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The Truth About The Truth Campaign

Introduction

The use of tobacco has been an ongoing issue in the United States for decades. More recently, however, the use of tobacco among teens has raised even more concerns. In this paper, the health campaign that will be discussed is the Truth Campaign. The Truth Campaign is a health campaign aimed at curbing the use of tobacco and nicotine products among teenagers, for the most part, but also adults. Especially now, the use of vaping devices in teenagers is a lot more common than cigarettes, and now more than ever it is important to halt the use of nicotine among teenagers for good. The main goal of the Truth Campaign is not only to encourage teens and adults to quit smoking, but also to inform and expose the truths about tobacco companies.

Health Topic Description and Audience Analysis

The health topic of the campaign is focused on is the use of tobacco products among the teenage population. The goal of the campaign is to stop the use of tobacco among teens before it even starts, because of the extremely addictive and harmful nature of products such as vaping devices and cigarettes. The mission of the campaign is to maintain a culture where teenagers reject the offers of tobacco, whether they are being peer pressured by friends to use it, their families use it, or they are just purely interested in trying it out.

Teenagers stand to benefit the most from the behaviors of the Truth Campaign. If teenagers are familiar with the campaign, they stand to benefit from it because of all of the information the campaign has collected. Everything about the campaign describes the negative repercussions of tobacco use. Teenagers may think that as long as they are not the one smoking or vaping, they are not being affected, however, negative effects also arise from secondhand smoke and exposure. The benefits of the Truth Campaign are to expose the real facts about tobacco use, to promote quitting of smoking, and to help teenagers get help if they are using tobacco products. In America, vaping is one of the biggest health issues among teenagers, with conditions such as popcorn lung and asthma. However, the campaign is aware of these health conditions and wants to be there to help teenagers not only curb their bad habits, but also to educate them on not only what is going into their bodies, and how their lungs and bodies are being affected. This campaign is more of an educational campaign than anything else.

The types of people already involved in tobacco and nicotine products are typically teenagers and young adults. As it seems, adults are the type of people to use tobacco products, such as chewing tobacco and cigarettes, and the younger demographic is more interested in nicotine products like vapes and nicotine pouches. Reasons that teenagers and young adults are the heaviest users of tobacco and nicotine products are age, money, and social variables. For high school and college kids, it seems if a person owns a nicotine device, such as a Juul, for example, they are “cool” and everyone wants to use their device to feel some sort of a buzz. Another reason is that middle and high school age teenagers are trendsetters and everyone wants to copy each other. If one person’s friend has a vaping device and likes it, they will most likely go out and buy one and so on. As young adults, teenagers want to “try” everything to see what it’s like,

no matter if they are in sixth grade or just graduated high school. It is part of being a teenager, and if all of your friends are doing it, most likely you will also fall into the habit. Vaping and tobacco devices are also extremely expensive to buy and maintain, and usually, teenagers have nothing better to spend their money on, which is another reason they are involved in this activity.

The types of people that are not typically involved in tobacco and nicotine products include younger children, people with underlying health conditions, and older adults. Younger children are still around their parents most of the time, so they do not get the chance to go out and experience tobacco and nicotine like teenagers and young adults do. Older adults, whether that be parents or the elderly, don't often use tobacco because it sets a bad example for their children. Not only is the tobacco bad for the user, but using it around children can cause secondhand smoke damage to young children's lungs. For older adults, these types of products are extremely expensive. A pack of cigarettes can run a person almost eight dollars alone, and if you have a family to raise and take care of, spending excess money on tobacco takes away from other necessities such as rent and groceries. Lastly, it seems as if smoking cigarettes is slowly fading away in society. It used to be very common, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, to smoke, because it was a lot cheaper and it was a newer concept back then. Now, in 2020, tobacco products will have been around for a long time and researchers have discovered many more of the health risks these products pose for our health. For example, bars and restaurants are a large part of social life. In Wisconsin, smoking in bars and restaurants has been banned for years, and it's just not very common to see somebody smoking a cigarette anywhere, whether it be while driving, walking through a park, or even in their homes.

For participants of this health issue, social interaction is the most important factor. Teenagers thrive off of social interaction. Whether it be high school football games, driving around town with friends, or even hanging out at each other's houses, teenagers love to be with their friends. With social interaction, however, comes nicotine use. For example, if in a group of friends, if only one friend has a vape, hanging out with that one friend allows the others to use their nicotine device and catch that “buzz” they so desperately want. Another factor that is important to participants is convenience. A Juul is a small nicotine device that, if you’re not aware of it, could easily be mistaken for a flash drive. This is convenient for teenagers because it makes it easier to hide what it is from their parents. These devices also don’t give off much smoke so they are easy to use in a bedroom, school bathroom (which I found very weird), or even walking around campus. These devices are so easy to disguise for teenagers, that sometimes it seems like it’s more of a game to see who can use but still be secretive about having them. Lastly, as mentioned earlier, the cost is another benefit for teenagers. With cost comes convenience, and if high schoolers like the reaction they receive from a vaping device, they will continue to buy them. The only inconvenient factor for teenagers is that the age to buy tobacco products was recently raised to 21. Not only has this made it more difficult for teenagers to get their hands on nicotine products, somehow it has made them even sneakier in trying to find someone else to buy them and hide from their parents.

The same factors that are important to participants are as important to nonparticipants. While teenagers like social interaction with their friends, adults like social interaction more so with their children and extended families. When around family, often it can be disrespectful to light up a cigarette or smoke a vape. Just like how it can be inappropriate to drink heavily around

children. It gives off a bad reputation and promotes a risk that a child could pick up the bad habit as well and end up putting their health at risk. Cost is a big risk factor for nonparticipants. Picking up on a bad habit like smoking cigarettes could put a damper on savings and spending money. Tobacco is an expensive habit, and an extremely hard habit to quit so avoiding it altogether is important for nonusers.

A typical member of the audience is Kyle. He is a male college student in a fraternity and he enjoys partying and hanging out with his friends all of the time. To Kyle, fitting into the “cool kid” crowd is important, along with being a friend to as many people as possible, even if that means only saying hi while passing by on campus. He thinks that if he owns a vaping device or carries a pack of cigarettes, people will want to be his friend, but they just want to take advantage of his nicotine. Vaping is also important to Kyle, and he is addicted to using his Juul or other vaping devices to create the “buzz” he is chasing. Kyle’s feelings and attitudes and beliefs about behavior change are that they are not important. He thinks that he is invincible and that tobacco and nicotine devices won’t negatively affect his health in the future. For Kyle, he is more worried about people thinking he is cool for vaping and smoking, instead of his chances of developing lung cancer down the road. Nothing can convince him to stop, either. No threats of poor health in the future or running out of money because it’s spent on tobacco worry him. Since the effects of quitting aren’t considerable, Kyle will continue to smoke and vape. He would much rather feel important and spend a lot of money instead of saving his money and putting his health, and the health of his friends and family, first. As for perceived benefits and self-efficacy, Kyle’s self-efficacy is low. He doesn’t seem to think he has what it takes to quit using nicotine and tobacco, so he does not even try. Peer pressure is a major social barrier for Kyle as well

when it comes to tobacco use. After all, even though he wants to stop using in the worst way, he will continue to be pressured by his friends, classmates, and fraternity brothers to keep using the products because they make him seem likable and cool.

Kyle's media habits include being active on all social media accounts, and overall always being on his phone. To maintain his likable and cool kid status, he adds everyone he meets on Snapchat and Instagram and starts Snapchat "streaks" to make it seem like he knows and talks to a lot of people, even though he may have only met someone one time at a random party or get-together. Kyle is always on his phone talking to people, and he does not pay attention in class because he is so engrossed in talking to his friends.

There are many ways in which the Theory of Planned Behavior influences Kyle's behaviors related to the topic of tobacco and nicotine. First, is his attitude. He isn't sure whether or not he wants to quit using tobacco because he's already so addicted it would be hard to quit, and so tempting to start again if he did end up quitting. As a college student, pressures to smoke, drink, and vape are always present so it is up to Kyle to choose to continue his poor habit or to better his overall health. The second way this theory influences Kyle's behaviors related to tobacco and nicotine is the social reward aspect of quitting. Being in a fraternity at college, most of Kyle's friends follow the same habits and lifestyles that Kyle does. As easy as it would be to quit if all of his friends were quitting, it would be easy to restart the habit if all of his friends do the same. It is hard to quit something when all of your friends are continuing to do it, so Kyle has to decide if quitting his use is worth the reward or not. The last way the Theory of Planned Behavior influences Kyle is through the extent of his feelings. He may have intentions to stop using tobacco and nicotine, but, being in college, will he try? Every weekend, it will be tempting

to go back to his poor habits. Overall, he will try to quit but there will always be pressure and excuses to go back and use his tobacco and nicotine products again.

Channels of Communication

The PSA I chose to discuss was called “Coroner”. To capture the attention of viewers, the video featured a busy city street and a teenage boy holding a blow horn that he would sound every eight seconds. Every time he would sound the blow horn, another teenager would hand out an orange circle that said “every eight seconds someone in the world dies due to tobacco”, to show how often people die from tobacco use. In the end, the video featured the coroner. The coroner talks about in 1990, a tobacco company put together a plan to stop coroners from listing tobacco as a cause of death on a death certificate. This just goes to show that tobacco and nicotine CAN kill you and that it’s not a matter of how, but a matter of when.

This PSA is effective because though at the beginning of the video it’s uncertain why a blow horn is being sounded every eight seconds, the viewer comes to realize that every time they hear the sound, a life is lost due to a silly drug.

The PSA motivates viewers to seek out additional information by handing out the orange circles. The saying on the circles is self-explanatory, saying how every eight seconds someone dies from tobacco, but it is in hopes that people go out and research more to discover how tobacco kills a person, and the negative effects it has on the user and the user’s friends, family, colleagues, and more. The video also says “sponsored by the truth campaign” in the beginning, to hopefully make viewers go out and see what the campaign is all about.

The PSA was not very effective in providing adequate information about how to find additional information. To promote the campaign, as mentioned above, the video said “sponsored

by the truth campaign” in the beginning, but they don’t provide details on where to learn more about tobacco. The video was more of a powerful showing of time and its effects on life vs. death instead of promoting a lot of facts and research on the topic.

The user experience in navigating the interactive platform is positive and easy. The interactive platform is organized into different tabs such as the take action tab, facts tab, the online store, the history and fact section about the actual campaign, a search bar, and much more. The overall experience is positive because the platform is easily accessible and everything is in its section to be able to find whatever it is you’re looking for easily. The platform provides information to the audience in a few ways. One way is under the facts tab, it has facts about tobacco, nicotine, and opioid use. It talks about what’s really in a cigarette, how cigarettes are damaging the planet, and the negative effects tobacco has on the human body. These facts are effective because it is raw data backed by science, and the facts are all about different subjects related to tobacco, not just the usage and statistics of people who have died from tobacco use. Another way the platform provides information is under the “about truth” section. This is where the truth campaign is described and the facts about how long it’s been around, what it does for people struggling with tobacco use, and where they tell people they believe in them and that a positive outcome is possible.

The information available on the interactive does feel complete and informative because there is so much and it is all raw, true, data that is backed by science. The most compelling information is under the facts tab. Some of the facts include how many trees are cut down to make a year worth of cigarettes, that smoking can lead to cataracts, how many people die in a year from overdosing on opioids in America, and so many more. This information is all

compelling and not only does it turn people away from the idea of using tobacco, but also it makes a current user want to quit.

The communicative component motivates users to interact by having a phone number that anyone can text if they want more facts about the campaign, or if they need advice in quitting, and more. The campaign also has social media accounts like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a YouTube account for people to interact with the campaign on. To inspire continued interaction, not only does the campaign have active social media accounts, but they also allow people to “interact” with a certain fact they might think is compelling or interesting. When they interact with the fact, it knows to continue showing facts that are similar to the compelling one to ensure that viewers keep coming back to the website to see what new facts are posted.

The PSA and the online platform work well together. The PSA provides a fact about how every eight seconds someone dies from tobacco use and then provides that this fact comes from the Truth Campaign. This ensures that if viewers are interested in the video, they check out the online platform to discover many more facts and find out what they can do to help others quit, or receive help to quit themselves. The video is just the beginning of all the campaign has to offer.

The choices in the PSA and online platforms are appropriate for the content. For some, the facts may be frightening, but if the raw data doesn't scare users of tobacco, it is not doing its job. The data is appropriate because it shows how damaging tobacco and nicotine are to humans and the planet we live on! Not only are human lungs and brains being damaged, but our atmosphere is also being damaged from all of the chemicals and smoke going into the air we breathe.

Lastly, the campaign does offer a unique and compelling take on the health topic. It has many ways to interact, has a friendly and welcoming approach, and provides the facts that people need to hear. The campaign is creative because even though it is all about teens and their tobacco and nicotine use, it includes facts from the adult demographic, and even shows the difference in tobacco use between the black and white populations. The campaign covers everything and is there as a resource to everyone who comes across it.

Conclusion

The Truth Campaign is an excellent resource as the world tries to promote a tobacco and nicotine-free society. The campaign helps users, especially teenagers and college students like Kyle, to quit and exercise avoiding these substances when at all possible. The Truth Campaign has many PSA videos to go along with the campaign that educates and makes viewers aware of the dangers that tobacco possesses and the harm that it is causing to their bodies. Overall, the campaign is a wonderful asset to protest against tobacco and slowly but surely leads us into a society free of vaping devices, cigarettes, and chewing tobacco. I think the campaign has a huge impact on all age groups of society, and the more the campaign is recognized and brought to light, the more positive resolutions it will have on our children and adults in America.