

CityStudio and Zero Waste Project Group Final Summary
#Mugshot - Single-Use Coffee Cup Reduction Campaign
UBC ECON 492D & ECON 317

1. Names

a. Name of the Organization

Zero Waste Vancouver; facilitated by CityStudio

b. Community Partners Information

Name	Responsibility
Paul Gagnon	Corporate Zero Waste Officer, City of Vancouver
Ileana Costrut	Project Coordinator - City Studio

c. Student Information

Name
Erika Tajiri
Novera Sayed
Yongzhi (Angie) Wu
Leo (Jaehyun) Soh

CBEL Partner

CityStudio is an innovation hub where students, the community and city staff can co-create experimental projects to make Vancouver a more sustainable and enjoyable city to live in. As part of its operations, CityStudio collaborates with the City of Vancouver and post-secondary institutions in British Columbia to provide practical learning experiences for students. Their vision is to “co-create a city where students are deeply engaged inside City Hall to make our city more livable, joyful and sustainable.” So far CityStudio has worked with 4,232 students, 201 faculties across seven post-secondary universities, and 208 city staff. This term, they connected our student group with Paul Gagnon and the Zero Waste Project.

Founded in 2011 with the aim of transforming Vancouver into the greenest city in the world by 2020, the Zero Waste Project is well on its way to delivering that goal. At the time, the diversion rate was only 15%, which meant 85% of solid waste ended up in landfills, but by the end of 2017, the diversion rate had increased to 84%. Despite these very positive results, one item remained resolute in spite of various waste reduction strategies and campaigns: single-use paper cups. Each week, 2.6 million of these cups end up in landfills, a figure that does not account for litter. To reduce their usage, Paul wanted us to find out why people continue to use them, then create a slogan and/or hashtag to combat the main issues that people faced when trying to stop using the cups.

In 44 Words

We conducted research to identify the main barriers preventing reusable mug usage. Then, we brainstormed potential social media campaign ideas and decided upon #MugShot Yourself. With the slogan decided, we created deliverables including a campaign strategy, an outreach package, various graphics, and short videos.

The Long Version:

Before creating a slogan or attempting to tackle the issue of single-use cup usage, we first compiled research from past CityStudio projects as well as independent and academic research. Each member carried out research on different geographic areas, with Novera taking Vancouver, Leo taking Toronto, Angie taking Asia, and Erika taking Europe. Some of our sources included Canadian post-secondary institutions like UBC and McMaster as well as municipality reports from cities in Canada, China, South Korea, and the U.S.

The past semester's projects surveyed individuals in the UBC and Vancouver area regarding the difficulties they faced when attempting to curb their single-use cup usage and switch to reusable mugs. The top three issues they highlighted were that mugs are:

- Hard to clean,
- Heavy to carry, and
- Easy to forget.

We did find solutions to these problems. For instance, we found foldable mugs such as [Stojo](#) and more affordable options offered by sellers on Amazon for \$15 CAD or less. These mugs collapse down into the size of wallets and use plastic or silicone materials that are light but durable, making them extremely easy to carry. In addition, some of these mugs can be attached to backpacks and other portable devices via metal hook, making them difficult to lose. But of course, to expect every single person to independently purchase such a mug is an unrealistic goal for any campaign, let alone a one-term student project. The same can be said about the most efficient solution to the "hard to clean" problem. While compostable cups, a perfect substitute for single-use cups, are available on the market and would cause significantly less environmental harm than their counterpart, they are much more expensive at wholesale. So, we determined that these fundamental causes could not be effectively tackled by a social media campaign.

Instead, we turned our focus and attention to another equally important aspect of the issue. The general public is not aware of the environmental impact that single-use cups have. More specifically, many residents of Vancouver do not seem to be aware that single-use cups are recyclable, as 2.6 million of them end up in landfills each week. This is understandable, as they are lined with plastic, which contaminates other paper products that share the blue bin with the product. Also, other cities like Toronto actually do not recycle single-use cups or have started recycling them only very recently. So, we decided that the focus of our campaign would be to raise awareness about the facts circulating within zero waste and sustainability discourse but not known by the general public.

Through research, our group discovered that there have been many past sustainability campaigns in Vancouver, some of which aimed to reduce single-use cup usage. Most of these had very little impact for two reasons: first, most sustainability groups lack a platform that can engage the general public, and second, many past campaigns lacked effective marketing techniques. We did not want to repeat the mistakes of these past campaigns, so we decided to focus on research and deliverables to create a campaign that could really succeed, rather than going live with a mediocre campaign.

Social media campaigns require specialized strategies that take advantage of specific algorithms and psychological tricks to capture attention in oversaturated online channels. Sub-optimal marketing strategies result in the targeted audience not hearing the campaign message, and by extension, not changing their behaviour.

Armed with a purpose, we examined past successful social media campaigns that garnered significant public engagement in order to come up with the most impactful campaign. We found that the following factors contributed to the likelihood that a campaign would succeed:

- A small number of very large prizes,
- A large number of small to medium prizes,
- A creative premise, and
- A challenge that asks participants to do and post something ridiculous.

In terms of the actual campaign materials, we found the following factors positively contributed to engagement:

- Dramatic music
- Ambiguous/memorable video
- Reveals message only at the end
- Iconic voice and/or character
- Short length (<15~30 seconds)
- Rapid pace
- Multi-platform marketing

In addition, on-campus research helped frame our campaign. The AMS Marketing Plan Report found through an online survey that 46% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that social or peer pressure influences them to make sustainable lifestyle choices (Hatmi et. al, 17). Another question found that 62% of respondents would be more likely to bring their own mug if they were reminded of the environmental impact of their actions (Hatmi et. al, 18). Moreover both the AMS Marketing Plan Report, Lug a Mug Campaign Report, and reports from previous semester concluded that rather focusing on funding to have more reusable mugs, it would be better to use the resources to remind people to bring their mugs as most respondents from survey said that they already own a reusable mug.

The #MugShot Campaign

Our campaign slogan, “#MugShot Yourself”, is a challenge that transforms guilt, a negative emotion, into a positive, generative energy. Since every one of us has been guilty of using a single-use cup at some point, the campaign asks social media users to post a mugshot

of themselves (a picture of them and their mug) with the hashtag #mugshot and a caption that shares a pertinent fact about the negative environmental impact single-use cup usage. For instance, captions could read: “Paper cups ARE recyclable!” or “If you buy a coffee a day, you create 23 lbs of waste each year!” The incentive to participate would be twofold. As the Marketing Plan Report found, social media users, especially youth, are eager to impress their friends with their sustainable lifestyle choices. In addition, desirable prizes would encourage users to participate. Keeping these in mind, we drafted the following contest rules.

Contest rules:

1. Get your favourite reusable mug.
2. Take your #MugShot, and make sure to include yourself & your mug.
3. Post your photo with a fact about the negative environmental impact of single-use cups and your pledge to drink sustainably.
4. Include the hashtag **#mugshot** and tag **@CityStudioVan** to be entered to win [AMAZING PRIZE, e.g. free coffee for a year, free mugs for life]

<https://www.facebook.com/events/162765171051711/>

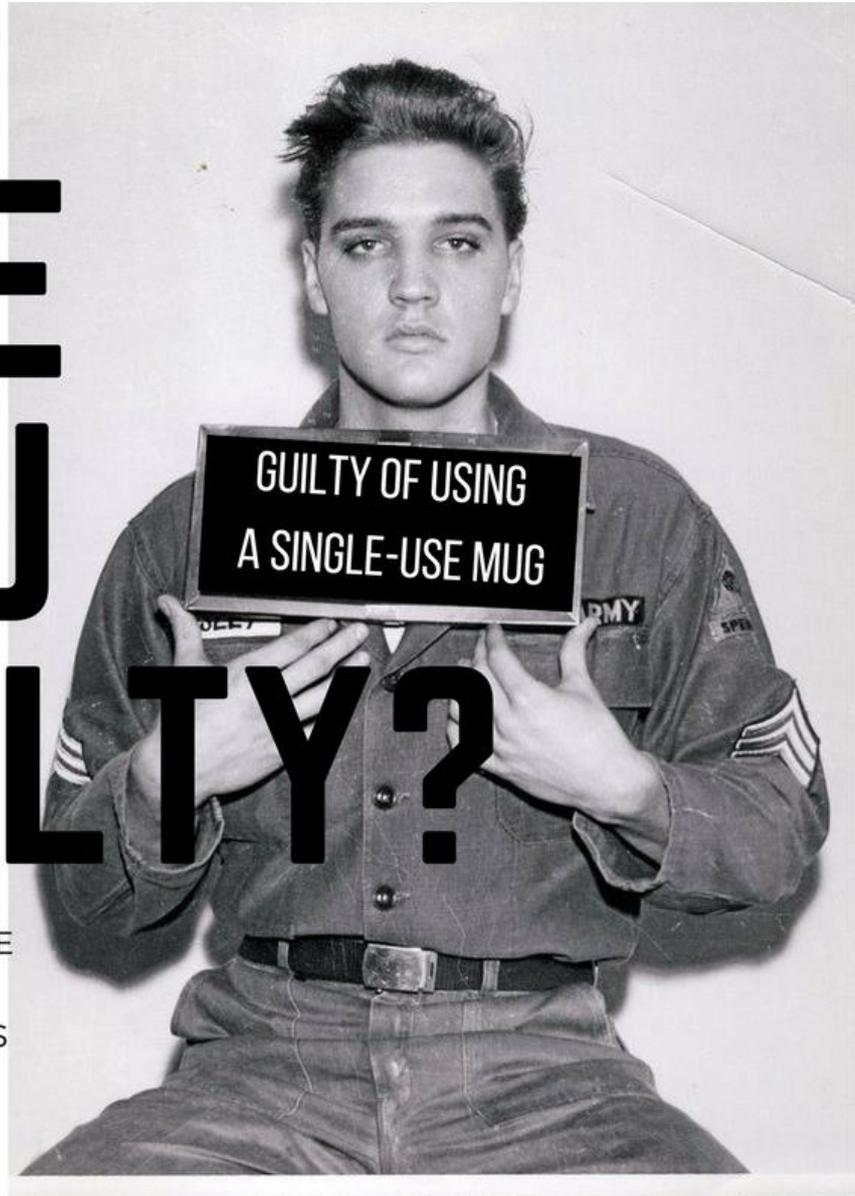
Campaign Feedback:

The “#Mugshot Yourself” campaign generated significant interest once presented to the public at the Hubhub Innovation Showcase on April 6th, 2018. Our group representatives connected with the individuals from the UBC Wellness Centre, Lupii Zero Waste Cafe, LUSH and the Vancouver Mayor’s office whom all expressed specific interest in getting involved in our campaign once it is launched. Due to interest, we have decided to add a Facebook page that connects various zero waste initiatives in Vancouver to pool our resources and to create a stronger voice on digital platforms. The positive feedback received from other organizations and the public confirmed that our focus on affective marketing was a success and that the #Mugshot Yourself campaign has promise in reducing single-use cup waste in Vancouver.

To buttress the campaign, Erika created eight graphics, including this one of Elvis Presley below.

ARE YOU GUILTY?

TAKE THE PLEDGE
TO STOP USING
SINGLE-USE CUPS
#MUGSHOT



Erika also made a Facebook group to connect Vancouver's Zero-Waste initiatives and generate a stronger voice and Angie edited several short, engaging videos that could be shared by the campaign to engage the public. Then, since external outreach to secure marketing and sponsorship opportunities will be integral to the success of this future campaign, Leo created a three page external outreach package that is visually appealing and can be repurposed to fit a number of logistical needs.

These campaign materials have been moved to a single Google Drive, which will be shared with the community partners so that a future student group and external organizations can have access to the materials and make use of them. Erika and Leo created an outline of the campaign strategy and timeline, so the following group has a rubric and clear guidelines to follow.

Connection to Economics

Our project did not link closely to economics, at least in the traditional sense. After all, we were creating a social media campaign, which sounds most like a marketing project. However, the issue of single-use cups and the manner in which our campaign addresses it do relate back to developmental economics.

As Barbier comments in *The Concept of Sustainable Economic Development* (1987), “sustainable development should also be applicable to all forms of economic and social activity, including industry and human settlements” (105), not just agriculture, forestry, and wildlife. Using Barbier’s terminology, the City of Vancouver is “a system dependent on environmental resources” (105) and single-use cups are a stress to that system, or as he puts it, a “continuous, relatively small and predictable disturbance” (105). But crucially, by contributing to solid waste buildup in landfills, single-use cups impede the system from operating with the “maximum amount of resource conservation and the minimum amount of environmental degradation allowable” (105).

To combat this, Barbier advocates “the integration of environmental and natural resources management directly into macroeconomic policy” (108), and we are seeing his statement transform into reality, as a recent draft proposal seeks a levy on single-use cups and a drastic reduction in plastic straws. But as Schweitzer et al. point out in *Economic Networks: The New Challenges* (2009), “The economy, as any other complex system, reflects a dynamic interaction of a large number of different agents, not just a few key players” (422). In other words, while macroeconomic policies at the city-level and beyond are key components of sustainable development, other agents need to be involved to create lasting change. With our campaign, we hope to do just that.

Challenges and Highlights

The main challenges we faced with this project were time and scope. As all four members were enrolled in a full course load, and three had significant extracurricular involvements, scheduling regular meetings and contributing to research proved difficult.

As we were aware of our time limitation, we focused on the most critical topics for our research and decided to improve the quality of our deliverables rather than going live with our campaign. In particular, we narrowed our focus to answering the question: “What does the public not know about the environmental impact of single-use cup usage?” Also, we increased our efficiency as a team by sharing our research results with each other, as this allowed us to diversify our research efforts.

Also, we divided up the deliverables to suit each others’ strengths. Erika has design experience and flair, Angie has video editing experience, and Leo is a talented writer and editor, so each took on the tasks they would excel at.

The biggest highlight of our project was, without a doubt, presenting at Hubbub. While we did not take home a prize, Erika and Leo made many connections and received an

outpour of positive feedback. Some of these connections include Recycle BC, a government-mandated organization that is lean but has gargantuan industry connections, and the mayor's office, which is planning a consultation on single-use cups in May and asked us to participate. Overall, most of the participants and guests at Hubbub responded positively to our campaign hashtag and slogan, and said that they would participate in the online campaign if it the prize had an equivalent value to free coffee for a year.

Works Cited

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