

## HEALTH-PROMOTING SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS AS SEEN BY THE STUDENTS OF THE SCHOOL FROM THE PODKARPACIE REGION

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### Keywords:

- health,
- health promotion,
- social marketing.

### Abstract:

**Objectives.** The aim of this work was to get to know the opinions of school age youth on social campaigns concerning health topics and to verify whether the school age and the gender significantly differentiate the opinions of the students and their perception of such campaigns.

**Material and methods.** The study was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2015 among the students of junior high schools and upper secondary schools. The percentage of girls in the group was 56.3 and of boys - 43.7. The research was based on the diagnostic poll method. The chi-square independence test was also applied.

**Results.** Campaigns related to motor activity and healthy eating are the best recognized campaigns in the age group being tested. The majority of students are aware of the campaign held under the banner of 'NO to being excused from PE'. TV and the Internet are the main sources of information. For the upper secondary school students, the musical setting of the campaign and the emotions are more important than for the junior high school students, for whom the topic and the participation of well-known figures count. Both the gender and the educational level are of significant importance in the perception of the campaign

**Conclusions.** Several factors contribute to the effectiveness of a social campaign, both with reference to a particular target group and with respect to the topic being mentioned. The gender and the school age differentiate the perception of the campaign. Schools should contribute more to promoting social campaigns concerning health among students.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the more important aims of health promotion is to spread pro-health behaviour and to encourage change in those places where factors with a negative influence on health might appear or are already noticeable. One of the popular ways of affecting the society is social marketing. It results, among others, from the effectiveness which is expressed in the proved changes of behaviour of people coming from various social groups, as a ratio of costs to the results obtained, and also as the effectiveness in reaching various environments and communicating with various social groups [Kowalski, 2011]. Social marketing has found its application in numerous fields of our life as well as in health promotion [Karski 2007; Woynarowska 2008]. According to Jachimowicz-Wołoszynek (2008), currently, 'social marketing is a tool of health promotion.' Directing social marketing to the needs of health promotion touches upon the issues from the range of, among others, driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics, actions concerning the level of physical activity and

physical fitness, nutrition, routine check-ups, vaccination or anti-nicotine actions. Social marketing is based on the campaign, which is a driver in creating social changes of the fully conscious and planned nature, as opposed to random and chaotic ones. Among the tools that are used most often is the social campaign which differs from the commercial one in that it does not indicate a product (a medication that treats illnesses, an exercising device to be used in the case one is overweight), but encourages us to change our habits. It aims at evoking reflexion, emotions and interest in difficult issues, and, many a time, at making people aware of them and at shaping particular, socially required patterns of human behaviour as well as attitude change. Among the initiatives which have been targeted at school-age youth recently there have been campaigns like, e.g. ‘Stay fit’, ‘Fruit and vegetables 5 times a day’, ‘Mom, Dad, I prefer water!’ ‘NO to being excused from PE’, ‘Activity is the right of our children’, ‘Help for life without tobacco’, ‘Don’t get involved with a cigarette’, ‘‘Drugs? What for?’ [Rasińska 2014]. A detailed description of a given campaign, that is its aim, target group and justification can be found on internet sites, such as [kampaniespoleczne.pl](http://kampaniespoleczne.pl); [niezpapierosem.pl](http://niezpapierosem.pl); [msport.gov.pl/kampania](http://msport.gov.pl/kampania). These campaigns resulted from, among others, a growing problem of bad eating habits and obesity in younger and younger children and a decline in children’s participation in physical education classes, as well as from a low level of motor activity and reaching for stimulants [Białek-Dratwa 2012; Tarczydło 2013;]. The issue of large-scale media campaigns of health promoting nature in varied context is more and more often mentioned in the works by both foreign and Polish authors, e.g. Cavill et al. (2004), Rudawska (2010), Białek-Dratwa et al. (2012), Piekutowska et al. (2013), Czerw et al. (2014) or Skaruz et al. (2015).

### **AIM OF WORK**

The aim of this work was to get to know the opinions of school age youth on social campaigns concerning health topics and to verify whether the school age and the gender significantly differentiate the opinions of the students and their perception of such campaigns.

### **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The voluntary and anonymous study was carried out in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2015 in a group of 245 students from the Podkarpackie Voivodship. Among the tested people there were 125 students of the junior high schools and 120 students of the upper secondary schools. Girls constituted 56.3% of the test group, and boys – 43.7%. The diagnostic poll method was applied, making use of the authors’ own questionnaire form. The questionnaire contained closed questions. Some of them were based on the 5-level Likert scale with the range from strongly agree to strongly disagree (1 – Yes, 2 – Rather yes, 3 – No opinion, 4 – Rather not, 5 – No). For the sake of this work, the analysis of only certain, selected questions from the questionnaire was used. The assessment of the relationships and relations observed in the sample was made based on the chi-square independence test, assuming the value  $p < 0.05$  as a statistically significant correlation (\*),  $p < 0.01$  highly significant correlation (\*\*),  $p < 0.001$  very highly significant correlation (\*\*\*)).

### **RESULTS**

The majority of the respondents (82.4%) admitted that they had come across campaigns concerning a healthy lifestyle. Approximately every sixth person denied, in a more or less decisive way, being familiar with such campaigns. Also a vast majority of the tested youth (87.3%) confirmed the necessity of promoting a healthy lifestyle. In the respondents’ opinion, social campaigns refer mostly to popularizing physical activity and healthy eating. Only 13% of the respondents mentioned campaigns related to disease prevention. The majority of the students (80%) are aware of the campaign under the banner ‘NO to being excused from PE’.

Only every tenth student did not know about it. In the opinion of over half of the respondents, the issues mentioned are the most important in the perception of such enterprises. Such factors as the participation of famous people or the sources of information came second. The students see positive aspects of conducting health-promoting campaigns, that is improving the awareness of the society, stimulating to action and to the change in the lifestyle. As many as two thirds of the people did not agree with the statement that health actions do not serve any purpose. Social campaigns mostly reached the students via the TV (45.6%), the Internet (21.4%) and through the school (20.4%).

The data obtained were also analysed with respect to selected relationships, in an attempt to answer the question: do such variables as the gender, the level of education and, what follows, the age of the respondents, affect the perception and the familiarity with the campaigns concerning the healthy lifestyle?

Both the boys and the girls tested proved to be well familiar with the health-promoting actions (table 1). In this case, no statistically significant relationship was found.

Both the boys and the girls were unanimously of the opinion that they mostly recognise the campaigns related to the promotion of physical activity and proper eating and, to a considerably lesser extent, to the disease prevention (table 2). In this case there is no statistically significant correlation either – only in the case of the campaign concerning the promotion of blood donation is a slightly better knowledge expressed by the boys (the difference is close to the level of statistical significance, with the test probability value  $p < 0.10$ ).

**Table 1.** Familiarity with campaigns promoting a healthy lifestyle with respect to the gender..

Familiarity with campaigns promoting a healthy life style	Gender ( $p = 0.2048$ )		Total
	girls	boys	
yes	63 (45.7%)	40 (37.4%)	103
rather yes	51 (37.0%)	48 (44.9%)	99
I have no opinion	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.8%)	4
rather not	17 (12.3%)	8 (7.5%)	25
no	6 (4.3%)	8 (7.5%)	14
Total	138	107	245

**Table 2.** The areas comprised by health promotion campaigns – as indicated by the students, with respect to the gender

Topic of the campaign	Gender				$p$
	girls		boys		
	$N$	%	$N$	%	
healthy eating	92	66.7%	68	63.6%	0.6114
physical activity	93	67.4%	74	69.2%	0.7683
blood donation	23	16.7%	27	25.2%	0.0989
safety on the road	29	21.0%	20	18.7%	0.6521
disease prevention	18	13.0%	13	12.1%	0.8346

**Table 3.** The factors influencing the effectiveness of the perception of the campaign – as indicated by the students, with respect to the gender

What affects the effectiveness of the campaign?	Gender				P
	girls		boys		
	N	%	N	%	
source of information	40	29.0%	37	34.6%	0.3495
topic	73	52.9%	66	61.7%	0.1687
participation of famous people	43	31.2%	49	45.8%	0.0190*
campaign's slogan	45	32.6%	21	19.6%	0.0231*
referring to emotions	29	21.0%	34	31.8%	0.0559
musical setting	34	24.6%	19	17.8%	0.1945

The boys more often emphasised that the effectiveness of the perception of the campaign is influenced by the participation of famous people in social campaigns, while the girls, more strongly than the boys, stressed the importance of slogans used in the campaigns (table 3). In both of those cases, a statistically significant correlation was noticed.

The girls, by far more often, confirm the importance of the campaign promoting a healthy lifestyle. As many as 2/3 of the female students replied positively when asked about that. The percentage of the boys in that case amounted to 45% (table 4)

**Table 4.** The opinions of the youth on the necessity of promoting a healthy lifestyle, with regard to the gender

Is it necessary to promote a healthy lifestyle?	Gender ( $p = 0.0315^*$ )		Total
	girls	boys	
yes	89 (64.5%)	48 (44.9%)	137
rather yes	37 (26.8%)	40 (37.4%)	77
I have no opinion	8 (5.8%)	11 (10.3%)	19
rather not	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.8%)	5
no	2 (1.4%)	5 (4.7%)	7
Total	138	107	245

The school that the respondents attend does not differentiate their responses concerning their familiarity with the health-promoting campaigns. A high percentage of both upper secondary school and junior high school students showed a high level of knowledge about the campaigns promoting a healthy lifestyle (table 5).

**Table 5.** Familiarity with the campaigns promoting a healthy lifestyle, with regard to the school

Familiarity with campaigns promoting a healthy lifestyle	School ( $p = 0.6818$ )		Total
	upper secondary school	junior high school	
yes	49 (40.8%)	54 (43.2%)	103
rather yes	49 (40.8%)	50 (40.0%)	99
I have no opinion	2 (1.7%)	2 (1.6%)	4
rather not	15 (12.5%)	10 (8.0%)	25
no	5 (4.2%)	9 (7.2%)	14
Total	120	125	245

The junior high school students tested proved to be more familiar with the campaigns conducted for the sake of promoting physical activity (over 3/4 of the group) than the youth

from upper secondary schools. The older youth paid attention more often to the campaigns related to voluntary blood donation (table 6). The analysis of the aforementioned factors showed a statistically significant differentiation between the two groups tested.

**Table 6.** Familiarity with the areas comprised by the health-promoting campaigns, with regard to the school

Topic of the campaign	School				<i>p</i>
	upper secondary school		junior high school		
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	
healthy eating	76	63.3%	84	67.2%	0.5250
physical activity	71	59.2%	96	76.8%	0.0031**
blood donation	31	25.8%	19	15.2%	0.0390*
safety on the roads	22	18.3%	27	21.6%	0.5228
disease prevention	14	11.7%	17	13.6%	0.6491

The junior high school students, definitely more often than the upper secondary school students, are of the opinion that the perception of social campaigns is affected by their topic (70% vs. 43%). It is also in that group that more young people pay attention to the importance of participation of famous persons in social actions. On the other hand, the importance of emotions in the perception of campaigns was emphasised twice more often by the upper secondary school students than by the junior high school students. In that age group, also the musical setting in the actions undertaken was of great importance (table 7)

**Table 7.** The factors affecting the effectiveness of perception of the campaign – as indicated by the students, with regard to the school

What affects the effectiveness of perception of the campaign?	School				<i>P</i>
	upper secondary school		junior high school		
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	
source of information	35	29.2%	42	33.6%	0.4549
topic	52	43.3%	87	69.6%	0.0000***
participation of famous people	37	30.8%	55	44.0%	0.0334*
campaign's slogan	35	29.2%	31	24.8%	0.4412
reference to emotions	42	35.0%	21	16.8%	0.0011**
musical setting	34	28.3%	19	15.2%	0.0126*

The students from the upper secondary school are more aware of the effect of the social campaigns on the healthy lifestyle of people. As many as 67% of the older youth agree with the statement that promoting a healthy lifestyle is necessary, while in the case of the junior high school respondents that percentage amounted to 45%. That relationship is statistically significant (test probability value  $p < 0.01$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Social marketing is one of the ways of addressing the local environment directly, using cooperation with the representatives of, among others, psychology, sociology, communication theory or anthropology. Conducting actions encouraging the change of the lifestyle towards increasing health potential, which means health gain, is not possible without contact with the local community [Karski 2007]. Thus, marketing communication is playing a key role nowadays in the process of prevention and control of the level of destructive behaviours and

illnesses among various target groups and its techniques are used to inform and influence the decisions related to health [Kowalski 2011]. The topic of social campaigns related to health is varied and may concern, among others, the issues of stimulant use, the principles of healthy eating, physical activity, screening tests or safety on the roads [Piekutowska 2013]. From our own research it follows that it is the campaigns related to physical activity and healthy eating that are the most familiar ones in the age group being tested. However, the educational level of the respondents differentiates their responses in terms of attention paid to the topic of the campaign. The older youth notice campaigns related to voluntary blood donation more often than those concerning promotion of motor activity. It might be resulting from a higher awareness, the change in values happening with age as well as with the possibility of actively joining the campaigns. Only after turning 18 can you voluntarily donate blood. From the research conducted among university youth, on the example of students from Białystok universities, it follows that campaigns related to respecting traffic regulations appeal most to that target group and induce changes of behaviour [Piekutowska 2013]. Various channels of communication are used in social campaigns, and their appropriate choice has an immense importance in reaching the recipients. The analysis of the results of our own research shows that for the youth from the Podkarpacie region, it is mostly the television and the Internet that are the main sources of information in that field, which can be also confirmed by the results of the studies by Białek et al. (2012) or Piekutowska et al. (2013). The school as a source of information about health-promoting campaigns ranked as third, which shows that such campaigns do not reach schools well enough. According to the students from Poznań universities, health campaigns are necessary and should be aimed at the whole society and at particular groups [Rosińska 2014]. The inhabitants of Warsaw are of a similar opinion. Nearly 91% of the respondents assess social campaigns as necessary and 90% perceive them as effective [Czerw 2014]. Similarly, the results of our own research show that the students from the schools from the Podkarpacie region that have been tested confirm the legitimacy of creating health-related social campaigns and the awareness of the necessity of promoting a healthy lifestyle increases with age. The studies by Skaruz et al. (2015), concerning the perception of the social campaigns by upper secondary school youth, show that the less complicated the message is, the more easily social advertisements reach the recipient. The respondents are also of the opinion that not every campaign is created for all the age groups. Musical setting is an important factor in social advertising. As far as that is concerned, the results of our own studies show that the musical setting is more important for the upper secondary students than for the junior high school students. A well-chosen soundtrack of the spot evokes emotions that can serve as food for thought, and it was the students from upper secondary schools that nearly twice more often emphasized the importance of emotions in the perception of a campaign. According to Skaruz et al. (2015), a social campaign should evoke emotions in the recipient and the greater they are, the better the campaign will be remembered, which can result in the change of the recipient's behaviour. However, the students from the junior high schools that were tested definitely more often declared that the perception of social campaigns is decided by their topic and the participation of famous people. The gender is a factor that affects the perception of the campaign significantly. The boys emphasized more often that the efficiency of the campaign is affected by the participation of famous people in social campaigns, while the girls, more than the boys, accentuated the importance of slogans used in the campaigns.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. According to the respondents, social campaigns increase the awareness of the society, motivate to action and to the change of the lifestyle.

2. There are several various factors contributing to the efficiency of a social campaign, both with respect to a particular target group and to the nature of the issue in question..
3. Gender and school age differentiate the perception of the campaign.
4. Schools should contribute more to promoting social campaigns concerning health among students and actively join in the health promoting actions undertaken in Poland.

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