

Report: Social Campaign Warsaw Fellowship 2017



Women's Empowerment through Body Positivity

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Our Social Campaign in Cooperation with MamyGłos

Introduction

Global efforts to empower women and achieve gender equality are at the forefront of human rights struggles in the twenty-first century. Concurrently, the increasing influence of globalization and neoliberalism has led to a great rise in advertisements featuring women with unrealistic beauty standards. Among many issues Polish women face, body positivity, especially for teenage girls, is essential for increasing the appreciation for diverse bodies in society. As the group tasked with women's empowerment in Poland, we believe body positivity is a phenomenon that needs a greater audience among Polish teenage girls and young women.

Body positivity is a concept that includes the capacity to withstand pressure to conform to a stereotypical body image typically designed by mainstream media, be proud or neutral about one's body, and enable teenage girls and young women to see through beauty standards that may be digitally modified. Ultimately, our goal is to encourage teenage girls in Poland to share their body stories in order to both empower themselves and show their peers the power of their personal body story.

To achieve this goal, we will cooperate with MamyGłos, a non-profit dedicated to empowering teenage girls in Poland. By working with MamyGłos, we will embed our campaign in their former work and utilize their experience, expertise, and pre-existing network within our target audience to propel their significant work and spread the message of body positivity.

Research

The need for greater levels of body positivity correlates with the amount of young women who feel uncomfortable with (and in) their bodies. According to the 2016 Yahoo! Health Survey, 94% of US teenagers are ashamed of their bodies (Miller, 2016). Unfortunately, there is a noticeable absence of research measuring levels of body positivity in the Polish society.

To galvanize typical social media users to participate in a social campaign, some elements of a standard social media "challenge" must be incorporated. Recently, challenges such as the ALS ice bucket challenge¹ and #nomakeupselfie² for cancer research have demonstrated the potential for regular people to share their story with the world and donate or raise money for a cause for which they care.

However, "challenges" have also manifested in a way that may have negative effects on participants. Such "challenges" include the belly button challenge³ (attempting to reach around

1 The challenge encouraged people donating money to the ALS association to contribute to medical research on Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, retrieved from: <http://www.alsa.org/fight-als/edau/ibc-history-infographic.html>

2 Cancer Research UK has raised over £8 million in donations in just six days after the trend of posting #nomakeupselfie went viral on social media channels, retrieved from: <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/2014-03-25-nomakeupselfie-trend-raises-over-ps8-million-for-cancer-research-uk>

3 Retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/06/17/the-terrifying-horribleness-of-the-belly-button-challenge/?utm_term=.47f4406f3b23

one's back and touch one's belly button), the collarbone challenge⁴ (being able to balance the coins along the collarbone), and the Kylie Jenner lip challenge⁵ (artificially plumping your lips to look like the 17-year old reality show star Kylie Jenner). Challenges such as these fuel insecurities and result in young girls comparing their bodies to those of others. Moreover, identifying yourself with terms such as "thigh gap"⁶ (a gap between a woman's upper middle thighs when standing with your legs together) and "bikini bridge"⁷ (a girl in a bikini lies down and her hip bones protrude causing their bikini bottom to stretch across) are potentially harmful for young girls since they further promote body shaming if someone does not fulfill a "skinny and sexy" body image.

Therefore, we will focus on creating a campaign that is both interactive and constructive to the empowerment of young Polish women.

Our Campaign

We created five videos that highlight body diversity among women, featuring women who are either current HIA fellows or Polish teenage girls and young women living in Warsaw. These videos are under a minute in length; feature the interviewee's personal story; show the interviewee doing something they love; include the broad theme of body positivity; display information for the #bodystory challenge; and request the viewer to both "like" MamyGłos on Facebook and participate in the #bodystory challenge by submitting their own thirty-second video to the MamyGłos Facebook page.



Our featured videos include Marilyn (HIA Fellow Warsaw 2017, human rights activist on criminal justice, education and immigration in the US, New York) discussing her hair as integral to her identity and body, Ola (HIA Fellow Warsaw 2017, human rights activist on children's rights, education and anti-discrimination, Poland, Wrocław) dancing and sharing her experience with scars and stretch marks as part of her body journey, Kasia (human rights activist on disability issues in Poland, Warsaw) speaking about her

experience with attractiveness as a woman with a physical disability, Sylwia (HIA program coordinator Poland, human rights activist on women's empowerment, co-founder of MamyGłos) describing shaved legs as a social norm, and Kim (advocating for diversity and child education in Poland, Warsaw) speaking about her colorful hair and piercings as a part of her identity.

4 Retrieved from: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/06/19/collarbone-challenge-harmful-social-media-craze_n_7620722.html

5 Retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/04/21/kylie-jenner-challenge-the-dangers-of-plumping-that-pout/?utm_term=.bcfdae7aa73b

6 Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/nov/03/thigh-gap-pressure-point-women-self-esteem>

7 Retrieved from: https://www.buzzfeed.com/ryanhatsthisis/a-bunch-of-internet-trolls-are-trying-to-make-bikinibridges?utm_term=.my9keXV4z#.os5n4LXww

In addition to the creation of videos to normalize body positivity, for each video that is submitted, MamyGłos will donate five zlotys to a crowdfunding campaign for body positivity workshops. These workshops will consist of a facilitator leading a discussion on body positivity, empowering participants to be more resilient in the face of ubiquitous advertisements with distorted views of women's bodies. Additionally, participants will be trained to also facilitate their own workshops in their own communities to spread a greater understanding of body positivity.



Our campaign also featured various graphics focused on body positivity. Firstly, we had an official poster for the video challenge with necessary information on how to join the campaign and create a 10- to 30-second video. Secondly, we updated the MamyGłos Facebook cover photo to feature information about the #bodystory campaign. Thirdly, featured six photos on Instagram that explain the video theme in greater depth. Fourthly, we published various doodles that displayed diverse or unconventional bodies as inspiration for Polish teenage girls. Lastly, we spent money to promote our videos across Facebook and use other channels, such as an online article in the feminist magazine *Codziennik Feministyczny*⁸ and in *I-D Vice* online magazine⁹ to generate media attention toward our campaign.



Our impact will be measured by the amount of people who view our videos on the MamyGłos Facebook page, how many videos are submitted over the next few weeks and months by Polish teenage girls, the amount of times the hashtag is used, and, ultimately, how much money is crowdfunded for body positivity workshops. This campaign will continue past the 2017 Humanity in Action Poland program through the work of MamyGłos.

Implementation Plan

Our implementation began on Monday, June 19 at 11:00 AM, with the publication of graphics about the video challenge and Ola's video featuring her personal body story in the style of MamyGłos, typically black-and-white drawings by hand, to ensure the campaign exists past the 2017 Humanity in Action Poland program.

Results

Our social campaign will stand out among other campaigns because we decided to focus mainly on foundational aspects. To truly impact our target group of Polish teenage girls requires

⁸ <http://codziennikfeministyczny.pl/cialo-jest-nasza-historia-mamy-glos/>

⁹ <https://i-d.vice.com/pl/article/wjn7gb/opowiedz-o-swoich-rozstepach-bliznach-i-znamionach>

dedication and persistence in sharing our videos we created, promoting the hashtag, and spreading our message of body positivity. As such, we have been dedicated to creating our videos, graphics, and sharing our message so MamyGłos will sustain the campaign after the conflation of the 2017 HIA Poland program. On June 19 at 11:00 AM, our campaign went live on the MamyGłos page with the publication of Ola's video, which garnered over 3,000 views in only three hours.



Our first infographics reached approximately 12,870¹⁰ Facebook users while our first video featuring Ola reached around 108,064 people. Moreover, our initial Facebook post had 6,025 clicks. Following these original posts, we published videos featuring teenagers and young women. Several people joined the #bodystory challenge; Katarzyna's video reached 3,164 people while Iwetta's impacted around 3,636. In result, we received mainstream media attention, primarily from the magazine Wysokie Obcasy¹¹, with which we did an interview that was eventually published online and in print. Furthermore, Girls Room magazine¹² published an article about our campaign.

share your #bodystory
facebook.com/mymamyglos

In August, we organized a body-positivity workshop dedicated to Polish teenage girls, attracting even more participants than expected (26 teenagers from Wrocław). As such, we decided to continue and expand our campaign, which now includes a partnership with Wrocław Medical University. We are now focused on training both medical students and teachers to be proactive in preventing the negative consequences associated with the absence of body positivity. We anticipate as our other videos become published, more people will both view and share them to increase awareness about the #bodystory campaign. Finally, we are proud that our very own Ola became a member of MamyGłos, where she serves as their coordinator in Wrocław to help organize body-positivity workshops dedicated to local teenage girls from Wrocław.

¹⁰ Numbers from October 2017

¹¹ <http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/7,127763,22117146,mamy-glos-to-mowimy-mamy-cialo-to-je-lubimy.html>

¹² <http://www.girlsroom.pl/grls/wasz-pokoj/7293-bodystory>

Impact

This social campaign was an excellent opportunity for each of us. First and foremost, when presented with the broad topic of women's empowerment, it was not clear what issue could be tackled within a few days. After much deliberation and collaboration with MamyGłos, we decided that body positivity was our best option because it can exist in perpetuity through MamyGłos after we complete the 2017 Humanity in Action Poland program.

Like all groups, our group had to work out our differences when it came to how to approach structuring and effectuating our campaign. Because women's empowerment is so broad, we each had disparate ideas about a specific topic. However, once we met with our assigned non-profit, it became clear that our focus needed to coincide with theirs, highlighting the importance of assigning HIA social campaign groups with an active and appropriate non-profit. Despite these challenges, our greatest challenge was determining exactly how to structure our campaign around body positivity. Ideas included focusing on why girls believed themselves to be beautiful, what makes them proud, what makes them unique, and what makes them strong, each requiring a different message. Ultimately, we decided to keep this subject broad but still focus on Polish teenage girls. We agreed that promoting the #bodystory hashtag and inviting viewers to share whatever that means to them to be the best way to move forward.

Throughout this process, we learned how three very different people with unique backgrounds and strong personalities can work together to take an idea and put it into action. We learned that body positivity is an incredibly nuanced topic, including self-love as well as body neutrality. Finally, we learned about MamyGłos, a truly unique, grassroots organization with a non-hierarchical leadership structure that aims to empower young Polish girls in various ways. We believe our campaign will stand out as a campaign that has a broad impact on a sector of Polish society that is often ignored since MamyGłos will soon lead the campaign.

Bibliography

Miller, Korin (2016). *Yahoo! Beauty*. "The Shocking Results of Yahoo Health's Body-Positivity Survey." Last modified January 4, 2016. <https://www.yahoo.com/beauty/the-shocking-results-of-yahoo-1332510105509942.html/>.

