

Clean Air Public Service Announcement Targeting Chinese Audiences

—The Case of *Hairy Nose*

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Abstract

This paper studies an empirical case of clean air public service announcement (PSA) video—*Hairy Nose*, which is a typical but special PSA targeting Chinese audiences, representing and criticizing current heavy air pollution in China. The aim of this research is to explore how this PSA appeals to target audiences and how Chinese audiences perceive this PSA. Through detailed media content analysis of *Hairy Nose* and in-depth semi-structured interviews with Chinese audiences, the objectives could be achieved. *Hairy Nose* provides a notable example of the use of multiple appeal strategies in one video. Four most obvious and significant appeal strategies were identified—humor appeal strategy, fear appeal strategy, contrast appeal strategy and identity appeal strategy. *Hairy Nose* elicited many positive emotions and favorable responses among Chinese audiences. Meanwhile, they also criticized this PSA from many perspectives.

Keywords

Public Service Announcement, Air Pollution, Appeal Strategy, Chinese Audiences

1. Introduction

Air pollution is a very serious issue in China at present. Following Olszewska (2016) [1], it can be seen as one of the six main types of modern risks—environmental risk, which “arise in, or are transmitted through the air, water, soil or biological food chains, to man” (Whyte and Burton, 1980, p. 3) [2]. As Chinese residents are becoming increasingly accustomed to the heavy smog, it is urgent to raise their environmental awareness, and media should play a significant role in this

process.

Many forms of media can contribute to raising people's awareness about environmental issues, and public service announcement (PSA) is an important one. Edelman and Moritz (2016, p. 23) [3] define PSA as “free advertising campaigns that provide an opportunity for not-for-profit organizations (NFPs) to disseminate messages that are in the public interest, to raise awareness, and to trigger behavioral changes and changes in attitudes toward social issues”.

This paper studies a specific current PSA—*Hairy Nose*, which was released by the environmental organization WildAid China on February 24th, 2016, as part of GOblue program's awareness campaign. This video describes a picture that future Chinese people have evolved by growing long furry nose hairs to filter out the harmful particles in “the pollution age” of China (see **Image 1**). It “shows a parade of stylish Chinese people—and one dog—sporting elaborately groomed nasal hair as they go about their daily lives in the ‘putrid, choking air and the never ending smog’” (BBC News, 2016) [4].

Hairy Nose is a public service announcement reflecting and criticizing China's heavy air pollution with various artistic approaches and appeal strategies. It has strong motivation and clear aims of raising Chinese people's environmental awareness. In China, this PSA video has been featured on several popular social media sites and many mass media portals, such as national TV networks, outdoor screens, subway and taxi screens (WildAid, 2016) [5].

The research questions of this paper are based on the case of PSA video *Hairy Nose* and designed as follows:

- 1) How does *Hairy Nose* appeal to Chinese audiences?
- 2) How is *Hairy Nose* perceived by members of the target audiences?

Through detailed media content analysis of appeal strategy and in-depth semi-structured interviews, these research questions could be answered. On the basis of original findings from the case study, this research could contribute to the research field of public service announcement, appeal strategy and audience related study.

The structure of this paper is as follows: First, the overall background and research questions are presented, followed by some critical discussions of the previous



Image 1. Still from *Hairy Nose* PSA video (2016).

research. Then, the methodologies and methods used in this paper are indicated and argued for, mainly about case study, content analysis of appeal strategy and semi-structured interview. Further on, research findings and analysis of the data are presented. Finally, the research results are widely discussed in the conclusion section, including critical reflection and suggestions for future research.

2. Critical Reflection of Previous Research

Media representation about air pollution belongs to environmental communication, which has become an important research field within media and communication studies in the last few decades (Hansen, 2011) [6]. However, I noticed that, most of the relevant research is focusing on news coverage of air pollution, while only a few of them studies other media forms. Research about clean air PSA is even rarer. What's more, most research is content analysis of news coverage and is normally analyzed in general. There is rarely any detailed analysis of media content. Not to mention the in-depth content analysis about clean air PSA. Thus, in this paper, I will do a detailed content analysis of the PSA *Hairy Nose*.

Previous researchers have conducted many theoretical researches of PSA's effectiveness and offered views from the perspectives of communications research, advertiser's viewpoint, psychology, marketing, standpoint of media scheduling, and so on (Bryant and Zillmann, 1994) [7]. However, many of them are not convincing enough. Not only because of lacking empirical research, but also the diversity of audiences and PSAs, as well as the complexity of effectiveness's definition—"effectiveness" is a complex concept which is very difficult to be measured. Each researcher has his or her own standards to judge if particular PSAs are effective. What's more, even the audiences' attitudes or behaviors have changed, they might be caused by many elements rather than the specific PSAs. Since it is not prudent to assess the effectiveness of PSAs, I will investigate audiences' perceptions of *Hairy Nose's* media content in this paper.

Bryant and Zillmann state, there are some "relatively uncontrollable factors" (1994, p. 320) [7] that will influence the effects of advertising. Identity of audiences is one of those factors. However, there is a lack of empirical audience-related data in the research field of clean air PSA. Without audience-related research, all the arguments about PSA are flawed, since PSA is aiming at changing audiences' attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, my research aims at offering some data about audience's perceptions from a rather distinct way based on previous research. The focus is on the individual audiences' voices about specific PSA content, rather than on groups or cultures.

3. Research Methodology and Method

3.1. Case Study

"A case study involves in-depth research into one case or a small set of cases [...] the aim is to gain a rich, detailed understanding by examining aspects of the case in detail." (Thomas, 2013, p. 150) [8] This paper is based on a specific single

case. The choice of methodology and method should depend on the research questions. Yin (2009, p. 4) [9] argues that “the more the questions seek to explain some present circumstance (e.g., “how” or “why” some social phenomenon works), the more that the case study method will be relevant”. Since both two research questions are focused on “how”—“how” *Hairy Nose* appeals to audiences and “how” audiences perceive *Hairy Nose*, the case study method is quite suitable and appropriate for this research.

Yin (2009) [9] points out that case study should be exemplary, significant, complete and be considered from alternative perspectives. *Hairy Nose* is a typical clean air public service announcement. It has the characteristics that a PSA should have: sponsored by a charity, has strong motivation of raising Chinese audiences’ environmental awareness, has clear aims of changing audiences’ attitudes and behaviors, utilizes artistic approaches and appeal strategies, and so on. Although *Hairy Nose* is typical in some regards, it is a special and unique PSA. It was released by a Western organization’s China branch. Thus, it combines both Chinese and western perspectives of air pollution in China. This background makes *Hairy Nose* different from other PSAs produced only by Chinese. Furthermore, although *Hairy Nose* is targeting Chinese audiences and its narration is in Chinese, the subtitles in this video are in English, so that it can be understood by English speakers and has wider range of potential audiences than those PSAs presented only in Chinese. As this is an information-oriented selection, “the utility of information from single case can be maximized” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 79) [10].

3.2. Content Analysis of *Hairy Nose*’s Appeal Strategy

This research employed qualitative content analysis (Thomas, 2013) [8] to explore *Hairy Nose*’s appeal strategy. When the PSA producers represent the horrible consequences of heavy air pollution in a particular way, or when they use particular appeal strategies, they are producing “a particular form of knowledge, which brings power with it” (Burr, 2003, p. 80) [11]. The strategies by which *Hairy Nose* constructs air pollution visually, acoustically and linguistically have implications for the audiences’ perceptions about air pollution.

The categories of appeal strategies were identified precisely after several times of content analysis. It was significant to analyze the media content of *Hairy Nose* again and again, to find out detailed connections between the elements in video and those appeal strategies. After conducting numerous times of content analysis, four most obvious and significant appeal strategies were presented—humor appeal strategy, fear appeal strategy, contrast appeal strategy and identity appeal strategy. What has been found in the content analysis of *Hairy Nose*’s appeal strategy can sufficiently answer the first research question.

3.3. Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured qualitative interviews (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) [12] were

conducted to gather some data about Chinese audiences' views of *Hairy Nose*, as the priority is the quality of data rather than the quantity of data. The interview method is very suitable and effective for gathering qualitative data according to Charmaz (2014) [13], because the data can "reveal participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 23) [13]. It is very important to listen to Chinese audiences' truthful voices through interviews as they offer a good chance to know audiences' detailed subjective views. Hearing the audiences' voices will help the researcher developing a better theoretical perspective of the research findings (Hyatt and Foster, 2015) [14] and their voices can provide original data for the arguments.

The interviews were anonymous, which means, the interviewees did not need to provide their names, so that they can express themselves much freer without uneasiness, especially when they want to criticize something. The anonymous interviews helped me to gain more real thoughts from the interviewees, and further benefited the whole research. However, the interviewees were still asked to provide their personal information except names, because personal information is very helpful for analyzing their identities and making connections with their views.

A purposive selection was conducted among the Chinese audiences and the snowball technique was used—I asked some of my friends to search for the participants among their Chinese friends. The interviewees should be the optimal target audiences—Chinese residents with diverse backgrounds and identities, including age, gender, occupation, educational background, social experiences, and so on. Thus, the diversity of interviewees can be guaranteed to some extent and the chance of hearing different voices is increasing. More importantly, the interviewees must have experienced air pollution in China.

Ten participants were recruited in total. Four interviewees are living in China: 47 years old, female, worker, from Wuhan; 23 years old, female, student, from Xinzhou; 54 years old, male, worker, from Wuhan; 22 years old, male, student, from Jiangsu. The other six interviewees are living in Sweden recent years: 24 years old, female, student, from Sichuan; 22 years old, female, student, from Beijing; 23 years old, female, student, from Wuhan; 36 years old, male, worker, from Beijing; 53 years old, male, worker, from Yunnan; 24 years old, female, student, from Wuhan.

All the interviews were around half an hour. Six interviews were conducted in face to face contact, while the other four were conducted by online video chatting. For face to face interviews, I brought a laptop and played *Hairy Nose* to the interviewees. They can also check the video whenever they want during the interview process. For online video interviews, I asked every interviewee to watch this PSA video before conducting the interviews. All the interviews followed an interview guide. Although the broad topics and questions were fixed, the interviews were quite flexible, just like structured conversations according to Gray (2003) [15]. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed into a word docu-

ment. Basic coding scheme was designed and data analysis was conducted in several phases. The data I gathered from this part can answer the second research question.

4. Appeal Strategies in *Hairy Nose*

One crucial factor that will affect PSA's persuasion is the appeal strategy. *Hairy Nose* provides a notable example of the use of multiple appeal strategies in one video. After conducting detailed analysis of the media content in *Hairy Nose*, the findings are quite fruitful, through which how *Hairy Nose* is constructed can be seen clearly. Every element in this video, including characters, plots, subtitles and narrations, color and lighting, background music and sound, can contribute to appeal strategy. Four most obvious and significant appeal strategies are identified: humor appeal strategy, fear appeal strategy, contrast appeal strategy and identity appeal strategy. In follow, the research findings will be discussed thoroughly and presented in these four categories.

4.1. Humor Appeal Strategy

Hairy Nose utilizes the persuasion strategy of humor appeal, just as the Wild Aid's Chinese representative says: "We want to find some humorous way to talk about the very serious problem we are facing" (BBC News, 2016) [4]. Many former researches have indicated effectiveness of humor appeal in PSAs. Nelson and While find out that more than half of their respondents perceive an advertisement favorable due to its humor value (Paek, Kim and Hove, 2010) [16]. Bryant and Zillmann suggest that, the proper mix of information and entertainment—"new 'infotainment' campaigns" (1994, p. 384) [7]—would be quite effective. This theory can be applied to the PSA *Hairy Nose*, which also combines pro environmental information and entertainment.

Meany and Clark (2013, p. 66) [17] argues that, "humor is frequently based on the clash of incongruous ideas". *Hairy Nose* uses bizarre and grotesque humor to construct a negative physical consequence of living in heavy air pollution—growing furry nose hair. It constructs all the people, including a dog, having different styles of nose hair in the video—a group of children laughing with plaited nose hair; young family out with their hairy-nosed baby; young commuters with their nasal hair dyed and plaited in a metro; many people getting their nose hair trimmed and modeled in a barbershop; a dog barking with its long nose hair; fancy nose-haired gentlemen playing billiard ball, and so on. The idea of "*Hairy Nose*" seems incongruous at first, but after thinking twice audiences might find this idea quite creative and fitting for criticizing heavy air pollution.

Not only the main appeal idea but also some tiny details in *Hairy Nose* are very funny and creative. For instance, on the date of a couple, the girl can even use her nose hair to push away the gift (a shaver) given by her boyfriend; there are some "advertisements" for nose hair in this video, and they appear twice—on both billboard and television. These "advertisements" for "Nose Hair Rinse Es-

sence” are very similar to real advertisements for shampoo—presenting a beautiful charming young lady fiddling her long lush nose hair (see **Image 2**). Slogans for “Nose Hair Rinse Essence”: Hazilization Technology, Soft and Bright, Shiny and Flutter; a barbershop’s advertising: Nose hair caring, Designing and modeling, Long lasting shape. Such tiny details can also reflect the humor appeal strategy.

Kassabian (2008) [18] argues that background music in a video could promote audiences’ emotional engagement unconsciously and inattentively. In *Hairy Nose*, the background music is also playing significant roles. An easy and light atmosphere is built by the lively and brisk background music in *Hairy Nose*. Therefore, the music can also contribute to the humor appeal strategy by indicating that this is a hilarious and funny video. Although in *Hairy Nose*, the visual element of this video is still the dominate source of audiences’ perceptions, the background music can enhance the visual receptions (Whalen, 2007) [19].

Humor appeal may elicit positive emotions and favorable responses to this PSA. However, Paek, Kim and Hove (2010, p. 1089) [16] argue that, this appeal strategy might also “bring about unintended consequences, including disbelief in the ads’ messages due to the use of exaggeration or limited impact due to some potentially unrealistic portrayals”. Excessive humor in *Hairy Nose* might subvert the seriousness of the environmental issues, and its absurd portrayals of nose hair might cause audiences’ disbelief in the dire consequences caused by heavy air pollution.

4.2. Fear Appeal Strategy

Another appeal strategy *Hairy Nose* utilizes is fear. Fear appeal always emphasizes the harmful consequences of disobeying to the suggestions recommended by the PSAs (Hale and Dillard, 1995) [20]. The most frequently displayed negative consequences of air pollution are breathing-related illnesses (such as lung decease, cough, etc.), while *Hairy Nose* displays the consequences of growing nose hair—although it is funny and bizarre, the fear appeal in this video is still direct to the message recipients. In this video, future images of Chinese people are painted as victims. They suffer physical evolving consequences, struggle in



Image 2. Outdoor advertisement in *Hairy Nose* (2016).

the putrid air and choking smog, have no options to escape, and do not even realize they are living in such circumstance.

Burr (2003, p. 52) [11] argues that, “language is at the heart of construction process”. It provides the basis for all people’s thoughts, and human experiences are also carved up by language (Burr, 2003) [11]. Therefore, language plays a very essential and significant role in constructing clean air PSA. Thus, we should apply this when looking at the way the subtitles and narrations representing air pollution in *Hairy Nose*, which can also promote fear appeal strategy. The subtitles in this PSA are in English, while the narrations are in Chinese. The texts bellow are all the English subtitles in the video, and the different phrases in Chinese narrations are pointed out in brackets:

“Look at them, survivors (winners) of the pollution age.”

“They have adapted to this environment (such successfully),

And even grown to enjoy living in it (And even fallen in love with this world already).”

“To them, this is just the way it is (everything is inherent and natural)—

(No matter the life in) The putrid, choking air and (or) the never ending smog.”

“But not to me (But I would rather fall into disuse).”

“Rather than blindly submit, I will experience breathing (Because it is the painful breathing, rather than numbness of adaptation).”

“Because it reminds me that the sky was once this blue.”

“If you do not change air pollution, it will change you instead.”

“Change air pollution before it changes you.”

Extremist words and emotive phrases are used throughout the subtitles and narrations. They aim at evoking a keen sense of poignant among the audiences. The word “survivors” makes the heavy smog like a disaster. “Pollution age” means the air pollution exists for a prolonged period. What’s more, this phrase and “adapted to” both indicate a major shift of evolution that human beings have been changed by the environment and evolved with long nose hair. The word “winners” in Chinese has similar meanings with these phrases, as it implies Darwin’s theory of evolution-only strongest and toughest “winners” will be selected by nature and survive in the harsh environment successfully. All these words and phrases paint the images of a society that most people do not want.

“Even” means it is unbelievable that human beings are so insensitive that they “grown to enjoy living in” heavy smog; “just” means air pollution is nothing special for these people; “putrid, choking air and the never ending smog” describes the contemporary heavy air pollution precisely. These phrases describe those Chinese people who are “blindly submit” to the heavy air pollution and criticize this phenomenon. The narration ends with a warning that if people do not change their ways, air pollution will change them “instead”, which is an obvious fear appeal element.

Besides the subtitles and narrations, the language in “advertisements” for nose

hair mentioned before also has effect on fear appealing. They reinforce the message of how air pollution has become normalized, as these words seem to imply the problem that Chinese people do not protest against heavy smog anymore, take air pollution to be normal, and enjoy living in it. These texts make the virtual *Hairy Nose* world in this video seems more realistic.

Furthermore, the color and lighting in *Hairy Nose* can also improve fear appeal by evoking audiences' dread and anxiety. In this video, some of the light is removed to darken the color, so that the color lacks brightness. The color temperature is always cool as pale gray—a color intermediate between black and white, as of ashes or an overcast sky. These colors and lights are also significant for portraying the horrible world in heavy smog. As for the artificial sound, *Hairy Nose* starts with the sharp sound of car horns. The video is full of hustle and bustle, including traffic noises, dog barking, coughs, and so on, which can also contribute to the fear appeal strategy.

The intent of *Hairy Nose* is to evoke audiences' fear to discontinue polluting the air, so it “emphasizing the negative effects” of air pollution to human beings and “instill fear in the audience about possible future harm to them” (Bagozzi and Moore, 1994, p. 56) [21]. However, fear appeal does not always work, especially high levels of fear (O’Keefe, 1990) [22]. Because high levels of fear might be too exaggerating for audiences to believe. Wolburg, Kendrick and Cressy (2005) [23] also point out that sometimes audiences might be resistant to fear appeal strategy, so that researchers are motivated to search for more creative and improved approaches. This might also be the reason *Hairy Nose* combines humor appeal and fear appeal to warn the audiences of the risk in a hilarious way.

4.3. Contrast Appeal Strategy

The word “contrast” means “strikingly different”. Contrast appeal strategy tries to motivate audiences by making comparison between negative and positive aspects. In *Hairy Nose*, there is a comparison displaying different consequences which depend on how Chinese people treat air pollution. In order to give audiences a feeling that the smog is very heavy in China, the color is gray and the light is dark at the beginning of *Hairy Nose* (see **Image 3**). It shows the consequence caused by no resisting and how horrible to get used to living in the heavy smog.

In the end of this video, the color turns to be more saturated and warmer, and the light turns to be more vivid and brighter (see **Image 4**). It shows the consequence of changing the air pollution: blue sky, white clouds, green trees, shining sun, and a smiling man riding a bicycle—images of a nice world without smog is conveyed to audiences. This contrast can make audiences appreciate a smog-free environment more.

There is another negative and positive aspects comparison between the characters in *Hairy Nose*. This video uses a large paragraph to display how Chinese people enjoy living in smog. While one man does not follow what everyone else



Image 3. Still from the beginning of *Hairy Nose* (2016).



Image 4. Still from the end of *Hairy Nose* (2016).

does. This man would “rather” be eliminated by nature and decides not to “blindly submit”, so he shaves off his nose hair. The narration in Chinese points out that breathing in such condition is so “painful”, so that it “reminds” him “the sky was once this blue”. This man shows totally different attitude toward air pollution and his action makes us realize that there is still hope for future. This contrast can also inspire audiences to take actions at once to fight with air pollution and protect our environment.

4.4. Identity Appeal Strategy

Central to the audiences’ emotional engagement to *Hairy Nose* are their identities. Since this PSA is targeting Chinese people, the producers should consider target audiences’ identities as Chinese residents and make the media content more relevant to China. In *Hairy Nose*, there are many scenes can only be seen in China, such as the middle-aged women using their long nose hair as ribbons and dancing on a square. Such detail can not only attract target audiences’ attentions, but also promote emotional engagement with audiences.

In *Hairy Nose*, “The Oriental Pearl” Radio & TV Tower in Shanghai is shrouded in heavy smog, and it appears twice in this video (see **Image 5(a)** and **Image 5(b)**). This tower can symbolize the development of modern China. Its presence in the video might reminds Chinese audiences that they have sacrificed

the environment for pursuing rapid development, as Ma states “the public actively engage with the air pollution issue by questioning the economic development model” (2015, p. 6) [24]. All the Chinese elements like these in *Hairy Nose* can fit in target audiences’ national identities.

Hairy Nose criticizes the behavior of “blindly submit”, which is one of Chinese people’s typical identities. This personality of Chinese people has been criticized throughout modern Chinese history. It was mostly criticized in the early twentieth century by many famous writers and Chinese people was called “slaves” at that moment, which means only obey, no resistance. One of the main messages of *Hairy Nose* is that people in China should not just accept the current situation. What this PSA video criticizes can hit the point and resonate with Chinese audiences.

Some plots in *Hairy Nose* appeal to audiences’ other identities. For instance, the picture below shows a baby growing furry nose hair (see **Image 6**). It can appeal to audiences’ identities as parents. If the audiences are parents, this plot can remind them of their own children, so that they are more likely to engage with this PSA.

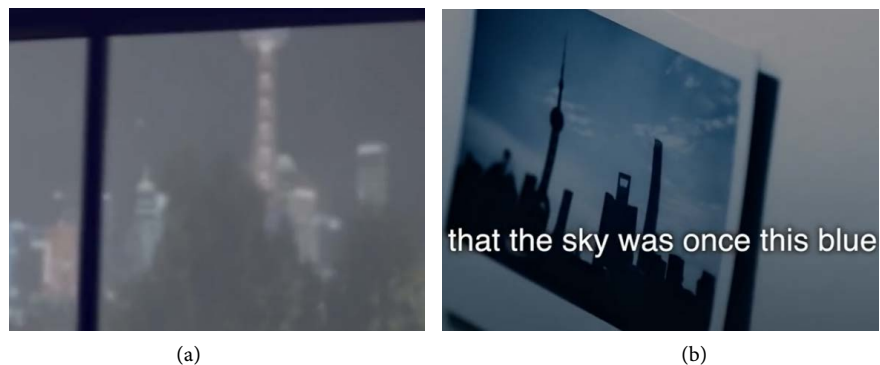


Image 5. “The Oriental Pearl” Tower in *Hairy Nose* (2016).



Image 6. Still from *Hairy Nose* PSA video (2016).

5. Chinese Audiences' Perceptions of *Hairy Nose*

5.1. Creativity of *Hairy Nose* Impressed Chinese Audiences

Among the interviewees of this research, many of them were impressed by the creativity of *Hairy Nose*. A 23 years old female student thought *Hairy Nose* is very creative to warn audiences of environmental degradation by human's evolution to air pollution. A 47 years old female from central China praised: "This creative idea is novel, refreshing, and straightforward. It stimulates audiences by showing them furry nose hair directly, so that Chinese people might pay more attention to the environment problems. The plots in this video are very attractive and closing to our daily life. With unique and creative representing ways, it can make me attach more importance to environmental protection." From their words, it is quite clear that creativity is very important to engage audiences and make PSA content favored by the audiences.

A 54 years old male teacher praised: "The bizarre, funny and furry nose hair really impresses me. This video is classic, resistant to ponder, and more enlightening than normal PSA. [...] Although this video is quite objective when it represents current air pollution in China, I think its starting point is optimistic." Another 22 years old male student also praised: "This video is interesting. Rather than describing the smog in China directly, it achieves its aims by imagining huge changes of creatures' nose in the process of adapting to heavy smog. It utilizes 'black humor' to express anxiety to environmental deterioration and appeal audiences to protect environment." It seems that humor appeal in *Hairy Nose* works to some extent, as the interviewees were impressed by the "black humor" and considered this video enlightening.

Several interviewees liked the plot a girl uses her nose hair to push away the gift (a shaver) given by her boyfriend. The 47 years old female said: "Long hair in the girl's nose, and the shaver as a gift lead to the theme of this video—raising people's awareness to focus on environmental protection and bring back our blue sky. This plot is very creative and it makes me more attentive to this video." The interviewees reacted to this plot because it might hit their hearts by displaying the girl's arrogant attitude of refusing to shave her nose hair in a creative way.

5.2. Fear Emotions among Audiences

Audiences' fear emotions are usually caused by the feeling of at risk. "Risk theories suggest that for a person to change their behavior to avoid risk, they must feel personally vulnerable to negative consequences, think the consequences will be severe." (Wolburg, Kendrick and Cressy, 2005, p. 28) [23] Many interviewees felt depressed and even hopeless after watching *Hairy Nose*. A 23 years old female student stated: "The dark color tone of this video makes me feel depressed." The 54 years old male said: "Yes, I feel a little scared. Because I do not want my nose becoming such ugly and weird, and I do not want to breathe painfully. (serious face)".

An interviewee from Beijing worried about the younger generation and future of China: “I am impressed by the image of a little baby with furry nose hair. It makes me worry about the future of children. Younger generations are very important. We should leave a beautiful world to them.” Another female interviewee, who is a young mother in her early 30 s, also expressed her worry for her four years old daughter. However, when it comes to the parents whose children have already become adults, they seemed do not worry too much about their children since none of them mention this aspect.

Several interviewees were impressed by the warning words in the end of *Hairy Nose*. The 54 years old male teacher said: “There are some concise words and sentences in the narrations. And the last sentence is very effective for warning.” And the 47 years old female said: “The narrations are very clear and distinct, especially the last sentence—‘If you do not change air pollution, it will change you instead’. It can really stimulate audiences to do introspection.” Their views verified that language plays a significant role in the process of carving people’s thoughts (Burr, 2003) [11]. In addition, the Foucauldian approach reminds us to always consider the “power relations at play within these influential discourses” (Burr, 2003, p. 175) [11]. When significant audiences accept the media content of *Hairy Nose*, these statements will “fulfill organizational purposes” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 50) [13] and be very powerful.

5.3. Criticizing *Hairy Nose* as Resident Audiences

Even though the interviewees liked some aspects of *Hairy Nose*, they criticized it a lot according to their own observations and experiences. As the media content in *Hairy Nose* is highly relevant to China, Chinese audiences can be considered as resident audiences (Athique, 2014) [25]. Athique (2016, p. 10) [26] stresses, “resident audiences are generally seen as being keen to consume content that is simultaneously ‘about here and about us’”, just as a 24 years old Chinese girl said: “I think those Chinese elements will more or less pull me into the video. I will pay attention to the things relevant to China, especially bad things. (laugh)”

A few interviewees criticized the length of *Hairy Nose*: “I think this video is too long. If I see it on television or website occasionally, I might turn it off. Maybe it is suitable for subway station.”; “The pace of this video is too slow. It is ... uh, dragging.” Their views verified Roehm and Roehm Jr.’s opinion that PSA should be conciseness, especially for new media, and “messages that were briefer created a stronger impression” (Roehm and Roehm Jr., 2012, p. 119) [27]. Although *Hairy Nose* is just one and a half minutes, it is still considered too long by audiences in the contemporary new media environment.

An interviewee from Beijing stated: “There is no ‘traditional’ PSA now. All the PSAs are pursuing creativity. So, I think this one is not very outstanding.” This view shows how the media development creates a situation where media producers have to come up with more shocking messages, and media contents have to become more and more creative. Another interviewee from Wuhan said: “I do

not think this video is very interesting. Because there are many more interesting posts on social media, such as small jokes, funny GIFs, short videos, which are very easy to get access to. Compared to those posts, this PSA is relatively less attractive.” It seems quite hard to work with complex social issues in the current new media landscape, where audiences generally expect the information to be shorter and shorter, but also interesting at the same time.

Some interviewees criticized the approaches of representation in *Hairy Nose*. A girl from central China said: “Some people who are not smart enough might do not understand why people in the video growing long nose hair.” Another 54 years old man agreed with this point: “The idea of ‘hairy nose’ is pretty good, but it is a little difficult for me to understand this video. The narration is imperfect—if all the people in this video think they are living in a wonderful world, then, why does the main character decide to shave his nose hair. It is an obvious contradiction for me.” *Hairy Nose* emphasizes artistic effects of the whole video, so it might ignore some aspects and lack consideration of logic in narration.

Some other interviewees thought *Hairy Nose* is ineffective at all. A 24 years old girl from Sichuan province criticized: “This video does not work on me. Because it is too sensual and only based on imagination. I want to see more rational and deeper information.” Emotional appeal in this video was not convincing for this interviewee as she preferred rational appeal. Another male interviewee from Beijing stated: “This video cannot contribute too much, as it does not have such huge power only by using irony. [...] Neither do I think the responsibility of environmental protection can be shouldered on this video or PSA.”

The 23 years old female student stressed: “The consequence caused by smog is too severe in this video, so that audiences might consider it not so realistic or trustworthy.” There were another two interviewees also considered this video too exaggerated to believe and they ascribed it to the organization’s American perspective. Their views corresponded to the opinion of Paek, Kim and Hove, who argue that this appeal strategy might cause “disbelief in the ads’ messages due to the use of exaggeration or limited impact due to some potentially unrealistic portrayals” (2010, p. 1089) [16].

5.4. How *Hairy Nose* Can Be Improved

The interviewees gave some advice to improve *Hairy Nose*. A female student from central China said: “The idea is very good, but I do not like it only focus on the bad aspects. And not every part of China is like this. I think it can represent some optimistic things that can bring hope to audiences. For instance, some areas in China are improving air quality actively rather than only waiting or blindly submitting.” Another young student also said: “This video is a little pessimistic. Government has invested a lot to improve the air condition in Beijing. I believe tomorrow will be better.” These interviewees were quite optimistic about future and had confidence in Chinese government.

A 23 years old girl gave many suggestions to *Hairy Nose*: “The way of narra-

tion needs to be improved. Maybe it should explain a little bit about why people in the future grow long nose hair. [...] And the video lacks a sense of comparison. Maybe it can divide the screen into two sides: on the left side, it shows people living in horrible smog with long nose hair; on the right side, it shows people living in a wonderful green and clear world. [...] The last part of this video is most important, but only occupied a small paragraph. Maybe the last part can be elaborated a little bit.” She thought contrast appeal strategy is important, but the contrasts and comparisons presented in this PSA are not enough.

As for future clean air campaigns, many interviewees gave their suggestions. A young girl said: “It is essential for PSAs to make everyone aware that heavy air pollution is a disaster for the whole society. Because the worst results of air pollution, like lung cancer, would not happen to everyone, so the individuals might not aware of the seriousness of environmental pollution.” Another 23 years old girl who major in media and communication studies gave a quite professional advice that the PSA campaigns could achieve online and offline synchronization to maximize the impacts, and should not waste media sources.

A 23 years old girl expressed her worries: “I am willing to join in more environmental campaigns, but not limited to propaganda. I prefer to do some realistic things, but I am afraid I cannot find many partners.” Another 22 years old male student stated: “I hope to see campaigns lasting for a long term. It does not matter which kind of campaign it is. What important is persistence, rather than those campaigns like ‘festival activities’.” I think the goal of raising Chinese people’s environmental awareness should be set for a long time, but the PSA’s goal should not, because the media environment is becoming “increasingly dynamic, complex, and fast changing in the 21st century” (Parente, *et al.*, 1996, p. 19) [28].

Another problem was, the interviewees did not know what specific and effective actions they can take to improve air quality in China. Even though *Hairy Nose* calls Chinese audiences to take actions, it does not provide any useful tips. An interviewee from Beijing joked: “If I do not add burden to environment, then, I am making contribution.” Many interviewees felt hopeless and useless: “I did nothing, because I cannot change anything.”, “Only government has the power to stop pollution.” Ma also has similar claim in her research: “the public is not empowered to act and contribute to the effort of improving air quality” (2015, p. 6) [24]. In future, clean air PSAs could figure out more specific actions to protect environment, and those actions have to be affordable for normal people. Such PSAs should also emphasize the importance of individuals.

6. Conclusions

To sum up, this paper analyzes the media content of *Hairy Nose* to see how it appeals to Chinese audiences, and investigates how Chinese audiences perceive this PSA. *Hairy Nose*, which is a typical but special PSA targeting Chinese audiences, providing a notable example of the use of multiple appeal strategies in

one video. Every element in this video, including characters, plots, subtitles and narrations, color and lighting, background music and sound, can contribute to appeal strategy. Four most obvious and significant appeal strategies are identified—humor appeal strategy, fear appeal strategy, contrast appeal strategy and Chinese identity appeal strategy.

There are many other appeal strategies that could be connected to *Hairy Nose*. However, they were not discussed or presented in research finding part for some reasons. For instance, this PSA calls people to take actions to change air pollution, but it does not provide any specific instructions. So, call-to-action appeal should not be applied to this PSA, since it “taps people’s need for guidance and desire to be nurtured to learn appropriate behaviors” (Edwin, 2016, p. 235) [29].

Emotional appeal might also be applied to *Hairy Nose*. According to Edwin, emotional appeal “triggers state of arousal—affection, anger, pride, sadness—to encourage desired behavior” (2016, p. 236) [29]. However, I think it overlaps with fear and humor appeals, because once these two appeal strategies work, they will probably trigger audiences’ emotions and promote emotional engagement with audiences. Besides, fear and humor appeals are more specific, while emotional appeal is broader. So, I discussed fear and humor appeals in this thesis rather than emotional appeal.

It seems that the humor appeal in *Hairy Nose* works, since it elicited positive emotions and favorable responses among Chinese audiences. This PSA was described by some words like, bizarre, unique, funny, interesting, novel, refreshing, creative, attractive, “black humor”, and so on. The interviewees were impressed by some plots and narrations, stylish nose hair, meticulous details, etc. The fear emotions among Chinese audiences were also aroused by this video. The interviewees admitted that they felt depressed of the dark color tone and images of furry nose hair. They also felt vulnerable to the negative consequences of heavy smog, and expressed their worries about the future and younger generation in China.

Chinese audiences can be considered as resident audiences in this case, as the media content in *Hairy Nose* is highly relevant to China. They criticized this PSA according to their own observations and experiences in China. Some interviewees argued that *Hairy Noses* is not very outstanding comparing to other PSAs, since all the PSAs are pursuing creativity at present and there are tons of interesting posts on social media. Audiences also criticized the approaches of representation in *Hairy Nose*. Some other interviewees even considered this video ineffective at all.

There are some limitations in this research. For instance, during the recruitment and sampling process, even though I have tried to guarantee the heterogeneity of the interviewees involved, some of them were still similar to each other and had many identities in common—the interviewees were all well-educated with at least bachelor degree, since my friends and my friends’ friends are normally well educated people. Thus, the data collected from the interviews were

quite ideal, and some messages were similar and repetitive.

I tried to find out some differences of perceptions between the Chinese audiences who are living in China and who are abroad. I thought there would be some differences because these two groups have relatively huge gaps in individual experiences and knowledge about air pollution in China. I compared the data between these two groups, but have not found any obvious or significant difference. The Chinese people who are living in Sweden recent years also knew the conditions of China's heavy air pollution, typical Chinese-style PSAs, and trends on Chinese social media pretty well. I give the credit to current high technologies and new media, especially internet and social media. By using these new tools, overseas Chinese people can gain rich knowledge highly relevant to China easily as insiders, no matter where they are on the earth.

One aspect of this research that needs additional investigation is the conditions of Chinese audiences' engagement and participation. Future studies should provide more detailed, systematic, and sophisticated analysis of audiences' participation in such clean air PSA campaigns, since participation is the ultimate aim of PSA.

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