The Impact of Multimedia Art on Public Health Campaigns

Mugisha Emmanuel K.

Faculty of Science and Technology Kampala International University Uganda

ABSTRACT

Multimedia art has proven to be an effective tool for conveying public health messages, using mediums like VR installations, viral art, documentaries, and interactive media. This paper examines how multimedia art captures public attention and encourages engagement with health messages through creative and emotional resonance. By drawing on case studies, it examines how different forms of art such as posters, films, and public performances effectively break through media noise to reach diverse audiences. Ultimately, this analysis highlights the impact of multimedia art in improving message retention, community connection, and behavior change, presenting both the benefits and ethical considerations of using art to enhance public health efforts.

Keywords: Public health campaigns, Multimedia art, Health communication, Community engagement, Health behavior change.

INTRODUCTION

Public health concerns have often relied on the message delivered to the public to modify circulating health culture appropriately. Moreover, during an ongoing crisis where large segments of populations impinge on the healthcare system, differentiating one's voice within a crowded media space can be challenging. One potential way of capturing interest, however, is by using multimedia hotspots, such as VR installations and viral art or memes images and messages propagated rapidly and organically through social media. The application of artistic expression in public health uses a variety of mediums—from skateboard designs and street art to graffiti murals. Electronic media are, however, easily exchanged and have almost an infinite lifespan. The message of any such design or composition is based on the universal attraction of beauty as an enticement to further engagement [1, 2]. This paper aims to give theoretical context for and situate practical examples of, attempting to engage the public through the application of multimedia in the service of public health education. Several keywords will need some definition for clarity, to be used later on. Overall, this paper aims to outline some main theoretical aspects regarding the uses of particular techniques, concentrate on multimedia art, and show how visual and artistic forms can organize the process of distribution rather than being apologetic or expressive. This paper also aims to present practical examples of using art in the context of health education and give some cases of specifically using multimedia in the hosting of art [3, 4].

The Role of Multimedia Art in Public Health Campaigns

One of the fundamental objectives of public health campaigns is effectively communicating a health message that results in comprehension and recall of that message. Art has held a central role in shaping health communication, and whether visual, auditory, interactive or a combination thereof, multimedia art not only conveys the health message but can also elicit an emotional connection from audience members, which can have far-reaching effects. Previous research indicates that understanding health information is achieved and recalled more effectively when it is presented through art, as art can engage and educate a wide variety of audiences creatively. The use of arts, such as graphic design, has been a part of the public health field for over one hundred years, with milestones including creating public service posters for

health messages in the 20th century and publications that the founders of the United States used to promote public health. By breaking down barriers to access and tapping local and individual creativity, communication about health issues that are conveyed through multimedia artwork facilitates broader, faster recognition and understanding of essential health messages [5, 6]. Given the history of the use of multimedia art in public health, this approach is critical in conveying the information that can identify at-risk populations and improve the overall healthcare of a community. Presenting data through different media and artwork gives the data relevance and meaning to the general public. The use of multimedia art, such as films, photography, theater, posters, comedy shows, and food safety, extends beyond the role of disseminating a message from a public health official or organization. It engages artists and their peers to help shape the message and the intended audience, as well as how it is shared. One example that integrates public health messaging through art is a documentary that was an integral part of a larger campaign to address food insecurity in low-income communities. The intended audience is broad and consists of those in the community, policymakers, and advocates throughout the state. The documentary is also designed to be an advocacy tool to raise awareness of the issue and affect community and local policy [7, 8].

Effectiveness of Multimedia Art in Health Messaging

A growing body of literature has examined the use of artistic forms, including print and digital images, music, and narratives, in reaching diverse audiences. This work has systematically compared the visual and auditory elements used in multimedia art practice against traditionally classified, non-aesthetic health promotional strategies. In general, results indicate that communication mediated through an image, music, or a story is more resonant with audiences than traditional risk-based approaches. Although there is disagreement on the ability of aesthetic communication to 'change minds' and hence influence behavior, there is notable consistency in findings that emotion and interactivity in health communication are associated with increased 'likes,' 'shares,' and comments in publicly available health messages. The visual arts are associated with audience attention and retention. For example, holograms attracted 20% more visitors to an exhibition than non-holographic photographs, and visitor evaluations of holographic images were 'more vivid,' 'more original,' less 'ordinary,' and less 'repetitious' than other images. Increased retention and affective intensity may imply a critical engagement with the stimuli, which is most marked for visual artwork. Few studies compare behavior change across consensually rated high and low visual and auditory representations of health risk, and large-scale empirical data documenting such behavior can be difficult to obtain. However, reviews of the literature are supportive. A systematic review of neuroimaging studies concluded the visual arts foster a sense of altruism, empathy, and theory of mind, increasing prosocial behaviors. A real-world study of digital vision-based and non-vision-based communications identified as 'viral' found that images of babies and children, rather than skulls, were significantly associated with leafleting behavior. Such findings are consistent with similar work in the domain of public health and the arts [9, 10].

Case Studies and Examples

Fight for Your Health: This innovative project, undertaken by an art-activism group and AIDS service organizations, was a counterprotest in the form of a parade. It was designed in response to an antigay protest specifically targeting the queer youth who participated in the National High School Journalism Convention and Delegates Assembly. The parade, full of multimedia art and performance, showed support for National Youth HIV and AIDS Awareness Day and respect for all young journalists. The Fight for Your Health art activism parade received extensive local media coverage. Images of the positive parade supporters were widely dispersed, reappearing in multiple blogs and online news stories. The event and its images were discussed in numerous local and national print and broadcast stories [11, 12]. Just for the Health/Art for Barter: An innovative public health campaign was developed to prevent methamphetamine use among teens and young adults in northwestern Michigan. Key to the campaign's success was its focus on true collaboration between both young adult artists and communicators and the public health, mental health, and substance abuse professionals who worked with the project from planning through implementation. Personally, and professionally, the artists provided a fresh and innovative perspective to the planning sessions and served as credible cultural informers about their teenage peers. Because of the young person-to-young-person collaboration, the resulting messages were edgy, witty, and real, and spawned artwork that received national art show recognition. After an initial

year of funding, the project staff assumed full leadership of the campaign. Branding was also critical to this project. The orange-stickered logo and bars in this ad appeared on adult entertainment magazines and brochures, marketing materials such as t-shirts, water bottles, and folders, and on the walls of local schools in the form of oversized cans. In every instance in which Just for the Health was presented, the art, the tone, and the program mission were consistent across various styles of media. In healthcare, branding is important because people remember what they love. In health communications, branding is important because people remember what they hate. And health promotion can be very aggravating [13, 14]. Too Soon! - Stop Teen Drinking: A multimedia campaign, partly funded and designed for the Washington State Department of Health, centered on two television ads that feature reverse narrative technique. The dramatic spots use flashbacks to show the positive life events that lie ahead for one young woman released from prison, who in a moment of arrogance, is not going to stop for a drink after an offer of "just one beer" from a friend. The spots contain the tagline "It's never OK to drink and drive" and encourage drinking and driving rules such as calling for a ride home, pulling over immediately if one is drinking while driving, calling the police if a friend is about to drive, and not letting a friend drive if they have been drinking. In addition to television, ads are running in family and teen publications, and on stations with target teenage demographics. The portfolio uses a drowned font and a reverse color scheme including a black background. A profile is offered about intoxicated drivers: Statistics show that one in four Sunday night drivers has drugs in their system and one in four drivers in fatal car crashes tests positive for illegal drugs [15, 16].

Challenges and Ethical Considerations in Using Multimedia Art in Public Health Campaigns
Multimedia artworks can be a very effective complement to public health messaging, but their use may raise some challenges, including ethical ones. A multimedia artwork could be appreciated and interpreted differently than an integrated text is intended because of its interpretative appeal, which is complex and may risk trivializing health issues. Ethical dilemmas arise about the artwork's representation of groups, confidentiality agreements, and consent; the association between signature or institutional sponsors and the original or altered artwork. Ideally, campaigns must approach both the technical and ethical aspects in an integrated way, from the very beginning of the design and execution of the artwork. Artists involved in public health campaigns have the right not to be excessively constrained in their artistic expression, to take advantage of an audience's heterogeneous beliefs to spread messages, and to be regulated by mingled juridical and operational tools. For legitimate ends, public health officials need to approach their audiences most effectively by looking longitudinally, ideographically, and eclectically at them, not only breaking them down into demographic subgroups but also trying to detect similarities across them. Ethical problems involve artistic freedom since regulation is not only aimed at making art effective through adopting recognized best practices but also at putting up a default ethical frame for all works. The more than 300 museums that have decided to be smoke-free spaces have addressed all these topics—sponsorship, corporate or individual, representing and depicting characters, and controversial issues like slavery and racism by putting in place a 'community-driven' approach, in which the people directly involved were primarily represented during planning. Even the proposal that the initiative was made by the authorities and then carried out directly by them was limited. Once the works had been conceived and produced, they were evaluated and finally publicly disclosed. Only those works inspired by the artists in the years past were kept in the collections, but those that were paid for outright by institutions, agencies, or contributors were not. The initiative was also a community-driven project. This additionally suggests that the distinction between artwork inspired by and assigned to, and artwork in any case paid for, can be misleading. It would also confirm that possessing one's own collection with the works of art at issue entails a direct responsibility to do right by the public. In addition, such a distinction would take into account the ethical relevance of being an 'authentic' place to which the public further entrusts the works purchased or even made to soundly inspire them when they come into contact with the same [17, 18].

CONCLUSION
Multimedia art is a powerful avenue for enhancing public health campaigns, as it not only conveys health messages but fosters emotional engagement that can lead to increased message recall and behavioral change. Through diverse mediums, multimedia art breaks down barriers of access, enabling public health messages to reach broader, often underrepresented populations. The emotional and aesthetic appeal of art

can make health information more impactful, fostering empathy and promoting prosocial behaviors. Despite its benefits, the integration of art into public health requires careful ethical consideration, particularly regarding representation and message clarity. Ultimately, multimedia art, when thoughtfully applied, holds transformative potential in addressing public health challenges.

REFERENCES

1. Berg SH, O'hara JK, Shortt MT, Thune H, Brønnick KK, Lungu DA, Røislien J, Wiig S. Health authorities' health risk communication with the public during pandemics: a rapid scoping review. BMC Public Health. 2021 Dec; 21:1-23. springer.com

2. Vraga EK, Jacobsen KH. Strategies for effective health communication during the coronavirus pandemic and future emerging infectious disease events. World Medical & Health Policy. 2020 Sep;12(3):233-41.

3. Lim MS, Molenaar A, Brennan L, Reid M, McCaffrey T. Young adults' use of different social media platforms for health information: Insights from web-based conversations. Journal of medical Internet research. 2022 Jan 18;24(1): e23656. jmir.org

4. Kostygina G, Tran H, Binns S, Szczypka G, Emery S, Vallone D, Hair E. Boosting health campaign reach and engagement through use of social media influencers and memes. Social media+ Society. 2020 May;6(2):2056305120912475. sagepub.com

5. Arizti-Sanz J, Bradley AD, Zhang YB, Boehm CK, Freije CA, Grunberg ME, Kosoko-Thoroddsen TS, Welch NL, Pillai PP, Mantena S, Kim G. Simplified Cas13-based assays for the fast identification of SARS-CoV-2 and its variants. Nature biomedical engineering. 2022 Aug;6(8):932-43. nature.com

6. Madhumathi J, Sinha R, Veeraraghavan B, Walia K. Use of "social media"—an option for spreading awareness in infection prevention. Current Treatment Options in Infectious Diseases. 2021 Mar; 13:14-31. springer.com

7. Gesser-Edelsburg A. Using narrative evidence to convey health information on social media: the case of COVID-19. Journal of Medical Internet Research. 2021 Mar 15;23(3):e24948.

8. Kerlow I, Pedreros G, Albert H. Earth Girl Volcano: characterizing and conveying volcanic hazard complexity in an interactive casual game of disaster preparedness and response. Geoscience Communication. 2020 Nov 17;3(2):343-64.

9. Zhang S, Zhu J, Zhang Y, Chen Z, Song C, Li J, Yi N, Qiu D, Guo K, Zhang C, Pan T. Standalone stretchable RF systems based on asymmetric 3D microstrip antennas with on-body wireless communication and energy harvesting. Nano Energy. 2022 Jun 1;96:107069. sciencedirect.com

10. Xu D, Mandal A, Baxter JM, Cheng SW, Lee I, Su H, Liu S, Reichman DR, Delor M. Ultrafast imaging of polariton propagation and interactions. Nature Communications. 2023 Jun 30;14(1):3881. nature.com

11. Pleyers G. The Pandemic is a battlefield. Social movements in the COVID-19 lockdown. Journal of civil society. 2020 Oct 1;16(4):295-312.

12. Mhiripiri NA, Midzi R. Fighting for survival: persons with disabilities' activism for the mediatisation of COVID-19 information. Media International Australia. 2021 Feb;178(1):151-67.

13. Etele, Anulika & Azuji, Ifeanyi & Igbokwe, Innocent. (2024). Causes and effects of crystal methamphetamine usage among undergraduates in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State: Emerging technological resources for intervention and prevention. 6. 1387-1402. 10.51594/ijarss.v6i7.1299.

14. Neffa-Creech D, Plant A, Montoya JA, Oruga R, Kilgore EA, Fraser R, Tesema L. Development and evaluation of a social marketing campaign to address methamphetamine use in Los Angeles County. BMC Public Health. 2022 Sep 22;22(1):1796. springer.com

15. Schumann J, Perkins M, Dietze P, Nambiar D, Mitra B, Gerostamoulos D, Drummer OH, Cameron P, Smith K, Beck B. The prevalence of alcohol and other drugs in fatal road crashes in Victoria, Australia. Accident Analysis & Prevention. 2021 Apr 1;153:105905. [HTML]

16. Hasan R, Watson B, Haworth N, Oviedo-Trespalacios O. What contributes to drug driving? An exploratory investigation into the influence of problematic substance use, roadside testing and

alternative transport options. Accident Analysis & Prevention. 2023 May 1;184:106990. sciencedirect.com

17. Ma R, Deng Z, Wu M. Effects of health information dissemination on user follows and likes during COVID-19 outbreak in China: Data and content analysis. International journal of environmental research and public health. 2020 Jul;17(14):5081. mdpi.com

18. Kitchens B, Claggett JL, Abbasi A. TIMELY, GRANULAR, AND ACTIONABLE: DESIGNING A SOCIAL LISTENING PLATFORM FOR PUBLIC HEALTH 3.0. MIS Quarterly. 2024 Sep 1;48(3).