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5/5/22

International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies

September 7th was designated The International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies day by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019 which is an environmental cause that also affects the public health of the world. The health implications of unclean air due to pollutants are not completely known as of now, but it is known that 9 out of every 10 people in the world have decreased life expectancy due to the air we breathe (Environment 2020). The primary goal of this campaign is to address and prevent the pollutants that have been put in the air that expose so many people around the world to health issues. In addition, the campaign appeals to a certain group of people who have a general interest in the environment, in health, or in both such as Marina, a woman with a graduate degree in Environmental Science who you will learn about later. The Clean Air campaign also uses PSAs as a primary way of communicating the crisis to their audience through videos, short written PSAs, and informational pages. Finally, the campaign provides a very informative but simplistic page using the “Voice of the World” to connect with the audience on the messages that need to be heard.

The International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies created only one year ago stands as one of the newest campaigns which emphasizes the importance of clean air, not only in the United States, but the entire world as it affects 9 out every 10 peoples life expectancy. Yearly, air pollution kills approximately 7 million premature deaths a year around the world as it pushes to be one of the largest environmental risks to humanity currently (Environment 2020). The

campaign pushes for worldwide change to prevent pollution emissions because it greatly affects the entire population and everyone in the world would positively benefit from breathing cleaner air. However, as this Clean Air campaign is extremely new there probably are not a ton of corporations, groups, or individuals who have jumped on board for the cause yet.

Most of the individuals who are working for this campaign or towards the campaign's mission are most likely individuals who care a lot about their environment and the health implications that the pollution has on the worldwide population's health. I would imagine those who are most involved in this campaign are people who are educated, care about the health of themselves and others, and care for the environment; they may also be a member of other environmental groups such as Greenpeace, Environmental Defense Fund, and the Nature Conservancy. Culturally, I would say that a majority of those who are working on and with this campaign would be classified as people between the ages 22-35 as that is far enough out college where they can truly form opinions and impact the movement, but not before the generation that did not care as much for the environment. I do not believe that the specific race of the individual would increase the likelihood of them being a part of this movement as it affects people of all races, however I do believe that individuals who are more educated in general, but particularly healthwise and environmentally will be able to clearly see the negative implications of the pollution of air and therefore be more likely to join the campaign. Finally, those who are severely affected or know others who are affected by the air pollutants due to underlying health conditions such as asthma, pneumonia, or cystic fibrosis would be very likely to support the cause and limit the pollution.

Participants and nonparticipants would reap the health benefits of this environmental change, however may not realize it as the population in general has succumbed to the

consumption of more and more air pollutants. However, a majority of us will die prematurely due to our continued consumption of this unclear air without even noticing the negative health related effects. To begin, less individuals would develop serious lung conditions from an early age such as asthma or pneumonia. Additionally, the convenience of not needing to have our breathing related health cared for as often would allow us to be more social outdoors without worrying about the air we are breathing as well not being held back by the slight side effects everyone experiences due to the pollutants in the air allowing us to perform interactions or actions at a higher level, as air particularly clean air fuels our bodies.

Creating a perfect person for this campaign for Clean Air is difficult because it requires playing into many stereotypes that may or may not always be true, but I will do my best. This character is at the forefront of this campaign and speaks on the topic around Wisconsin. Her name is Marina and she is in her final year of graduate school attending Madison University, where her major was Environmental Science with a sustainability concentration. Marina is a 25 years old, moderately attractive white woman who grew up in Middleton, Wisconsin with a younger sister who suffers from asthma. Marina lives in a fairly well off family, but was intelligent enough to receive an academic scholarship to the University of Madison. I created this demographic for the character based on what type of person I would picture at the forefront for a campaign like this. As a young fairly attractive female with a strong educational background she would be able to speak out for the movement and be listened to. Additionally, her upbringing in a very progressive community with the subsequent mix of her environmental major and finally her sister's chronic asthma are all factors which influence her to be an activist toward the cause for Clean Air. She would likely be very passionate about the environment itself in various ways whether speaking out about the atrocities of the environment, volunteering in clean ups, other

green activities, or even doing the little things like biking, composting, recycling, and saving water. Marina would use several forms of media such as television or social media, but pertaining to the campaign she would focus her media attention toward blogs or scholarly articles she wrote about the effects of polluted air as well as assisting in coming up with creative ways to run the campaign's website.

Clean Air for Blue Skies as a campaign can appeal to many individuals similarly to the way it did with Marina through the use of the Social Cognitive Theory as well as the Health Belief Model. The Social Cognitive Theory can explain the reasoning why Marina was so involved with the campaign because of her outside persuading factors such as having a sister who is at risk and being brought up in the progressive city of Madison. These examples are environmental and social factors that influence the way that she addresses her health and the health of others. In the same way Marina satisfies the Health Belief Model through her perceptions of health being based on her exposure to health problems with her sister and others around her due to air pollutants and therefore being hyper aware of the implications of unclean air (DuPré 2021).

The particular PSA that I selected was a video that was about a minute long and addressed the issue of Clean Air directly by using factual evidence and was narrated by the Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme(UNEP) who had a very influential voice on this topic. In particular, the PSA easily catches the attention of the viewer through its usage of direct statistics related to the crisis which is that more than 90% of us breathe dirty air and that half of global warming is caused by air pollutants. The first statistic raises a huge red flag for many viewers as that statistic implies that 90% of us have negative health effects due to breathing the polluted air. Additionally, the video uses a trusted voice for the

campaign through the narration being provided by the Executive Director of UNEP (Environment 2020). On top of that, the video addresses outside factors that contribute to human health that are caused by dirty air such as the implications on global warming and pollution. These two aspects make the PSA very effective for the listener as they can recognize that due to the extreme statistics and the addressing of the crisis by an educated individual as a very serious topic that needs to be addressed by the general public taking the steps to producing worldwide cleaner air. The video provides the audience with enough information where they would not need to do additional research on the topic to understand the implications that the crisis has on the public's health and the environment, however the video promotes that the viewer becomes more educated on the topic not giving details about the specific effects of dirty air on humans just that something needs to be done.

Originally, when first visiting the campaign site I thought the set up was very confusing as the home page does not provide very much information about the topic other than a few key dates, the mission, and some inspirational quotes. This would not be ideal for the first time user as they could interpret that the cause does not have a lot of information covering it and that it is not worth worrying about if the creators did not even put their full efforts into it. Upon further exploration of the page I was able to witness the full extent of the efforts that were put into making an organized, attractive page for the audience. When looking at the pull down tab it provides the visitor with several options of pages to explore that include video and written PSAs, an informational page on the Clean Air crisis, and finally events that the audience can take part in to help the mission for cleaner air. The platform provides this information in a clear manner which is very effective explaining complicated topics in lay terms appealing to those of varying intelligences as well as providing different avenues for the viewer to engage, whether videos,

statistical information, or written PSAs. The information is complete providing very compelling statistics on the topic in every form of engagement for the viewer so regardless of which avenue the viewer chooses they will be presented the facts on the subject. Finally, the platform in general is a call for global change motivating corporations, groups, and even the individual to make a difference in this campaign and encouraging them to start making the change now by doing the little things like biking, not producing excess exhaust pollution, and planting trees.

Unfortunately, the campaign I chose focuses primarily on the environmental effects of unclean air rather than the health effects which are rather implied as the resources do not provide specific effects of breathing unclean air. The narrative they are creating is that unclean air effects more than just the environmental aspect of our lives; rather it has negative implications on our health and overall lifestyle especially if we continue down this path of destruction. I do not believe that the campaign holds a unique effect on the health implications that are caused by unclean air because that is not their targeted audience on the campaign rather they directly target environmentalists. However, I do believe that the campaign uses the implication of health effects to their benefit on the webpage and in PSAs stating that even now the unclean air has a direct impact on our health. The impact on the target audience is fulfilled through the several different observations of the environmental implications of unclean air whereas the health effects enhance the overall impact of the campaign instead of driving it.

The health campaign needs to more directly address businesses rather than a certain socioeconomic group on the topic as large corporations create the most air pollutants that hold us back from breathing clean air and directly negatively affect our health. Corporations need to lead the way for environmental change that will cause health benefits such as moving to electric cars, more environmental processes, and cleaner production systems. Through the use of the online

platform the campaign provides the viewer with eHealth or educating the audience on the negative effects of unclean air on human health. The online platform does this by making their page and information friendly to those at varying health literacy levels through the use of “Voice of the World” and presenting the important information in a simplistic way so that the message gets across to the audience, but the major points are still heard (DuPré 2021).

The International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies was established in 2019 to be recognized on September 7th annually to raise concern for the increased air pollutants that are in the world’s atmosphere that have negative health and environmental effects. This campaign for clean air tends to appeal to certain individuals who are a part of various different demographics, but have two things in common, they care about the environment and their health similar to Marina, the Environmental Science graduate student activist. The campaign's PSAs influence the public through their use of presenting the health information in various forms via videos, written PSAs and informational pages to demonstrate how serious the topic of clean air truly is to the health of the world. Additionally, upon continued engagement the public online platform allows for an easy way for the audience to join in on the Clean Air campaign through its use of the “Voice of the World” which allows viewers with varying health literacy levels to effectively communicate their message with anyone who cares to know. The direct impact of the campaign surprised me as I learned lots of new information for example that 9 out of every 10 people have decreased life expectancy due to the air we breathe, that statistic alone we should be addressing and doing much more to minimize the amount of excess pollutants we discharge into the air.

Citations

DuPré Athena, and Barbara Cook Overton. *Communicating about Health: Current Issues and Perspectives*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

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