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Advocacy Campaign for Women's Reproductive Health and Access on Social Media

Rachel Crist

Portland State University, rcrist@pdx.edu

Jules Montes

Portland State University, jumontes@pdx.edu

Lauren Frank

Portland State University, lfrank@pdx.edu

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Rachel Crist & Jules Montes

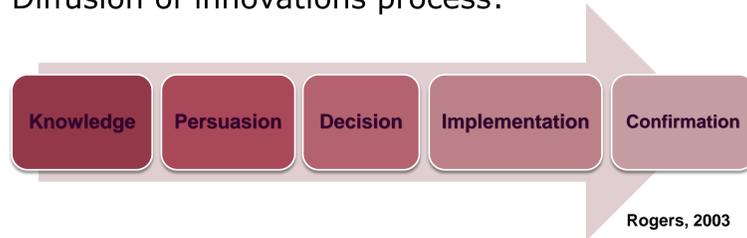
r crist@pdx.edu - jumontes@pdx.edu

Department of Communication, Portland State University



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:



- Original tweet sourced from Planned Parenthood:



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.

Billboards



Photos sourced from Planned Parenthood, 2015

Example Tweets



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.

"It [BCHM tweets] shows how responsible people are when it comes to [birth control], they know the importance, and they prioritize what's important. Doing this is showing that I have more to do in life than just get pregnant."

Women's Focus Group Participant

"It's [birth control] used for family planning purposes and for like you mentioned, regulating hormones and menstruation and menstrual cycles. Other than that I can't really think of functions of birth control."

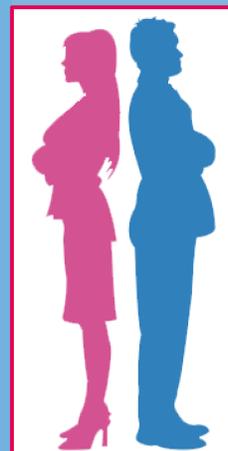
Men's Focus Group Participant

"This seems more targeted towards women because when you hear birth control... of all the birth controls you think of the pill, and that's for women. So I wouldn't picture like a man calling a condom birth control and tweeting."

Women's Focus Group Participant

"Like, condoms are their own little category, and then birth control the default mode is the pill."

Women's Focus Group Participant



"I could have [shared the BCHM hashtag] but it would have required the right person to coerce me to do it. 'You need to take part in this dude. I know you believe in it, and this is something important to me.' I'd be like okay."

Men's Focus Group Participant

"I think that this would just be really difficult to bring into a stereotypical male conversation."

Men's Focus Group Participant

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.

Acknowledgements

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