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Advocacy Campaign for Women's Reproductive Health and Access on Social Media
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Background
- Advocacy organizations increasingly rely on social media (e.g. Twitter hashtags) to foster issue awareness as social media platforms can be promising communication channels to reach diverse audiences.
- This study examines the #BirthControlHelpedMe campaign in order to better understand the response to an advocacy campaign promoted through social media via hashtag.
- Diffusion of innovations process:
  - Rogers, 2003

Methods
Participants
- Participants consisted of 16 undergraduate communication students, separated by gender into 2 focus groups with 8 participants each.

Procedure
- Focus groups were conducted separately for men and women. The moderators led participants in a semi-structured discussion on perceptions of birth control.
- Participants were then shown example tweets that used the #BirthControlHelpedMe hashtag, and asked about their response to the campaign.
- The discussion ended with whether the campaign would cause participants to talk more openly with their peers about birth control.

Results
Both Focus Groups
- Saw the #BirthControlHelpedMe campaign as targeting women.
- Perceived birth control as primarily corresponding to female forms of birth control; they equated birth control to “the pill” and not related to men.

Women’s Focus Group
- Existing attitudes aligned with campaign.
- Expressed concern over sharing the hashtag due to possible alienation of those with opposing views in their social networks.
- Voiced that they would be more likely to talk with friends about birth control after viewing campaign.

Men’s Focus Group
- Existing attitudes aligned less with campaign.
- Did not feel that they could use or share the campaign’s hashtag.
- Felt either that the hashtag did not pertain to them or they would face judgement by peers due to the female connotation of the hashtag.

Conclusions
- By effectively only targeting women, the #BirthControlHelpedMe campaign reinforces the perception that birth control is women’s responsibility.
- Both women and men should be targeted by health promotion campaigns and policies involving birth control & family planning.
- Messages design is critical for taboo topics.
- Social judgment and peer influence can affect behavior and limit the spread of awareness campaigns.
- Important for men to be educated about reproductive health & share responsibility.

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