96)

Issue	N	%
Clean Hong Kong	48	50.0
Anti-narcotic	22	22.9
Anti-smoking	11	11.5
Infectious disease prevention	9	9.4
Mental health	2	2.1
Medical treatment	2	2.1
Blood donation	2	2.1
Total	96	100.0

3. Results

Figure 1 Health issues featured by time period



3. Results

Table 2 Language and its function by period

Features	1950s-60s		1970s-80s		Total		Chi-square value
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
<i>Language</i>							20.4 ^{***}
Chinese	32	91.4	29	47.5	61	63.5	
English	0	0.0	22	36.1	22	22.9	
Mixed	3	8.6	10	16.4	13	13.5	
<i>Function</i>							7.6 ^{**}
Informational	21	60.0	19	31.1	40	41.7	
Involvement	14	40.0	42	68.9	56	58.3	
p<0.01; *p<0.001							

3. Results: language features

□ *Imperative* linguistic feature

literary parallelism linguistic feature



Anti-narcotic
1980

(Say no to drugs, don't be tempted by your peers)

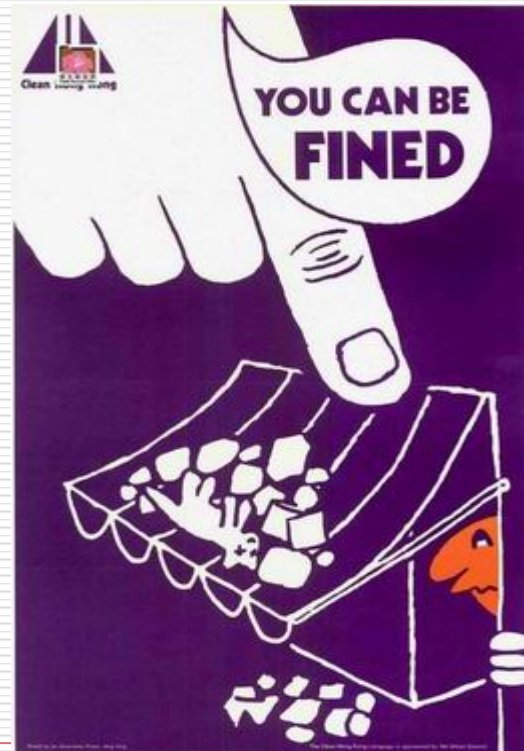
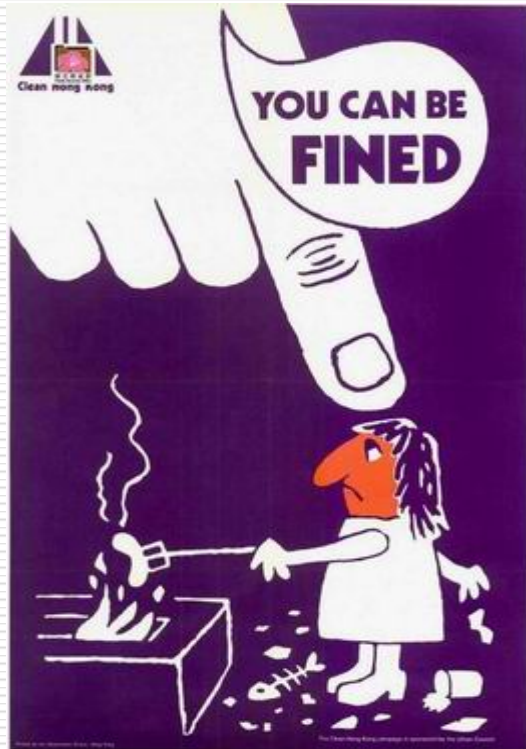


Clean Hong Kong
1959

(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.



Clean Hong Kong
1972

3. Results

□ 3.3 Visual components

Visual	1950s-60s		1970s-80s		Total		Chi-square value
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Visual element							8.3*
Photo	9	25.7	33	54.1	42	43.8	
Illustration	25	71.4	25	41.0	50	52.1	
Mixed	1	2.9	3	4.9	4	4.2	
Setting							19.6***
Indoor	3	8.6	8	13.1	11	11.5	
Outdoor	5	14.3	34	55.7	39	40.6	
Non-specific	27	77.1	19	31.3	46	47.9	
Key visual							5.5
Human	28	80.0	35	57.4	63	65.6	
Animal/Insect	2	5.7	4	6.6	6	6.3	
Object	5	14.3	22	36.1	27	28.1	

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

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

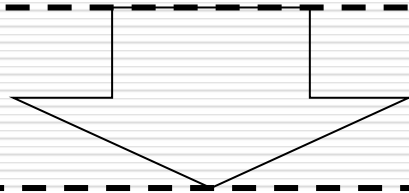
PB: Person-based; SB: Social-based
**p<0.01

4. Discussion

- 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
-

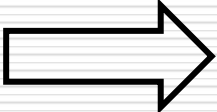
4. Discussion

- The increased 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  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!
