

“She Can Too” Persuasive Health Campaign

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Abstract

Women’s Sports Foundation (WSF) is an organization that promotes female athletes and supports and empowers women through sports. WSF encourages women across the nation to reach their full potential and live a healthy life (Women’s Sports Foundation, n.d.). In order to continue the effort in supporting young women and equality in sports, the campaign “She Can Too” was created. The goal behind such a campaign is not only to raise awareness regarding the inequality that currently exists in the realm of sports, but also to encourage more young women to join a cause that promotes a healthier, more active lifestyle. Through different persuasive attempts, the campaign is intended to resonate with young women around the world.

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The “She Can Too” campaign is multifaceted and is centered around different posters, flyers, and brochures. Furthermore, the addition of a magazine cover provides another effective means of communication with the intended audience. A magazine cover can be an effective way of reaching a target audience not only due to its easily accessible nature, but also due to its popularity in society. Mass media is known to be powerfully influential and able to shape cultural norms (Perloff, 2017); therefore, it is a suitable platform to promote a prosocial cause such as “She Can Too.” The campaign is intended to promote a change in behaviour for women and even men around the world. Not only does the campaign anticipate a change in behavior, but also as a prosocial cause: It anticipates a change in social norms when it comes to viewing women as equal to men. The intended audience are young women; however, the overarching message to promote equality among sexes and to live a healthier lifestyle can be geared to the general population as well. In order to reach the intended audience, a few strategies were put in place based on existing theories.

Semiotic Approach

By using a semiotic approach, the color pink was used as a background color for the magazine cover. Typically, pink is associated with women and with femininity (Perloff, 2017). Through association, the intended audience of young women can be drawn towards the color of the magazine and are more likely to read the information on the cover. This is a simple, yet effective way to connect with the intended audience.

Diffusion Theory

Another strategy that was used in the creation of the magazine cover was diffusion theory. This theory, suggested by Rogers (2004), suggests diffusion is the manner in which new ideas are spread across members of a social system through different communication channels. More recently, as suggested by Perloff (2017), diffusion theory offers a vast array of effective tools when it comes to promoting social causes that are innovative in nature. Furthermore, diffusion theory highlights the idea that interpersonal communication along with different media outlets can lead to changes in health behavior. A societal change can be obtained through an innovative, bold campaign that effectively uses different persuasive methods. For a health communication campaign to be effective quickly, a key component is to incorporate culturally prevailing values and norms that are compatible with the main ideas of the campaign. As explained by Perloff

(2017, p. 542) “health campaigns flourished in the 20th century,” which is of great benefit to a health campaign such as “She Can Too,” due to the fact that the prevailing cultural sentiment is already one that is geared towards an awareness and aim for a healthier lifestyle. This awareness benefits the campaign insofar as the message that the campaign is promoting is compatible with the cultural norms of the time.

Diffusion theory further argues the fact that a clear reward should be obvious to the individual (Perloff, 2017). As a result of this, the magazine cover was designed with this idea in mind. The phrase “invest in yourself” offers a message that adopting a healthier lifestyle is an action that is rewarding to the individual. It comes as no surprise that exercise, diet, and nutrition are all crucial elements for proper health. However, to make the point readily apparent to the audience and to present a salient reward can make the argument more persuasive for the intended target. As suggested by Perloff (2017, p. 549) “awareness is a first step to influencing attitudes and behavior.” With this in mind, any persuasive attempt must encourage the audience to become aware of the message being presented and the concern being raised. Perloff (2017) further argues that campaigns are effective by presenting the audience with an initial message, and subsequently, early adopters spread the message to further crowds.

Self-Efficacy

For an individual to be persuaded, another key aspect argued by Perloff (2017) is the individual must feel that their contribution will in fact make a difference. This indicates that self-efficacy is crucial for the individual to believe they can make an impact, and therefore will engage in the desired behaviour of the campaign. As a result, the magazine cover offers a message that indicates it is possible to “make a difference.” This message could then encourage individuals to make a donation and could potentially avoid having an individual assume their contribution would not be influential. Although it may be self-explanatory that making a donation will in fact make a difference, it is helpful to remind the audience of this fact. This message makes it clear that a donation can make a difference when it comes to supporting women in sports and the WSF as a whole.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Another theory utilized for the creation of the magazine cover was the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). The ELM considered the possibility that those who viewed advertisements may have specific motivations and may carefully consider what was being

presented to them. Furthermore, elaboration likelihood could be high or low, depending on differing factors (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). Perloff (2017) elaborates extensively on this theory and posits information can be processed centrally or peripherally. When information is processed centrally, it is assumed that the individual processing the information is doing so analytically and with considerable thought. In contrast, when information is processed peripherally, it is assumed that individuals are mostly relying on visual cues and are ignoring the main argument of the message that is being presented to them. Peripheral processing occurs when individuals use surface-level characteristics to process a message, rather than considerate thought. Understandably, the goal with a campaign such as “She Can Too,” is to have the intended audience process the information centrally and to understand the presented message. When the goal of a campaign is to have its intended audience process information centrally, the audience must be motivated and able to process the message given to them (Perloff, 2017).

To ensure high levels of motivation to process information centrally, the viewer must recognize the message as relevant to them personally (Perloff, 2017). With this in mind, the magazine cover is comprised of items that are likely to be relevant to the intended audience. For example, the mention of nutrition and the underrepresentation of female sports in the media are both items that could relate to the intended audience. Young women who are interested in sports, a healthy lifestyle, or simply interested in an item geared towards female health such as this magazine, will likely consider these items as personally relevant to them and their interests. In contrast, those individuals who are not impacted personally by the messages or topics on the magazine are not likely to process the information centrally. These individuals will have low involvement due to a lack of personal relevance of the issues presented. In their case, they may resort to mental shortcuts and visual cues rather than the substance of the message presented.

Although the main goal is to achieve individuals processing the information centrally, the magazine cover offers a few cues that could be peripherally processed. For example, the attractiveness of the model on the cover can be considered a peripheral cue and although it is short-lived, it can serve as a way of capturing the attention of an individual and this may lead to the individual feeling positively towards the campaign (Perloff, 2017). Clearly, there is a need to create a sense of personal relevance between the campaign and the target audience. As a result, the individual must believe what is addressed on the magazine cover is of personal relevance to

them and will affect their life. The reason to incorporate both peripheral and central processing is to capture the largest audience possible.

Mere-Exposure Effect

Mere-exposure effect is another strategy used in the magazine cover. The simple exposure to an item may cause an individual to develop a favourable attitude towards the item (Zajonc, 1968). Therefore, brochures and posters were part of the strategy used to obtain the attention and interest of individuals regarding the “She Can Too” campaign. Moreover, a magazine is an item that is placed in multiple locations such as supermarkets, convenience stores, and bookstores which can therefore increase the likelihood of individuals being exposed to the campaign. The effectiveness of the mere-exposure may be due to individuals assuming that messages that are repeated are accurate or assuming that a campaign that has the resources to communicate their message multiple times is a credible source. Furthermore, the sense of familiarity that occurs after multiple exposures to a message may also be influential (Perloff, 2017). However, as noted by Perloff (2017), this strategy is most effective when individuals have not yet developed a strong attitude towards an issue. As a result, mere-exposure effect could persuade the intended audience of the campaign as it addresses an issue that most people may not feel too strongly about. Mere-exposure effect could be countered by wear-out, which suggests the excessive repetition of one message can cause aversion towards it (Perloff, 2017). Wear-out is avoided by creating different messages and approaches towards different topics of concern.

Conclusion

Overall, the “She Can Too” campaign was designed with the intention of targeting young women and encouraging them to live a healthier lifestyle. The use of semiotics, diffusion theory, self-efficacy, the ELM, and the mere-exposure effect were used in conjunction on a magazine cover as different persuasive attempts, intended to capture the attention and interest of young women. Likewise, the campaign intended to encourage equality among sexes and an equal representation of female sports in the media. Furthermore, self-efficacy was used to communicate to individuals that their donations would make a difference, therefore increasing the likelihood of a possible donation to the campaign. Different persuasive attempts can resonate differently with individuals and the goal was to capture as many individuals as possible.

Figures



Figure 1. "She Can Too" promotional magazine cover. Cover left, Back right. Photo retrieved from "The Lazy Artist Gallery", (n.d.).

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