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## GLOBAL MEDIA AND HIV/AIDS EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS: CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY, AESTHETICS, AND POWER

### *A MÍDIA E CAMPANHAS EDUCATIVAS SOBRE HIV/AIDS: RESPONSABILIDADE CORPORATIVA, ESTÉTICA E PODER*

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#### Abstract

Based on an ethnographic study of the production and reception of HIV/AIDS public service campaigns by MTV and Viacom, this paper considers the branding of HIV/AIDS education promotion. Using a cultural materialist perspective concerned with the relationship between the campaigns and social relations, this paper discusses the production of HIV/AIDS campaigns through corporate social responsibility programs. It examines the hierarchies of aesthetics and relations of power behind the campaigns as well as the role of employees in the creation of the HIV/AIDS initiatives through company volunteer programs. The findings highlight the internalization of the consumer in the production of HIV/AIDS brands. The findings also demonstrate that employee involvement in the creation and maintenance of HIV/AIDS branded campaigns may be best understood as a synergistic process, whereby HIV/AIDS campaigns are not simply being produced by employees, but also becoming incorporated in the valuation of the wider corporate brand.

**Keywords:** HIV/AIDS, Education Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Aesthetics

#### Resumo

Com base em um estudo etnográfico da produção e recepção de campanhas de utilidade pública sobre HIV/AIDS, promovidas pela MTV e pela Viacom, este artigo analisa o processo de construção de branding de campanhas educacionais de HIV/AIDS. Utilizando uma perspectiva materialista cultural, voltada para a relação entre as campanhas e as relações sociais, o artigo discute como a produção de campanhas de

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HIV/AIDS se dá por meio de programas de responsabilidade social corporativa. Serão examinadas as hierarquias estéticas e relações de poder por trás da campanha, assim como o papel que funcionários exercem para a criação de iniciativas dirigidas às questões do HIV/AIDS, que ocorrem através de programas empresariais de voluntários. Os resultados revelam a internalização do consumidor na produção de marcas relacionadas às questões do HIV/AIDS. Os resultados também demonstram que o envolvimento dos funcionários na criação e manutenção de campanhas de HIV/AIDS pode ser melhor compreendido quando interpretado como um processo sinérgico. Por meio desse processo, as campanhas de HIV/AIDS não são simplesmente produzidas pelos funcionários, mas também incorporadas à avaliação da marca corporativa mais ampla.

**Palavras-chave:** HIV/AIDS, Campanhas Educacionais, Responsabilidade Social Corporativa, Estética.

## Introduction

Both traditional and social media have played key roles in producing the universal awareness of HIV and AIDS. Representations and theoretical perspectives concerning the media in HIV/AIDS education, however, have evolved considerably since the beginning of the epidemic in the 1980s. Early critical accounts demonstrated that the mass media played a role in the distortion of scientific and medical findings concerning HIV and AIDS, privileging certain types of information over others, through depictions of AIDS in the early years as a ‘gay plague’, which gave way to the dominance of biomedical and behaviourist constructions of HIV/AIDS into the 1990s and 2000s. Feminist, queer and HIV/AIDS activist accounts move beyond discussions of media distortion, behaviourist and biomedical models of HIV/AIDS by considering the distinctive ways in which discourses actively operate in the construction of gender, sexuality and epidemic.

Feminist and queer theory pertaining to the media and HIV/AIDS, in contrast to many accounts which attempt to quantify audience understanding and behaviour change looks to situate media and audiences historically in relation to other texts and voices. This avoids the trap of analyses of ‘audience effects’, which view audiences as passive recipients of media messages. Nonetheless, these perspectives, in relation to the media often maintain a focus on national education campaigns and their mediation by public policy. In HIV/AIDS media campaigns today, however, the consumer is now implicated in the message through global processes such as branding and technological developments in digital and social media at a global level.

In addition, until the 2000s, media corporations as the leaders and initiators of HIV/AIDS education campaigns was infrequent. International institutions and national governments have long collaborated with the mass media in order to educate particular social groups about HIV and AIDS. However, the leadership of these initiatives is increasingly corporate led, an example of which is the corporate-led Global Media AIDS Initiative (GMAI) founded in 2004. The two main leaders in this regard have been MTV

and Viacom.<sup>2</sup> Both companies have produced highly acclaimed programming and have reached more audiences than any government. Since MTV began its Staying Alive campaign in 1998, it has partner with 278 broadcast partners to air programming in 112 countries and its Flagship drama Suga, which has been running since 2009 has reached more than 720 million viewers worldwide (OGUNMWONYI, 2018).

A longitudinal, multi-method ethnographic research approach was used to look at campaigns and their production by MTV and Viacom and their evolution since the launch of the *Staying Alive Foundation* in 2005. Visual content analysis of campaigns draws on critically engaged discourse analysis and visual ethnography of media objects, which included observations and interviews as well as qualitative content analysis. This paper also draws on interviews conducted at Viacom and MTV in London, UK, and Washington and New York with eight key employees involved in the initial stages of campaign production as well as data from the company websites concerning company volunteer programs.

### **Changing media, changing relationships: safer sex and brands**

HIV education has become increasingly mediated via the branding of safer sex education campaigns. This now can now be seen at all levels but is predominantly promoted by global media. Here I will briefly consider how new media objects in the form of brands are being produced and positioned in relation to audiences. These branded adverts not only constitute the campaigns themselves but also influence the ways people interact with them as such. In other words, branded campaigns via new media technologies and audiences may be playing a more co-constitutive role in shaping them than previously theorized.

The campaigns of global media are collaborative both at the macro level and the micro, audience reception level. At the macro level, international and national partnerships with governmental, international and non-governmental foundations play a

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<sup>2</sup> Viacom is the parent company of MTV and was divided into two companies in 2006, Viacom Inc. and CBS. Both companies were signatories of the Global Media AIDS Initiative and MTV's Bill Roedy was its first chairman.

role in the type of content produced, dependent on the complex relationships and goals involved in the production of campaigns. Furthermore, in collaboration with international bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and non-profit organisations (NPOs) like the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), media leaders are increasingly becoming implicated in the implementation of intergovernmental processes. At a micro level, the incorporation of the audience is evident in the branding process, which is developed in conjunction with databases of consumer likes and dislikes, interests, concerns, sexual preferences and practices (e.g. MTV's ongoing sexual health surveys) and interactions with blogs and other social media.

### **Brands as new media objects and audience interactivity**

Of interest for understanding global HIV/AIDS campaigns is the brand as a form of media object within HIV/AIDS communication and how it is constituted by the audiences and producers. Viacom properties, including MTV examine closely what young people want out of the brand, conducting hundreds of focus group interviews per year and also draw information from interactions on social media. Whether the audience would rather support a socially responsible MTV is a central area of corporate research and is fed into the support and development of MTV's *Staying Alive* brand.

In contrast to other programming and adverts within the company, however, the property rights for the campaign are source of negotiation, whereby local media companies at an international level are granted rights free use MTV and Viacom holdings programming. However, these campaigns are not merely 'pro-social' action by these media companies. Rather, the campaigns are fully integrated into the daily routine of MTV and its parent company Viacom across each of its platforms. From billboards to radio, internet as well as prime time comedy and drama, company 'volunteers' participate in the writing, creative execution and production processes. As a result, this pro-social work constitutes how the company runs and is seen both by its employees, its audience and its shareholders. Branded HIV/AIDS campaigns can thus be considered a medium of

exchange that operate as an interface of communication between producers and consumers (LURY, 2004, p. 27)

Digital media has allowed for much greater audience interactivity with these branded campaigns. Examples include weekly blogs, kept by audience members recording their experiences of their HIV status, and ‘reality TV’ PSAs and televised sex edutainment programs, such as the series MTV Suga. The implication of audiences at various levels, however, means that looking at issues of representation, while important, is not enough in order to fully explore global media HIV/AIDS campaigns in the digital era. Some of the questions that arise pertaining to branded HIV/AIDS education campaigns central to the discussion in this paper are:

1. What does corporate media involvement in HIV/AIDS campaigning mean in terms of how education messaging is being produced and presented?
2. Whose voices and images are the most dominant, and whose remain the most marginalised in this context?

### **Methodological approach**

HIV/AIDS education campaigns by considering the ways in which they are being reconfigured in relation to global media and how audiences are increasingly implicated through processes of branding in consumer culture. The research strategy adopted to study these reconfigurations draws on a Cultural Studies perspective, whereby media production and reception is understood as a complex process of constant negotiation, of processing and reconstruction. Representations do not simply copy ‘reality’ but incorporate social and culturally situated hopes, fears and fantasies, and contradictory meanings (VAN ZONEN, 1994). Therefore, the production of texts and audiences cannot be analysed as interlinked in the process of producing meaning. Following this approach, multiple methods and sources are necessary in order to unpack the processual, dynamic nature of the research topic as a complex cultural ‘site’ (FROW AND MORRIS, 2000). In addition, they allow for the exploration of the various different parts of this process and how they interrelate, using multiple methods and sources. The three areas of

analysis for this research (campaign production, visual content and audience reception), which are not mutually exclusive, required a multi-method research approach.

The production of the campaigns involved the development of branded health education promotional materials across a wide range of platforms, including television, radio and internet. The findings discussed here focus on in-depth interviews with key informants working in the production of the HIV/AIDS awareness campaign materials. Through key contacts in the London office, contact was made with campaign managers and producers New York and Washington. To protect participant identities, names have been withheld. Websites, social media, press releases, webcasts and reports were also consulted as part of the analysis.

The visual analysis of the campaigns produced by MTV and its parent company Viacom, looked at specific campaigns (2004-2006 and 2014-2016). The use of specific case studies of campaigns was selected in order to avoid making generalized claims. The aim of the visual analysis was to 'situate knowledges' (HARAWAY, 2006), grounding the visual texts being studied in local and actual practices and experiences in examining discourses and meanings.

To 'situating knowledges' in the case of visual analysis, it is important to consider language, in its many modalities, as simultaneously reflecting and constructing the context in which it is to be found. Furthermore, following Lury (2004), this research sought to go beyond the analysis of semiotics and discourse to understanding how branded media objects may be understood as a relational, interactive media of exchange between producers and consumers. The visual analysis aimed to bring out how advertising for HIV/AIDS education is also involved in the creation and maintenance of certain social divisions and hierarchies. Reception of the campaigns by the audience was approached through observer participation, focus groups and in-depth interviews and has been reported elsewhere (MARTENS, 2010, 2013). Given the focus of this article on campaign production, here we will consider how audiences are implicated in the production process through a range of digital means, including face to profile communication as part of the branding process.

**Discussion:****Face to profile communication: Brand valuation and integrating audiences in the production process**

A key marketing technique used by Viacom and MTV in their management of CSR image is that of the integration of the audience in the positioning of their brands. According to Lury (2004) and Bookman (2018) this enables the position and activities of the consumer to be internalised in the processes and products of production and distribution. This involves what Lury, drawing on Manovich, calls ‘looping’, which she describes as the compulsory inclusion of consumer tastes, styles and actions in brand-making. Taking a slightly more ominous outlook, but in recognition of a similar incorporation of consumers in the production process, is Poster’s notion of the database. What both of these concepts have to offer is their emphasis on the internalisation of the consumer in production processes.

Viacom properties such as MTV in particular put much effort into internalising the consumer in their production processes. On a yearly basis, it conducts more than 200 focus groups globally. *Staying Alive* has also partnered with organizations such as the Kaiser Family Foundation on telephone and other surveys. The annual focus groups conducted by MTV mainly look at brand awareness, but also consider what young people want out of the brand. Whether the audience would rather support a socially responsible MTV, is a central point of investigation. According to an MTV production assistant, this feeds into the support and development of MTV’s *Staying Alive* brand. The brand is further developed through technological changes and the increasingly important role of the audience in the creation of web-based and other *Staying Alive* materials.

A second form of involving the consumer in the production process and integrating consumer information in programming is through the ongoing sexual health surveys conducted by MTV (see [www.staying-alive.org](http://www.staying-alive.org)). Much of the research and findings revolve around condom use. In MTV’s collaboration with Body Shop, one of its key findings was that ‘When it comes to safe sex, 92% of women do not consider a



condom to be a ‘handbag essential’ on a night out’. MTV’s emphasis on the promotion of condom use amongst women in its various PSAs is thus not only justified by MTV, but to a great extent also led by the findings of the research conducted.

The CSR campaigns of Viacom and MTV have progressed, as the company has become clearer about their consumer needs and wants through their close interaction with consumers. In the 2018 Viacom Social Impact report, the company CSR programs are clearly linked to the pro-social collaboration valued by young people:

According to Viacom Consumer Insights, over 95% of young people globally believe it’s important to collaborate with other young people to make the world a better place, and four in five believe their age group has the potential to change the world for the better (VIACOM, 2018).

The internalisation of the customer in the process of branding and the discussion of CSR in relation to brand image emphasises that, while on the one hand HIV/AIDS awareness and information processes can be visibly transformed through social marketing techniques, brand valuation can also be transformed by the corporations’ involvement in social issues. Rules concerning intellectual property and logos may be relaxed in the branding of HIV/AIDS communication, where the MTV logo has sometimes been removed when their programming has aired on other channels. However, logo or no logo, branded health communication has become integral to Viacom and MTV’s corporate practice and identity and is significant not just in terms of the way in which it conducts its communication with audiences and shareholders, but also in terms of its internal communication with employees.

### **Aesthetics and power**

The PSAs and outdoor adverts produced by the corporations over the past decade consistently feature men and women from various races and on first glance seem to draw on racial signifiers to generate what Bev Skeggs (2004) terms a ‘multi-cultural appeal’, similar to Benetton or Gap adverts (see also FRANKLIN ET AL. 2000). Like Benetton adverts accentuating difference at the same time as transcendence and global unity. These adverts also incorporate multicultural appeal. Drawing on the work of Stuart Hall, they

emphasise how difference and the multicultural are generated through a grammar of race. Lury (2000) posits that race rather than becoming naturalised or a marker or expression of a biological essence is rather a 'stylised act of choice' (2000, p. 149). What is relevant to our discussion is how the packaging multiculturalism within the 'act of choice' and increased 'visibility' is framed as a decontextualised, aesthetic object, thus limiting the range of reflexivity made visible in relation to HIV testing.

With regard to the production of the 'multicultural', Homi Bahbha (2004) argues that markers of 'race' and cultural difference need be understood with relation to transparency and identity, whereby there is an assumed neutrality of being white, heterosexual, male and middle-class. The 'Western connoisseurship', as he calls it allows people to understand and place cultures in a universal frame of time and space, taking into consideration their historical and social contexts only eventually to transcend them and make them transparent (BAHBHA, 2004). This use of cultural diversity, as Cronin argues, is less a 'radical form of difference' than a 'menu of signs for the Western Consumer' (2000, p. 87). In these adverts, particularly the posters, up-close photos of interracial couples embracing, showing one arm overlapped with another of a different colour, they are lifted out of any context, the (in some cases headless) bodies themselves become blurred with the context in which they appear.

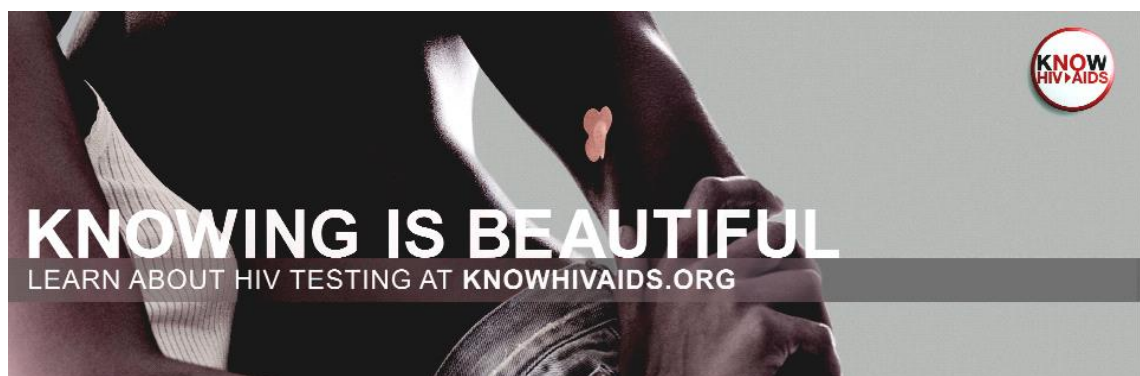


Figure 1: Viacom Knowing is Beautiful campaign

Beyond the sepia-tinted rainbow of multiculturalism presented, the short televised and website adverts generate hierarchical understandings of race through the bodies of

black women and black gay men. However, not only is racial difference shaped as a fashion choice, women of colour appear as hypersexualised. In the adverts, based in apartments, on sofas, beanbags, the floor or in a doorway, the adverts feature couples in intimate situations, characteristic of television and movie scenes of couples warming up to lovemaking. In contrast to representations of white women, representations of black women rely on stereotypes of black women as seductresses. The adverts thus contribute to what has been widely discussed in postcolonial studies as ‘the continued production of the racist/sexist sexual myth that black women are not innocent and never can be’ (hooks, 2010).

In the PSAs, with voice overs by the U.S. rapper Common, featuring black women with partners, unlike their lighter skinned male partners bearing a pink plaster, are not depicted themselves as reflexive, test-taking subjects (see Figure 1). This contrasts directly with the adverts featuring white women, depicted as responsible test takers and wearing clearly visible plasters, as in the case of the PSA featuring a white woman riding her bike with her partner, as well as the PSA entitled ‘Couch’. In contrast to the black women, the white women are not presented in as hypersexualised terms, or without test-taking agency. One is riding a bike and looking her lover in the eye, the other is caressing her lover similar to the way he is caressing her.

A hierarchy of sexuality can also be identified. The one same sex spot in the campaign ‘doorway’ presents a dimly lit scene of two black male arms being stroked by each other. The arms are more decontextualised from their contexts and their bodies than the other public service adverts. It is also a shorter advert than the others, and lasts seven rather than ten seconds, as do the other PSAs. While this does demarcate one of the two subjects as having had an HIV test, it does not show either partner’s face, unlike the heterosexual adverts, where faces are clear. In addition, the skin tone of the plasters on the black male arms in the adverts serve as markers of race beyond the frame of the text, where white skin through the imaging of pink plasters mark the normative parameters.

The production of difference and limits of race, gender and sexuality raise questions pertaining to reflexivity. Within the context of the PSAs, women and subordinated others, whether they be gay or straight men of colour, are obliged test-taking

objects. Despite his physical absence from all but one of the adverts, it is only the white heterosexual male, in the case of these adverts, who is fully present as a reflexive subject, depicted as either having made the decision to get tested or protected from HIV by the prophylaxis<sup>3</sup> of their heterosexual relationships with uninfected partners.

This campaign marks a key contrast with earlier campaigns by Viacom, with a strong emphasis on rationalistic processes (e.g. 'Knowledge in a Pill' or 'Startling Facts') associated with behaviour change. However, this move to highly aestheticised mode of communication is different to earlier approaches to HIV/AIDS education, promoting behaviour change as testing becomes an individual duty, a personal responsibility to prevent people from becoming HIV positive. The administration of the self is thus made possible through the process of choice and responsabilisation. However, rather than underplaying other aspects or explanations of behaviour, such as, emotions, the 'unconscious', and cultural responses to danger and risk extensively documented by researchers (DAVIS, 2002), these campaigns emphasise the emotional and the cultural side of the brand as a commodity. The commodity of the sexual health brand, however, does not configure all individuals equally. Aspirations and desires as cultivated in these images, however, are addressed to a white heterosexual male gaze first and foremost.

The '*Knowing is Beautiful*' campaign addressed to heterosexual audiences through its focus on couples is also revealing, with regard to the techniques and procedures of responsabilisation and distribution of 'risks'. In the campaign, getting tested is equated with making the responsible choice within the context of heterosexual relationships and the wider context of productivity and minimising of risks in society. This supports the work of Lupton (1994) and Turner (1997) on the subjectification of heterosexuality and responsabilisation in relation to HIV/AIDS, but in this case, responsabilisation is tied in directly with beauty. The emphasis on making responsible choices is articulated in the words of a Kaiser Family Foundation executive involved in the production process: 'Beauty in the way it's depicted is powerful...The idea 'beautiful' is big enough to encompass all the things we're trying to say about HIV testing. It's

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<sup>3</sup> See Singer, L. (1993), who writes about the prophylactic role of marriage.

something you do for your partner, something you do to stay healthy, something you do to be productive' (GLOBE, 2005).

As MTV and Viacom Campaigns have evolved, they continue to run PSAs with major international stars (e.g. Tinie Tempah's message, promoting Condom use, 2015-2019). However, since 2009, programming and initiatives have expanded and MTV have been running a television series focused on HIV/AIDS education, MTV Suga, now in its seventh season and focused on the lives of young people on the African continent.

The latest television programming has tackled complex issues related to HIV, such as gender-based violence and stigma. However, being tested and using a condom remain the main recurring themes within the wide range of videos, shorts and television programming across MTV and Viacom platforms. HIV test taking and condom use are thus presented as individual choices that a person must make in order to stay healthy and productive in society. This supports the notion that health is not only a choice but a 'task and duty' expected of individuals in risk society (BECK-GERNSHEIM, 2000). Inherent in this notion of 'staying healthy' however, is a hierarchy which puts heterosexuality and particularly white heterosexuality in a position of greater reflexivity, while 'others' are urged to get tested.

### **Employee involvement in HIV/AIDS initiatives**

Here I will explore the relationship between the corporate social responsibility of Viacom and MTV and the valuation of their brands by staff. To begin with, I will examine interactions between the company and its staff and how these are conducted and mediated. According to employees, there are three main ways in which knowledges and discourses about the corporation are cultivated: 1) Company induction, 2) Internal communications 3) Corporate Communication. These will also help me examine how corporate social responsibility has become integrated into the workplace and in relation to employee-brand valuation. Furthermore, I will discuss how they relate to the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, as corporate 'volunteers' take responsibility for the running of the corporations' transnational HIV/AIDS education efforts.

New staff members learn about the pro-social side of the corporations. As part of their training, each employee receives a training session about HIV/AIDS and learns about the company's involvement in promoting HIV and AIDS awareness, which is also covered at induction. A new employee, explains what is covered in the HIV training and briefly discusses employee inductions:

There's basically an overview of people's experiences, of other employees that were in the induction. Looking at what the company is doing. Looking at the company's workplace policy, looking at the kind of specific factual information on HIV and AIDS, how you protect yourself, all that sort of stuff. Looking at employee confidentiality, looking at confidential counselling... And separate to that, at induction, people are informed about our public affairs and pro-social work.,I think a lot of people may come into MTV not necessarily knowing about all the stuff we do on the pro-social side. And I think a lot of people are sort of pleasantly surprised.

(Production employee, 2006)

Messages about HIV both vis-à-vis employees and their knowledge about the workplace environment are an integral part of how employees are introduced to the company. In the words of an MTV producer: 'Everyone knows that HIV/AIDS is MTV's pro-social issue'. Not only is this part of induction, however, each employee receives a training session about HIV transmission and prevalence rates.

In addition, internal communications regularly promote the corporation's involvement in relation to HIV/AIDS campaigns, including the promotion of company volunteers. Travel manager describes becoming a Viacom 'volunteer', and that had the responsibility of directing Viacom's HIV/AIDS awareness efforts throughout the UK and Europe:

everybody that's working on this campaign is on a voluntary basis, and we all have other jobs, real jobs, that we get paid to do. And also, when we first started, we were all real novices - I mean, my real job is a travel manager for the group. So we've been through a steep learning curve, finding out about each other and also finding out what needs to be done, what deadlines are. When I first started talking to Viacom Outdoor, it was like, What's a 48 Sheet? That kind of thing. But also learning about the disease itself: I've had an awful lot of meetings with the National AIDS Trust, the NHS, to learn about the nature of the disease, the etiology of

it, that kind of thing. That was a challenge - making sure that we're up to date on all the information as well  
(Travel Coordinator and HIV/AIDS UK-Europe Campaign Coordinator, 2005).

During the interview, the travel coordinator discussed what Viacom was doing in the field of HIV/AIDS awareness referring to various documents that had been prepared ahead of time, drawing attention away from herself, to the documents in front of her, demonstrating insecurity regarding the specifics of Viacom's HIV/AIDS campaigns. When asked certain questions regarding the campaign, she deferred a number of these to the US-based producer in New York. The high level of responsibility as overall coordinator for Europe's HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, without prior training meant, as she mentions above, required a steep learning curve to work on education campaigns about HIV and AIDS.

A third strategy used for communication of corporate values with its employees is internal communication, initially from its company magazine *Upfront* to initiatives such as *Viacommunity*, which brings together 100s of micro-initiatives across Viacom properties run by corporate "volunteers" including MTV's *Staying Alive* initiative, all of which are promoted on the company website and also on corporate social media channels, such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

How is this corporate culture experienced by Viacom and MTV employees? In relation to his everyday experience at MTV, one employee, when asked about his opinion of MTV stresses how he found it important to learn about MTV's pro-social side:

That is one of the reasons I've been so impressed with MTV. I didn't know that it had that social side. I feel that it is really exciting..it hasn't got a huge team working for it, but it is very exciting. But even more important, her boss of MTV Europe believes that we should be taking responsibility and I think it has been important for me to believe that they are doing pro social work. And that efforts are being made, and they want to obviously make money, like every corporation, but that pro-social side is important

(MTV writer/contract worker, 2006).

An executive producer at the Staying Alive Foundation discusses the corporate emphasis on HIV in relation to employees and how this influences the company more generally<sup>4</sup>:

...[S]o that all the employees know what we're about and why we do it, we actually have HIV training sessions going on ... we look to write editorials on it. So we're trying to push it down so it's just not on air as well...

(Executive Producer, 2006).

The above discussion of HIV/AIDS education as initiated and constituted within the workplace demonstrates that not only is brand valuation influenced by MTV and Viacom's involvement in a social issue, but that HIV/AIDS education as a social issue in the workplace is having a transformative impact on the corporate culture, as workers become 'volunteers' and workplace inductions and training focus on HIV/AIDS education.

The pro-social side of MTV and Viacom has evolved to include, programs offered through the Global Inclusion Office and as a result, corporate volunteerism has grown across both Viacom and MTV, now covering a wider range of other social issues are now also promoted compared with a decade ago when HIV/AIDS was the main pro-social issue for both companies. One employee speaks of his participation in one of the Global Inclusion initiative summits:

The takeaways fed into the idea of becoming a better Viacom employee, as well as just generally being a better human being. I've even talked about the overall execution of the summit to people outside of Viacom, and everyone is always blown away. They're just like, "That's so cool!" A number of people have been like, "I want to work at Viacom!" So, I really think that these sorts of efforts really do a lot to set us apart in the marketplace

(Business and legal affairs, attorney, 2019)

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<sup>4</sup> This interview was conducted prior to HIV training being brought to the UK from the US.



If considered in relation to the concept of governmentality and the work of Nicholas Rose (1990), the techniques of self-monitoring and self-care promoted through workplace HIV education made available to employees combine with possibilities for self-actualisation and self-fulfilment through employee ‘volunteering’, HIV training and self-improvement workshops. The intrinsic rewards of the workplace, however, do not stop there, they are carried through the valuation of the brand, which employees play a key role in building.

## **Conclusion**

HIV education can be understood as socially marketed via complex webs of partnerships and alliances and the vertical integration of messages across a wide range of properties and media. This allows on the one hand for HIV/AIDS education to be distributed to unprecedented audiences. On the other hand, it impacts upon global HIV/AIDS education initiatives. Through newly formed partnerships and alliances corporations have now become more heavily involved in the leadership processes of multilateral institutions and global NGOs, as attested by the corporate leadership of the Global Media AIDS Initiative. These processes result in a greater synergy of information between the various actors and media objects produced. Campaigns and programmes once initiated by multilateral institutions are now being led by multinational corporations, which collaborate with and are accountable to stakeholders in multilateral institutions and NGOs, thus linked their programs to programs of Corporate Social Responsibility. Secondly, the influence of neo-liberal governance promoted through global media marketing strategies can now be seen to form a core element of HIV/AIDS education promotion.

In terms of the campaigns, customer desire, emotions, aesthetic values and personal responsibility remain at the centre of its rhetorical appeal. The main question that arises is whether or not this increase in distribution correlates to an increase in accessibility of the messages. As much as MTV attempts to ‘know its audience’, is the

reinforcement of dominant consumer values of aesthetics and beauty going to make the messages any more accessible to audiences?

Corporate social responsibility cannot be seen as divorced from this process. The identities of the corporations themselves are influenced through the cultivation of brand image related to HIV/AIDS education and pro-social work and its internalisation of consumer values in the design and style of its products. Employee involvement in the creation and maintenance of the brand value further demonstrates the synergistic way in which the campaigns are working. Branded HIV health communication is not just synergistically producing the campaigns but in the process, the workplace and brand value created through the campaigns are also transforming the companies.

The signs and spaces for demonstrating corporate commitment to HIV/AIDS on the one hand open up important possibilities for greater visibility of issues pertaining to corporate social responsibility. On the other hand, they also serve to consolidate brand valuation as a form of capital accumulation.

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