"Hipster" is a meaningless target for labour marketing campaign

Kate Black

The term "hipster" is thrown around more than brass atCoachella. At the slightest glimpse of thick-framed glasses, a can of Pabst Blue Ribbon or Ray Bans, people are quick to call someone a hipster — only to be met with a denial that they are, in fact, a hipster. This tired cycle of senseless name-calling has been going on for years and needs to come to an end, but the BC government seems determined to keep the party going.

In anticipation of a predicted labour shortage, the government launched a $15 million ad campaign to encourage youth to join the workforce. Featuring signs stating that "Hipster is Not a Real Job," the campaign received a slew of media attention — mostly negative, pointing out how it alienated its audience and distracted from the desired cause.

Nobody — no matter how tight their beadbands — will look at this gossipy public transit, drop out of their fine arts programs and enter the workforce, because nobody self-identifies as a hipster — and rightly so. Classifying yourself under a blanket term reduces your style, artwork or social causes to something done purely for the sake of image. In a time where culture mass-produced and brands have commoditized uniqueness to the point of erasing the mainstream, a person's individuality is at a premium: one way of protecting this is by rejecting all-encompassing stereotypes.

At this point, the word "hipster" has become so vague and overused that anyone from the starting artist sharing her masterpiece to the suburban twin buying out the discount rack at Urban Outfitters can be labelled a hipster. The BC government made the mistake of implying that belonging to this theoretical subculture is a "job" — a dishonourable choice — instead of a long-term drudgery over people straying from the supposed norm.

The term itself is completely ambiguous: hipsters only exist to those whom they define them, for the definition is playful in nature and remains exclusive to those creating it. As Dustin Glick explains in his Hipster Theory of Relativity, "A hipster can only exist in comparison... it's an illusion, like tall. If you're 5', someone 6'1" is tall; but if you're 6', someone 6'5" is tall." In other words, there is always going to be someone more alternative and pretentious than you, but you will rarely recognize yourself as being a hipster.

As a group that can't seem to self-identify or be concretely defined by others, the concept of a "hipster" is about as hazy asKylie Jenner's dressing room. That said, criticizing a group that theoretically does not exist in pointlessness, because they will never actually know that you are talking about them. If you call someone a hipster, they're probably going to scoff and call you a bigger hipster; if you run a post that encourages telling people to stop being a hipster and get a real job, they're probably going to take you less seriously the next time you want to appeal to them using youthful jargon.

This campaign achieved little except for desecrating British Columbia's rich artistic diversity as a figure of superficial culture, and confusing a group of angry and confused students. Hopefully, they will learn from their mistakes and actually choose an audience that exists — or recognizes their existence, anyway.

Chinese investments warrant wariness

Adrian Lahela-Chomlak

China's economic expansion over the past decade has been impressive, but now that they're expanding onto our doorstep, Canadians are rightly becoming wary — the potential takeover of Calgary-based oil sands corporation Nexen by The China National Offshore Oil Company poses a greater concern than the supposed benefits.

Canadians should feel apprehensive because this isn't a standard corporate takeover. CNOC isn't just any foreign company but actually a Chinese state-controlled corporation — bringing with it some unique considerations. A recent University of Alberta poll suggests that Canadians largely disagree with the potential takeover. Conducted by the U of A's Centre for Chinese Institute, the survey found that while 37 per cent agreed partial ownership is acceptable, 64 per cent disagreed with total ownership and only 9 per cent actually agreed, with the rest undecided. At the moment, the deal is paused, awaiting approval from the Canadian government — currently trying to determine if the deal is a net-benefit to the country.

Determining what benefits and issues will be difficult because there's more to consider than just the economy. Getting companies to invest capital in the oil sands seems like a surefire way to make society economically gain. The problem is the takeover comes with so much baggage that it doesn't seem worth it.

First, there are significant environmental implications to the takeover. China has a notoriously bad environmental record, with massive CO2 and smog emissions last part of a long list of pollutants discharged at record levels. Around the world Chinese companies have contributed to this shoddy record, but since they often operate in third-world countries, they face few repercussions.

If CNOC takes over Nexen, it's reasonable to worry that this bad environmental policy may follow. Another problem is the traditional monetary fine punishment structure is less of a deterrent because CNOC has the funds of an entire nation behind it. It's worrisome that more than one oil sands companies, CNOC could abuse their privileges in a way that harms the environment. National security is also a concern with this potential takeover — not to say that China will use CNOC as a way to directly harm Canadians. Instead, CNOC could be used as a platform for more subversive security threats like cyber-attacks and corporate espionage. These concerns come out of the latest annual report by the Canadiser Security Intelligence Service, which warns against foreign interference through companies with strong ties to their home nation. The report warns against the harm that these kinds of attacks could wreak on high-tech industries, and China could be particularly dangerous in this respect.

The final problem with the deal is that it will likely open the door to political corruption: a more prevalent issue with the oil sands than Canadian companies want to admit, but this deal has the potential to be particularly bad in this respect. It comes down to the resources that CNOC has at its disposal thanks to state ownership. CNOC can flex muscles that regular corporations can't because of state backing and China could use it to influence Canadian policy to its利益s.

It's good to encourage investment in the Canadian economy and the country of origin for the money doesn't play into the deal that much. However, China's weird fusion of socialist bureaucracy and capitalist economics makes it a bit dangerous.

National interests are being eroded through corporate methods that are strange, and foreign control of Canadian resources in this way is not a good thing.

Leadership Opportunities and Challenges in a Dynamic Energy Industry

Hal Kvisle
President and CEO, Talisman Energy Inc

Date: November 1, 2012
Time: 4:30 – 6:00 p.m.
Location: E1-017 ETC
Engineering Teaching and Learning Complex
University of Alberta North Campus

109 Years of Leadership in Business, the Community and the Country

Brandt Louie
Chairman of the Board, London Drugs

Date: November 21, 2012
Time: 4:30 – 6:00 p.m.
Location: 2-190 ECHA (Second Floor)
Edmonton Clinic Health Academy
University of Alberta North Campus

These events are free and open to all. Refreshments will be served.
RSVP and information: www.innovativeleadersualberta.ca