#SPEAK OUT FOR SOIL

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1.0 SUMMARY

#SpeakOutForSoil launched as a campaign strategy derived by myself, and three other students in response to a live brief set by our client, Sustainable Soils Alliance (SSA); the campaign was presented in front of an ambassador of the SSA in early March 2020. The SSA are unified with academics, agricultural workers, scientists, NGO's and businesses, working alongside the government to integrate soils into environmental and sustainability policies in aid of helping the soil crisis. Whilst the alliance is supported by the representatives outlined above, their brief was to engage the *public* on the severe soil degradation in the UK. The client expressed a problematic gap in their communication sector, when campaigning soil health to UK citizens; soil is undervalued, ignored, and signified with germs and dirt (Sustainable Soil Alliance, 2020). Our strategy responded to the SSA's objective to engage the public on the alarming undervalued and ignored crisis of soil, by undertaking a campaign to *engage* and *inform* our target audience on the issues faced and provide strategies to act on the prevailing crisis. Our first initiative began by selecting a target audience to direct our vital message to, we acknowledged the importance of concentrating on a select audience to focus our campaign. Thereby, with research into environmental awareness, contemporary culture and the vanguard of environmental movements today, which will be explored further in section two, we chose to aim our campaign at young school children aged eleven to fourteen. Significant research was undertaken in audience acknowledgement and thus, will be critically evaluated further on. Subsequently, our desired aim was to engage and inform by framing a multi-purpose strategy, consisting of an assembly presented in schools, wherein we would present our campaign video, introduce our subscription box and utilise our social media platform, Instagram, informing our clear message through our hashtag, #SpeakOutForSoil. To reiterate, our desired outcome was to *engage* and *inform* the main audience, young children, however, also reach towards a sub-audience of teachers, parents, and extended family. To recapitulate the multi-purpose tactic, engaged interactive communication, incorporation of potential campaign partnerships, visual media, the utilisation of online social media platforms, and the accompanying campaign material with the clients branding and vital message combined. Therefore, this campaign focused firmly on its online approach, which reflects campaigning in a digital age, thus, the digital strategies will be critically evaluated within a theoretical sphere of campaigns, and contemporary examples affixed.

2.0 Introduction

This report will consist of an overview and critical evaluation of the vital strategies and practices utilised in the creation of the campaign, #SpeakOutForSoil. To present a critical evaluation of the designed campaign, an initial underpinning of campaign as a concept is necessary in the grounding of this report. In addition, the connection to the current climate will provide a context for the intended campaign and facilitate the critical appraisal. The structure of this report will entail an outline of the specific strategy, a critical analysis of the theoretical ideas and concepts, and the creative communication processes' that have influenced the development of the campaign strategies. Consequently, this report begins with a significant identification of the concept campaign and follows with the current context of campaign relevancy in the UK now. The key strategies unpicked from the campaign and undergoing a critical evaluation will be divided into three parts of this report: Understanding the Audience, Communication Tactics, and the Digital Approach.

What is a campaign? Whilst there are a wide range of styles, the fundamentals in campaigning are relatively similar, which is evident in case studies past and present, and notable by campaigners and applicable scholars (Barnard and Parker, 2018; Rice and Atkin, 2013; Rose, 2010; Pezzullo and Cox, 2018). Communication, persuasive and visual narrative, creativity, and audience are some of the key aspects in a campaign (Barnard and Parker, 2018; Dal Cin, Zanna and Fong, 2004) and vital to the realm of media and cultural communications, particularly in influencing social, cultural, environmental and political change in society. A campaign has been significantly relevant in the past, recent years and today's contemporary climate; campaigning for women's right to vote in 1928, the #MeToo movement and environmental campaigners Extinction Rebellion. It is significant to note, a social movement and campaign are associated terms, however, do indeed have distinctions. It can be argued, campaigns are a segment of a movement (Lakey, 2011) and can be portrayed as metamorphic, in other words, "campaigns can develop into movements" (Whitelock, 2013). Following on from the concept of campaign, the relevancy of this report in today's current climate of significant environmental campaigns and movements will now succeed.

Environmental campaigning is widely inescapable in today's ecology, the UK media is dominated with

environmental campaigns and movements regarding key issues of climate change. For instance, movement Extinction Rebellion generated provocative headlines in 2019, when an action caught on camera of a demonstrator being torn down from a tube by commuters went viral (The Telegraph, 2019). In fact, environmental protests made up 45% of all protests in the UK last year (Bailey, 2020). More significantly, the global young active citizen appeared on our streets and online corridors, protesting against climate change directing their aims at the government. The environmental movement, Youth 4 Climate[1] addresses concerns of climate change by campaigning for awareness, social change, and utilising a critical narrative towards the government (Pezzullo and Cox, 2018), this movement consists of mainly school aged children inspired by public figure Greta Thunberg (UK Student Climate Network, 2020. Moreover, the Greta Effect has been coined to illustrate "an increase in online social activism among [12-15 year old] children" (Ofcom, 2020). Ofcom (2020) has identified a rise of social media activism and young people; 18% of twelve to fifteen year olds are vital advocates in supporting environmental NGO[2]'s. In explicitly recent times, the vanguard of the environmental movements, Greta, has encouraged young people to protest online instead of on the streets as a consequence of Covid-19. Subsequently, there is key information regarding the tools of digital activism aiding campaigns, which will be examined and evaluated further on. It is clear in the contemporary day, that young children are advocates in challenging environmental issues, and environmental campaigns are substantially evident in the UK right now, thereby, our campaign strategy is a critical read and a relevant account of environmental campaigning. The intrinsic strategies will be critically evaluated alongside a theoretical underpinning and crucial reflection of design choices.

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[1] Youth 4 Climate is also known as: Youth Strike for Climate, Youth for Climate and Fridays for Future.
[2] Non-Government Organisation.

3.0 UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIENCE

The campaign target audience included young children, aged eleven to fourteen, before one evaluates the audience acknowledgment with vital campaign theory, it is necessary to identify the context of audience in media and cultural studies. The term audience has polysemic meanings, with some interpretations including the audience as the receiver, a consumer, and reader of texts (Bertrand and Hughes, 2018). Furthermore, an evolving technological shift has altered the audience role. Jenkins (2008) argues a cultural shift of new information and technology can provide a convergence within individuals, evolving from passive spectators to active participants. Acknowledgment of the audience becoming metamorphic can comprise of the active citizen participating in cultural digital activism. Jenkins (2008) states activists partake in convergence culture in one aspect by performing the act of culture jamming[3], whereby the activist consumes the text and reverts the semiotics reclaiming the role of the consumer to a creative and agency attached citizen. Moreover, the perspective of the target audience as passive consumers is discussed in academia (Corrigan and Frith, 2006), but widely contested (Reis, 2020; Jenkins, *et al*, 2016). Reis (2020) supports the perception of agency and civic tendencies in youth, stating young children have been inspired from Greta Thunberg's environmental message, by contributing to social media activism, thus, implying youth "citizens as agents of change" [and] "producers of contextualised and socially relevant knowledge, instead of being simple consumers of knowledge (p. 144). To reiterate the point, the audience has become an active significant part of culture and thus, in terms of audience acknowledgement when campaigning, the idea of the audience as passive and merely a spectator is not sufficient. Understanding your audience is vital in a campaign and can impact the successful nature (Barnard and Parker, 2018). The context of environmental campaigns and the active young citizen in the digital public sphere, is evident in Britain today as beforementioned. This contextual research created an essential part of the campaign strategy, a grounded contemporary identification of our target audience as keen environmentalists, furthered our agenda to explore our audience persona.

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[3] Culture Jamming defined and critically discussed in section 5.

Barnard and Parker identity a step by step audience analysis (2012, p.60) including, but not restricted to, (1) identifying sub-audiences influenced by the main audience, (2) learning values, behaviours, agenda and desires of the chosen audience and (3) identifying the appropriate communication tools to connect with the audience. Subsequently, the campaign utilised this approach to delve into audience analysis. An identification found, young children to be susceptible of influence from educators, parents, media and provocatively commercialism (Chaudhary and Gupta, 2014), though on the contrary, young children have the ability to utilise their "own degree of power" by influencing others (Barnard and Parker, 2012). We anticipated to reach a wider sub-audience, such as, teachers, parents and family members. In doing so, we could offer the client a wider audience within the campaign strategy, although, still significantly focused on our main target audience of young children. Moreover, Barnard and Parker (2012) argue an important element of audience research is understating your audience, therefore, our audience profile was created (See Figure 1) and displayed in the campaign presentation. A relatively small primary insight into the behaviours, interests and hobbies of the children was collected by the campaign group members from close connections within our social circle.

Figure 1: Screenshot of Audience Persona.

The audience profile portrayed in Figure 1 was presented in a visual, fun and creative way, consisting of a young female figure posing as the target audience. This allowed for a deeper analysis into our audience demographic and helped make vital strategic decisions throughout the campaign, in regard to our tactics. Utilising young children as the target audience can bring complexities to campaigning and prospective problems our campaign could have faced. Bragg (2007) advises a carefully considered ethical approach to using a young audience due to their vulnerability. Subsequently, due to the nature of our goals, *engaging* and *informing*, we identified a potential problem with the age of our target audience. The client SSA believe they are failing to engage the public because "soil is uninteresting and undervalued" and the soil crisis is complex to understand (Sustainable Soil Alliance, 2020). Our problem we encountered in the designing of the campaign, is the complexity of the issue and digesting of the problem by the young children. To overcome this encoding problem, an emphasis and further research was utilised between the characteristics of the audience and campaign tactics. Therefore, Hart's (1992) ladder of participation in youth projects gave a solution to our communicative issue. With a focus on participatory design through involving the target audience in an interactive engaged assembly, we could ensure a responsible and inclusive degree of participation, rather than an objective approach. In reflection, the research strategies of understanding our young audience were successful in obtaining a civically engaged, digital active, and creative persona and thus, the tactics were carefully considered alongside the young audience.

4.0 COMMUNICATION TACTICS

The campaign approach embodied the aims, engage and inform by utilising a four-tactic method, these tactics substantially centred around participatory education design, subscription based awareness and visual digital media. The tactics were acknowledged alongside awareness of the young audience, the client's brief and relatable to the current environment. Understanding and identifying the correct communication tools are vital for a successful campaign (Barnard and Parker, 2012), therefore, it is necessary to study the theoretical approaches and then apply to our campaign strategy. Rose (2010) states, campaigns must "communicate in as many dimensions as possible" (p.46). Moreover, he emphasises visual media provides an impactful visibility to the campaign issue and imagery "exist[s]much more in the mind of the beholder, while words tend to remain the property of the source." (Rose, 2010, p.61). A lack of universal explanation within a campaign does not necessarily signify a lack of impactful knowledge, when aligning an audience, the quality of communication is greater than the quantity (Rose, 2010, p.61). Behaviour change is vital in campaigns, the study of audience behaviour is prevalent in academia of media and cultural studies for example (Ang, 1989; Blumler and Katz, 1974). Moreover, Cialdini (2009) psychology of persuasion[4] is paramount to campaigning, more focused is his idea on reciprocation, whereby, in producing an action for someone, the action may possibly be returned as "good faith" (Rose, 2010, p.63). In addition to Cialdini's (2009) concepts of persuasion, Greek philosopher Aristotle's notion of rhetoric is useful within communication tactics. "The faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (Herrick, 2009, p.77) and the "instrumental use of language" (Hauser, 1986, p.11) are considered definitions of the linguistic term rhetoric. Furthermore, a triangulation of persuasive methods is studied by the Greek philosopher and consist of (1) ethos- signifying credibility and trust, (2) pathos- reinforcing emotive language, and (3) logos- connoting logistics (Rorty, 1996). The latter power of three are vital in campaign methods, and can be utilised in narratives to impact, educate and shape the audience (Dal Cin, Zanna and Fong, 2004; Rose, 2010). Consequently, outlined theories above conclude how significant the communication

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[4] Robert Cialdini (2009) lists a variety of other behaviour rules including: Scarcity, Authority, Consistency, Liking and Consensus.

part of campaigning is and fundamental part of the strategy.

Our communication approaches utilised key narrative tools and tangible tactics to employ the aims of our campaign. Accordingly, the multi-purpose tactic constituted of an assembly, a subscription box, a video, a social media platform and accompanying hashtag. In a critical logic, our multitude of tactics were chosen to transcribe the client's message in the best possible form; in doing so, we followed Rose's (2010) key principles. (1) being multidimensional with our approaches, by utilising a range of tactics as outlined above, (2) providing agency, by offering an engaging assembly to allow the children to interact and join in the public sphere, (3) moral legitimacy, by strongly expressing the detrimental problem regarding soil health in our video, posted on our Instagram page, discussed in the assembly and also in the accompanying texts (See Figure 2) and finally, (3) have "verve, *élan*"[5] (p.11), whereby

Speak Out For Soil Campaign

SUSTAINABLE
SOILS
ALLIANCE

Abi, Aqila, Jodie and Will would like to thank you for listening to us today.

Soil is the source of nourishment for food, foundations for buildings and storage for water and carbon. Help us share this vital message.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR CAMPAIGN AT:
WWW.SUSTAINABLESOILS.ORG

Figure 2: Leaflet for campaign.

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[5] Translates to 'momentum' from French to English.

the campaign group felt passionate about their campaign methods, as well as the environmental issue, and confident in delivering it to the client. Moreover, the use of messengers and influencers within a campaign is a contested communication tactic, on one hand, the factors of utilising celebrities for example in campaigns can heighten the awareness of the campaign, however, on the other it can take away from the vital campaign message and be overshadowed by the use of an influencer (Rose, 2010).

The Video

The visual approach to our campaign strategy included creating a short video to summarise the client SSA, the soil crisis and how the audience could respond by helping, this provided a clear illustration of our campaign. The video portrayed a playful, yet informative communication style, including rhetoric persuasive language. The soil facts correlated to *logos*, our client's details associated with *ethos* and our voiceover which included emotive and heightened language, conveying the means of *pathos* (Rorty, 1996). On one hand, an advantage of utilising a video is the visual impact (Rose, 2010) attached to it, however, on the other hand, we experienced difficulties with combining all relevant detail in a short video, and anxieties of the overall vital message being conveyed correctly arose.

The Subscription Box

Our idea of a subscription box influenced by the concept of reciprocation (Cialdini, 2009), whereby, in giving the audience a box of items ranging from partnership products, for example, Pukka tea, to healthy soil tips, we anticipated the campaign would receive donations or a boosted awareness. Complexities were attached with this tactic, due to the target audience, we came across a vital problem of assuming a role of the young child as a consumer. An option we utilised was to target the subscription service towards the sub-audience by providing leaflets (See Figure 2) to the children, thereby, anticipating the children reaching out to the sub-audience members.

The Assembly

A key aspect of our multi-purpose approach consisted of an in-school assembly, in front of the children and teachers. In recent years, schools have become fundamental learning spaces for young children learning about socio-environmental issues, and partially supporting the civic young citizen (Reis, 2020; Rickinson, 1999; Winter, 2007). However, it is argued by Reis (2020) the national curriculum does not

directly encourage youth activism, instead, civic and agency notions within young children are developed through "*active* learning" (p.142). Consequently, our assembly tactic manifested as an interactive, active and participatory seminar, instead of a passive spectatorship, the tactic would involve an integration of the audience by facilitating a dialogue on the concerns of soil and showcasing the subscription box. Ensuing an active assembly meant our aims of engage and inform could be conveyed through active communication.

Social Media

Our digital tactics, the social media platform Instagram and accompanying hashtag, #SpeakOutForSoil anticipated to boost our campaign into the digital age. Digital activism is on the rise for campaigning and social movements, this will be critically discussed and evaluated more in the digital approach section. Our target audience are the most active users online (Leadbeater, 2008), therefore, our tactics were relevant with the audience in mind. In addition, web 2.0 has increased democratic, active participation and civic engagement in youth it has been found (Reis, 2020; Hodson, 2014). The Instagram platform was created in response to the client lacking one. The hashtag appeared within the accompanying flyers, the video and would have been explicitly mentioned in the assembly talks to ensure a repetition of the message.

5.0 THE DIGITAL APPROACH

Leading on from the social media tactics, digital approaches to campaigning is paramount to the current climate and this campaign. An increased interconnectedness has widened the possibilities for campaigns, and social movements as Castells (2012) states. Increased digital technology can impact culture for instance, successful campaigning can evolve into environmental policies and democratic notions. Environmental petitions shared across social media such as on Facebook can eventually end up being debated in the House of Commons, signifying the abilities of digital campaigning. Moreover, there are an abundant of ways the digital ecology can help facilitate a campaign; networking can reach a wider cohort of people, spreading a multitudinous of messages, and enabling a transformation from the traditional way of communicating into the public sphere (Pezzullo and Cox, 2018). The tactics of an Instagram platform allowed our campaign to present itself online. Self-presentation online reinforces a distinct notion away from the traditional gatekeeper of news media (Pezzullo and Cox, 2018, p.271), this allowed our own messages to be shared online without the dominance of news media. Moreover, a type of new media has arguably become a vital part of the everyday life of a citizen; social media has become noticed for enabling a rapid share of content to a "wider range of audience than ever before" (Pezzullo and Cox, 2018 p. 251) and allowing campaigns not to be restricted to local communities. In addition, Robertson (2018) identifies social media as vital for harvesting ideas, spreading them wide and "magnify[ing] their impact" (p.150).

Figure 3:Led By Donkeys Billboard in Taunton, Somerset, 2019.

A predominant example of digital campaigning and activism is the renowned activist group, Led By Donkeys; their art form of cultural jamming is widely known in the UK at this current time (See Figure 3). Culture jamming has a collection of definitions (Jenkins, 2008; DeLaure and Fink, 2017), for example earlier forms have focused on consumption by reverting its semiotics, it can "refer to an organised, social activist effort that aims to counter the bombardment of consumption- orientated messages in the mass media" (Handleman and Kozinets Cited in Carducci, 2006). Moreover, Jenkins (2008) argues culture jamming has moved on from simply targeting consumerism and involves social, cultural and political issues in the wider sense. Subsequently, Led By Donkeys focuses on the political issue of Brexit as the vital focus; the group take politicians tweets from social media and reverts them to billboards for the public to see, this act can include Jenkins (2008) concept of media convergence, whereby, old media meets new. DeLaure and Fink (2017) explore culture jamming as an art of cultural resistance, they argue characteristics of culture jamming which includes its ability to be (1) playful, by reverting the dominant meaning towards a satire notion, (2) participatory, by sharing content online the user becomes active, (3) transgressive, it breaks the norms of traditional art by remixing and illegal tendencies, and (4) political, it harnesses the power to provide collective action from members of the

public and has the power the change dominant ideologies[6]. On the contrary, the form of culture jamming can have limitations attached, it has been argued to be hypercritical and anti-establishment. Heath and Potter (2004) argue culture jammers "reflect the true spirit of capitalism and that counterculture…has been used to sell products for decades" (Heath and Potter cited in DeLaure and Fink, 2017, p.286). Furthermore, according to Heath and Potter (2004), culture jamming can be considered alongside the notion of counterculture; the term counterculture is contested in cultural academia. It is said to be a temporary act of rebellion, instead of the deep-rooted resistance which is usually found within subcultural theory (Hall and Jefferson, 2006). To reiterate, culture jamming has civic and agency notions of resistance by utilising playful modes to revert semiotics, however, some critics argue this is failing to address the wider issue and is merely a distraction (Heath and Potter, 2004).

Moreover, digital technology allows campaigns to reinforce a significant message of alert, amplify and engage according to Pezzullo and Cox (2018). A campaign must alert the target audience to the significant problem and keep an alert stage throughout the campaign, then the message must be amplified, strengthening the campaigns vital message through communication channels, this can allow the public to join into the digital public sphere. Consequently, the idea of engagement occurs by alerting the public and amplifying the problem, thus, engagement can "reflect how social change itself is constituted through communication." (Pezzullo and Cox, 2018, p.256). Alert, Amplify and Engage is a direct, strong mode of communication that is significant to assert the campaign objective, it must be unforgettable and utilised in all accompanying campaign material (Pezzullo and Cox, 2018, p.241). Although, this campaign did not seek to use the act of culture jamming, the involvement of social media integrated within our campaign is highly significant. The idea of a direct campaign message was prevalent in our campaign by using the campaign tagline, #SpeakOutForSoil. This allows for the issue of soil to be translated through a concise message and connotes the idea of engagement by introducing the hashtag. Hashtag activism is highly utilised in today digital climate, a predominant example includes: #BlackLivesMatter; the act can be defined as a large number of posts appearing on social

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[6] In total DeLaure and Fink (2017) distinguish eight characteristics.

media under a common hashtag symbol with a socio-political issue (Yang, 2016). Utilising a hashtag in a campaign has been argued to spread content successfully and also produce democratic notions, "spreading media texts help us articulate who we are…build[ing] [a] community and awareness around the subjects we care about" (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013, p.4). However, on the contrary of hashtag activism, it has been noted to misrepresent marginalised communities. The universal platform twitter can harness the public sphere and, in some cases, allow for detrimental discourse to alter the meaning of a hashtag. The #BlackLivesMatter movement notably constituted racism by non-activists on twitter, reverting the vital message and reinforcing the detrimental issues the movement was facing (Yang, 2016, p.16).

6.0 CONCLUSION

This report introduces the campaign, #SpeakOutForSoil; it critically evaluates and adds to the sphere of environmental digital campaigning. In responding to the brief set by the client, Sustainable Soil Alliance, this campaign has successfully provided ideas and strategies for utilisation. The campaigners undertook a vital challenge in understanding the client's gap in communication, planning, and identifying the appropriate methods and presenting these in a campaign strategy. Strengths and limitations were apparent in this campaign, yet, the limits have provided valuable insight to future strategies. In one significant aspect, the lack of campaign messengers was absent from the campaign strategy, though for accredited reason. The vanguard of environmentalism in today's current climate for young children, Greta Thunberg, proposed a fear for this specific campaign which was shared with the client. The fear was everting the public engagement from the detrimental soil issue towards the excitement of the revolutionary young activist. The campaign felt the issue we were trying to engage with our target audience would been overshadowed by the revolutionary Greta Thunberg. To reiterate, this report has offered key insights into the campaign approach and critically evaluated alongside fundamental campaign theory. This campaign hoped to provide a strategy to engage and inform a young audience on the soil crisis for Sustainable Soil Alliance.

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