



Strategy for using social marketing to challenge gender inequality

Background

Voices for Change (V4C) wants to bring about change in attitudes and behaviour on a wide scale in Nigerian society, not just in small, local communities. Mass marketing approaches have been used to 'sell' gender equality to young people in a way that is appealing and engaging. V4C created a youth brand called 'Purple' to attract young people's attention, and have used a range of media to ensure they get the message.

V4C's approach

Using a brand-led approach is key to bringing about change at scale. V4C has invested in creating mass awareness of the Purple brand among young people. The Purple brand has been used to attract and engage young Nigerians, and to direct them to other Purple communications or activities to deepen their interest. These include the Purple Tinz radio show, the Purple Website or Purple Academy online learning tool.

Motivating messages are created based on research among young people. This includes research to identify their key values, influencers, ambitions and aspirations; as well as studies testing the communications materials – TV adverts, posters, radio show, etc. These messages promote the benefits of gender equal behaviour, including personal fulfilment, better family relationships, and effective community development.

Targeting the wider society is crucial to bring about change. V4C has worked with religious and traditional leaders to promote gender equality across all ages. The programme has promoted role models from different backgrounds – media personalities, students, musicians, business people, pastors and imams – to condemn negative behaviours such as violence against women and girls and show the wider community that people from all backgrounds are embracing gender equality.

Using media creatively to get the messages across has been an essential part of V4C's strategy. Purple Tinz Radio show and TV adverts used mass media, backed up by outdoor posters to create brand awareness. Online and social media have been used to provide detailed information and support, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Methods included regular web-chats, online videos, quizzes, and the Purple Academy online learning tool. This has given young people a range of opportunities to experience the Purple brand and deepen their engagement in gender issues.

V4C's experience

The media and creative approaches have worked very well. Tracking research shows strong awareness of the Purple brand among our core target audience of 16-25 year olds. Radio, TV and outdoor posters have been strong drivers of awareness. Young people have found the brand appealing and the radio drama has prompted lively discussions in focus groups. The characters were engaging, and offered positive role models. Radio stations have chosen to re-broadcast Purple Tinz radio drama at no cost, suggesting that it has had a real appeal for their listeners. V4C has invested in high quality production in all its communications materials, and this paid off in high levels of awareness and engagement.

The challenges and V4C's response to them

V4C wanted to provide clear messages on gender equality, but did not want to put young people off by lecturing or talking down to them. Finding the right balance here was challenging, and early feedback found that messages on gender were not sufficiently explicit. This was addressed by creating the '50/50' campaign, and subsequent research has found that Purple is now clearly associated with gender equality.

Data from media houses has not always been credible or available in the formats needed, so V4C commissioned its own research. This helped the programme to design a strategy to use the most effective media to target young people. In addition to conventional paid media, we formed strategic partnerships with media houses to secure free media coverage. V4C provided training on gender issues to journalists and executives, and as a result secured free airtime for discussion and coverage of gender issues.

The four states in which V4C works – Kano, Kaduna, Lagos and Enugu – have different cultures and media contexts. In Lagos, outdoors material has been therefore adapted to be livelier and eye catching, given the crowded media landscape. V4C has held more public events in Lagos, whilst a low-key approach has been adopted in Kano owing to the sensitivities around gender equality and security concerns. Adaptations have been also made to the radio drama, with characters specifically developed for the Northern and Southern versions.

Conclusions and practical implications

- Creating an appealing brand raises awareness and increases the impact of a campaign;
- Different media have different roles, with radio and posters most successful in generating awareness;
- Messages and media need to be refined to address the specific culture of each state;
- Conducting bespoke audience research, both to develop and evaluate the campaign, was central to its success;
- Online media offer potential to engage young people, but need support and promotion.

Using this combination of social marketing methods, we achieved strong awareness of the Purple Brand among our audience; we created appealing messages which attracted them; and we contributed towards shifts in attitudes and behaviour on gender equality issues.

Key results to date

Over the four years since initial implementation of this strategy:

- Over 20 per cent brand awareness amongst the target group of young people across the four intervention states
- Over 100,000 positive comments recorded on web and social media
- Over 3 million active users on purple website
- Contribution to an increase in positive attitudes on specific gender equality issues