

Headline	National campaigns go digital		
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Description	This year, many national campaigns, including the Speak Good English Movement, have hopped onto the new-media bandwagon to reach out to the young and Internet-savvy.		

National campaigns go digital



NEW media has finally arrived. This year, all types of campaigns, including government-backed ones, have hopped onto the new-media bandwagon, in a bid to reach the young and Internet-savvy.

They include the Speak Good English Campaign, the National Council on Problem Gambling's latest anti-gambling drive, and the National Environment Agency's latest dengue-awareness campaign.

Under these drives, messages, photographs and videos are posted on websites and social-media platforms such as Facebook and blogs.

Experts agree that the new-media strategy should be effective, as youths are engaged on their own turfs.

However, the success of a campaign depends on whether youths find the content appealing and the other components of the campaign.

Young people are likely to be comfortable with new media and access it regularly, so conducting campaigns via new media makes sense for organisers, said Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser of the National University of Singapore's sociology department.

But youths can turn off or "flip channels", due to the massive number of choices available, or if they find the message naggy and overbearing, he said.

Ms Vivian Yeung, the managing director of communications company REAP Interactive, said that the message has to be presented in ways that youths are receptive to.



For example, youths like new media because they like being able to choose to read what they are interested in.

There should also be less text with more visuals, to avoid turning off most youths, who have a short attention span, she said.

Dr Melanie Storry Chan, consultant psychologist of The Counselling Place, said: "Many youths have told me that they like the

interactiveness of new media, as opposed to more traditional forms such as reading books or hearing a lecture.

"They also appreciate having quizzes or games attached to new media, and (they) say that this often helps them learn more about themselves and the message given. The use of new media such as Facebook, blogs (and) Twitter are very effective at reaching most youths."

But she said that these campaigns will work better if they combine new media with other initiatives, to increase youths' exposure to a campaign message.

Studies in the United States have found that media campaigns combined with school programmes are more effective in putting a message across.

Student Cindy Chew, 18, said: "Introducing a campaign is like trying to set a fashion trend. At first, the idea seems weird. Then, after you see it more (often), it becomes acceptable, even cool. The good thing about using new media is that youths will see it quite a lot."