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Marketing communication of prevention measures during the pandemic in Croatia

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has opened up a debate on official health communication and thus set a new norm in the healthcare marketing. In the focus of the analysis of this paper is marketing communication of the Croatian COVID-19 vaccine campaign *Misli na druge – cijepi se!* (*Think of others – get vaccinated!*) with the main research questions: how the public institutions in Croatia communicated the COVID-19 challenges and educated the public about vaccination as one of the prevention strategies; whether campaigns as official health communication have adopted the principles of creativity and how they used visual elements in the campaign. Findings show that the campaign adopted the principles of creativity as it used the antithesis in a campaign message, logo and testimonials, however, the campaign failed to reach the target vaccination numbers.

Keywords: COVID-19, crisis communication, vaccine marketing tools, media, creative industries

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the society in which we live, and the measures of closing and limiting social contacts have affected the economy, social relations and the environment. Different sectors of the economy are more or less affected by the pandemic, but the creative and cultural industries sector is one of the most affected. This is because many activities within the creative industries depend on human contact, especially the organization of various events such as concerts, theatres, festivals, museums, cinemas, fashion shows, exhibitions, etc. These activities were among the first to close in the first wave of the pandemic and equally, they will be among the last to be liberalized by the end of the pandemic (UNESCO, 2021).

However, not all activities within the creative industries were the losers of the economic and social crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The replacement of physical contacts with digital ones has not only remained on the borders of everyday life and entertainment. Still, it has also included general education, many aspects of modern business such as business meetings and travel, medicine and telemedicine (Thomas et al., 2020). In that sense, the pandemic intensively emphasized creativity in the digital (communication) environment. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, from WHO, said that the WHO is fighting both a pandemic and an infodemic at the same time (Anon, 2020). Precisely because of the infodemic, i.e. the continuous placement of various conspiracy theories, fake news and misinformation, both about the virus itself, the origin of the virus, but also about vaccines against COVID-19 (Butcher, 2021), many governments have initiated educational and public health campaigns. Namely, the pandemic intensified the post-truth atmosphere that began with Donald Trump's first presidential campaign. Therefore, it can be argued that "a continuous deluge of public relations rhetoric in all facets of media" culminated in infodemic which led to „widespread public inability and unwillingness to distinguish truth from fiction in media" (Verbeek, 2017, p. 116).

Campaigns promote vaccination against COVID-19 as the only effective means of preventing more severe forms of the disease, especially in vulnerable populations (Ministry of Health and HZJZ, 2021). Public health campaigns are instruments of political communication by which governments and state authorities try to influence public beliefs and attitudes on a (health) issue, using the mass media or other communication channels. The main goals of information campaigns are to inform, convince, and mobilize the public (Tomić, 2012), i.e. to initiate citizens' action to do what is in the government's interest, which is always presented as a public interest.

For an informative public health campaign to be successful, it must be carefully and thoughtfully planned, well organized and effectively implemented, which means that it must respect the basic determinants of strategic communication. According to Zerfass et al. (2018, p. 487), „strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication by an entity to engage in conversations of strategic significance to its goals" when resources are limited and uncertain.

The COVID-19 pandemic is, without a doubt, a situation of great social insecurity. Strategic communication is an essential instrument of crisis management because it suppresses, prevents harmful consequences for the organization or even brings it profit. When it comes to the goals of crisis public health campaigns according to Rossmann et al. (2017, p. 2) this communication needs to "provide information about risks, symptoms, or treatment of a disease; enable the public to evaluate risks and deal with the threats; and encourage the public to take appropriate precautions and increase compliance with health-care and social interventions". In a situation of high message congestion, many of which is misinformation, fake news and even conspiracy theories, the constant repetition of the public health campaign message through the mass media or other communication channels are no longer enough to ensure campaign effectiveness. Therefore, public health campaigns should use creative concepts to attract and retain public attention and motivate them to take the expected health action.

1. Health promotion and health communication campaigns

For decades, health messages have been one of the crucial tools of public health institutions that seek to influence the change of behaviour, lifestyle and habits in a particular segment of the population or the entire population. Morrison, Kukafka & Johnson (2005, p. 540) define health messages as ”persuasive messages that are designed to change any behaviour within the realm of health care”. Thus, health promotion is the context in which health messages are viewed. Parish (2005, p. 11) points out that the term ”health promotion” was unknown until the 1970s, but since then, it has become ”a key policy issue on the agenda” of many (western) countries. It is worth mentioning that the origin of the idea of ”health promotion” is related to health improvement programmes, with the focus not only on health education and treatment but also on prevention (e.g. availability of preventive services, emphasizing individual responsibility for healthy lifestyles, etc.) (Parish, 2005, p. 12). Health promotion theorists considered in the context of communication campaigns as

> ”purposive attempts to inform or influence behaviours in large audiences within a specified period using an organized set of communication activities and featuring an array of mediated messages in multiple channels generally to produce noncommercial benefits to individuals and society” (Rice and Atkin acc. to Zhao 2020, p. s11).

Of course, the health campaign can be observed and reflected through (critical) sociological lens. For example, Australian sociologist Deborah Lupton (2014, n.p.) considered the ”ethics and politics of public health campaigns” in the context of her broader research on ”the sociocultural dimensions of health, medicine and public health, as well as the sociology of food and eating and the sociology of the body”. Lupton (2014, n.p.) critically analyzed two Australian government obesity-focused prevention campaigns and showed that ”public health campaigns and their use of strategies that attempt to arouse negative emotions such as disgust, shame and fear“ concerning non-normative (obese bodies), thereby perpetuating old but also constructing new prejudices and stereotypes that: 1) stigmatize and 2) transfer individual responsibility to the individual without respecting the broader economic, political, social and cultural context. An example of analysis by Lupton points to the importance of careful consideration of textual and visual messages. Morrison, Kukafka and Johnson (2005) emphasized also the recognized the importance and development of health communication to create communication campaigns to change health behaviour and reduce health risks.

2. Vaccination as a ”prevention policy”

Like many other previous pandemics, COVID-19 as a global and local phenomenon transcends the boundaries of public health issues and penetrates all sectors of society and everyday realities. Eric Mykhalovskiy and Martin French (2020) developed the concept of ”politics of prevention” because they believe that ”technologies and discourses of risk” are central within public health (2020, p. O4). Prevention has long been a fundamental principle of public health reasoning and practice. It enacts a temporal logic sequenced in terms of past, present and future because the goal is ”reducing future harms” (Mykhalovskiy and French, 2020, p. O5).

The issue of prevention policies has become one of the burning issues in COVID-19 times and attempts to stop the spread of the virus. Public health measures applied by countries around the world according to WHO recommendations (physical distance, self-isolation, lockdown, testing, wearing a mask, washing and sanitizing hands and ultimately vaccinations) were communicated as necessary but provoked discussions and polarization of the public, political actors, scientific communities, etc. because they have questioned and suspended the acquis, rights, freedoms and way

of life that belong to the world of the so-called ”old” or pe-COVID-19 normality (Mykhalovskiy and French, 2020). Mykhalovskiy and French (2020, p. O10) argued that political and health authorities placed a narrative, even ”fantasies“, about the vaccine as ”the promise of a quick biomedical solution”. The global race to find a vaccine against COVID-19 has unmasked ”deep anxieties, as the general public realizes they have to leave behind the absolute of "cure" and deal with uncertainties of who now gets cured?” (Berghs, 2021, p. 1).

WHO (2021) as a global medical authority promotes ”safe and effective vaccines” as „critical” or ”game-changing tool” ”to ending the COVID-19 pandemic”. Moreover, a distinction is made between vaccines and vaccinations – ”it's not vaccines that will stop the pandemic, it's vaccination”. Experiences of doubt, scepticism, anxiety and confusion due to the multitude of (often contradictory and distrustful) information resulted in feelings of complete untrust in authorities (political, scientific) and complete scepticism, doubts and rejection of scientific knowledge and pandemic policy measures/prevention policies (Glasdam and Stjernswärd, 2020). Vaccines and vaccinations, in general, ”faces several challenges across the world” for decades (Ali, Sadique and Ali, 2021, p. 1), and the current pandemic has posed new challenges to routine immunization and prevention policies/practices, such as rumours and conspiracy theories about policies and vaccination practices, suspicion, and scepticism about vaccine composition, questioning the motivation of global and national vaccination policies) (Ali, Sadique and Ali, 2021, pp. 2, 7).

3. Method

Against the backdrop above, the paper aimed to explore whether the campaign *Misli na druge – cijepi se!* (*Think of others - get vaccinated!*) was successful and whether it was in line with the guidelines of strategic communication.

The campaign was analysed using a mixed-method that involves the use of different campaign materials to analyze in detail the different content related to the research problem while respecting the social context (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2014). The case study was an appropriate method for this paper as researchers wanted to answer how the campaign was implemented and whether the campaign was successful. To that end, we used qualitative content analysis to analyse campaign materials and this involved analysing the web page of the campaign ”Think of others – get vaccinated!”, which included analysing website materials from the campaign website itself as well as the website of the Croatian Institute of Public Health (Hrvatski zavod za javno zdravstvo/HZJZ). In addition to that, we also analysed social media accounts of the Croatian Institute of Public Health, press releases as well as video testimonials of celebrities (Table 1.).

Table 1. Material and sources included in the content analysis

SOURCE	UNIT
Web page	Misli na druge. Cijepi se!/ *Think of others - get vaccinated!* https://cijepise.zdravlje.hr/ Hrvatski zavod za javno zdravstvo/ the Croatian Institute of Public Health https://www.hzjz.hr
Social media	Hrvatski zavod za javno zdravstvo/Facebook https://web.facebook.com/hzjz.zavod/?_rdc=1&_rdr Hrvatski zavod za javno zdravstvo/Instagram https://www.instagram.com/p/CSRY8h0rehV/ Hrvatski zavod za javno zdravstvo/YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=626LZLrLtYo
Press releases	https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/HZJZ_O_-kampanji.pdf https://www.hzjz.hr/priopcenja-mediji/poznate-osobe-u-kampanji-za-cijepljenje/ https://www.hzjz.hr/priopcenja-mediji/cijepljeno-je-50-odraslih/ https://www.hzjz.hr/priopcenja-mediji/u-tri-dana-vise-od-50-000-osoba-primilo-prvu-dozu-cjepiva/
Video Testemonials of Celebreties	https://www.hzjz.hr/priopcenja-mediji/poznati-za-cijepljenje : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRrRevpKUc8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OumTGL0o4Co https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xn1g4_l7XOQ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypQJYO_KHn8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9upabnQIz8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qy3NSXx7Hzk https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44HEETUdWqc https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nY7Qzo5ccIo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjpuFGVoQeU https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3iC0Bfe_vM https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSbEesZ9GRA https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuN0cWLrIbk https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X333VT2sVRQ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OG9w7Fo940 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPDeDhAGvfo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yq8eJVUOJI4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JsFzf2FDRw https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1UDKykJ3oo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBZWwGhVfek https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRgilS7yPLA&t=1s
Invitation to tender	https://www.hzjz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Vo%C4%91enje-kampanje-%E2%80%9EMisli-na-druge-cijepi-se%E2%80%9C-na-dru%C5%A1tvenim-mre%C5%BEama-HZJZ.pdf
Logo with Message	https://cijepise.zdravlje.hr/
Mass media articles	https://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/clanak/uzivo-koronavirus-24-12-20201224 https://www.rtl.hr/vijesti-hr/novosti/hrvatska/3979628/afera-s-cijepljenjem-preko-reda-van-prioritetnih-skupina-cijepilo-se-4635-osoba-hzjz-nam-je-odgovorio-o-kome-se-radi/ https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/jugoslavija-je-1972-u-rekordnom-roku-vakcinisala-18-miliona-ljudi/ https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/hrvatska-dobila-cak-20-000-doza-manje-od-ocekivanog-broja-ali-vise-brine-jedan-drugi-podatak-15047604 https://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/telegram-otkriva-ono-sto-beros-mjesecima-skriva-propali-cijepise-radio-njegov-poznanik-kojem-daje-milijune/

However, since social media posts contain information disseminated from the campaign website, which was also a subject of the analysis of this paper, the analysis of social media is not specifically quoted nor has it been analysed separately. The analysis thus focused on analysing the health situation (number of infected and vaccinated people in Croatia) at the time of initiating the campaign and at the end of August 2021, campaign goals, target audiences, messages, communication tactics used in the campaign, innovation and creativity, as well as a PR plan of the campaign, budget and evaluation of the effectiveness of the analysed public health campaigns.

The campaign materials outlined in Table 1. above were analysed using the strategic framework proposed by Sutton, Balch, and Lefebvre (1995), which specifically focuses on strategic or planned communication. According to Sutton, Balch and Lefebvre (1995), strategic or planned communication contains the following elements, if executed correctly,

(1) defining and understanding the target audience;

(2) determining the behavioural objective — that is, what action the audience should take (and not take, if there is a competitive behaviour);

(3) deciding what reward should be promised in the message for taking the action;

(4) establishing what needs to be included to make the promised reward credible;

(5) determining what „openings and vehicles" should be used — that is, how to reach audience members when they are receptive; and

(6) deciding what "look and feel" or what image of the action should be portrayed in the message.

The analysis especially focuses on the use of creative solutions in the visual and verbal part of the campaigns that fit into the last and sixth segments of Sutton, Balch, and Lefebvre's (1995) campaign structure. In other words, the analysis captured a qualitative inquiry of campaign materials through standard elements of planning strategic campaigns (analysis, goals, target audience, tactics, the latter with special attention to the creativity of visual elements of the campaign, and also budget and measuring the success of the campaign).

Researchers also aimed to conduct interviews using an open-ended questionnaire with the officials from the public health institutions in Croatia. Unfortunately, officials did not answer a request for interviews so researchers were not able to check and compare the results of the content analysis with the answers of the responsible officials of the Ministry of Health and the Croatian Institute of Public Health who were the organizers of the campaign. However, whilst this presents a limitation for the study, the campaign materials quoted above give a good picture of the vaccine campaign and the communication of public health authorities. In other words, analysing campaign materials, both written and visual, as well as celebrity testimonials gives a good overview of campaign messaging and goals, which enables meaningful analysis of the strategic communication as deployed by Croatian public health authorities.

The research questions for the study were set out as follows,

RQ1) How did the public institutions in Croatia communicate to the public about vaccination as one of the prevention strategies in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic;

RQ2) Has the campaign as official health communication adopted the principles of creativity and

RQ3) Can the Croatian vaccine campaign be seen as a strategic communication effort in the way it was planned and communicated?

4. Findings

The public health campaign *Think of others - get vaccinated!* started at the end of December 2020, more precisely on December 24, 2020, initiated by the Croatian Institute of Public Health and the Ministry of Health. On that day, Croatia had 2,233 newly infected citizens, and 70 people died (B. S./M.Šu./Hina, 2020). The campaign started before the mass vaccination in Croatia, and the reason for that was the problems with the distribution of vaccines in the European Union (HRT, 2021).

Given that the Croatian Government ordered the most significant number of Astra Zeneca vaccines, which in late 2020 and early 2021 had substantial problems in the production and distribution of vaccines, the campaign was initially met with negative comments from the media and the public (Jureško, 2021). In addition to insufficient vaccines, the campaign to promote vaccines and vaccinations in early 2021 was met with significant criticism because the media revealed that former politicians, relatives, and friends of ruling Croatian officials got vaccinated before priority groups (Dobrić, 2021). It was contrary to announced plans for priority vaccination of health care staff, employees of retirement homes and the oldest and most unwell members of the population.

The campaign was also linked to potential corruption controversies because the central digital platform for registering for vaccination cijepise.zdravlje.hr did not work. The media soon revealed that Health minister Vili Beroš assigned the work on the development and management of the platform to Vinko Kojundžić, his acquaintance, who had no previous experience in the IT business (Klarić, 2021). All the controversies related to the campaign's launch led to the conclusion that the campaign was not approached in a planned and thoughtful way, which is a fundamental starting point of strategic communication. In addition to that, although the Croatian public learned that the job on the central platform for registering for vaccination was assigned to *Cuspis*, a company owned by Vinko Kojundžić, a friend of Health Minister Vili Beroš, it was not possible to find out who the author of the creative concept of the campaign was. We did not find information on which agency or organisation developed the campaign's creative concept and whether the employees of the Croatian Institute of Public Health and the Ministry of Health participated in developing the idea.

Campaign goals

What is known from the official statement of the Croatian Institute of Public Health are the general goals of the campaign. Campaign *Think of others - get vaccinated!* goals were created under the European Union's joint campaign under the slogan *Together through the crisis* and the main message: ”We cannot move forward but together: with researchers, medical staff, scientists, teachers, friends and neighbours working in the background“ (HZJZ, 2021a). The joint EU campaign is based on solidarity which is also woven into the narrative of the Croatian campaign. This is also evident from the title *Think of others* and the idea of autonomy in decision-making. The campaign aimed to inform citizens to make ”their own decision” about getting vaccinated. According to the Croatian Institute of Public Health, the goal of the Croatian national campaign is to inform citizens – ”about the vaccine, its properties and effects, possible side effects after vaccination and contraindications for vaccination, as well as the organisation and implementation of vaccination programmes for all citizens. They decide to get vaccinated“ (HZJZ 2021a). In addition to „information and education”, an essential determinant of the campaign is the ”social appeal” and sensitisation of citizens/society ”to the need for solidarity, empathy and altruism”. Solidarity and togetherness are the key motives of the campaign, emphasising

> ”no one is persuaded to get vaccinated, but appeals to the awareness of each individual about the need for solidarity with other members of the community. The Coronavirus has doomed us all to togetherness!” (HZJZ, 2021a).

The theme of togetherness is intertwined with the ideas of interconnectedness, common victory over the virus, belonging and the inevitability of living in a community.

The description of the campaign repeatedly states that "the goal of the campaign is not to persuade… to uncritically accept the decision to vaccinate" but to present vaccination as the only and most successful way to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on lives and the future (HZJZ 2021a). The campaign emphasises the benefits of vaccination (HZJZ, 2021a):

1) The vaccinated person acquires immunity "from infection in the foreseeable future (for now, for objective reasons, there is no empirical confirmation of the duration of immunity)";

2) Vaccination reduces the possibility of a person becoming a source/carrier of infection for people the person interacts with.

3) "It is the right of every person to make for himself the decision which he considers to be best for him".

4) Everyone is part of (family, work, etc.) the community "and should consider whether in certain circumstances (by refusing vaccination) it can be a source or carrier of infection, and thus life-threatening for other persons".

5) "Personal exclusivity proves (may prove to be) very dangerous for other members of the community".

6) "Self-protection (vaccination) alone or individual exposure to infection (non-vaccination) is a much weaker barrier to infection in the future than vaccination of the majority of the country's adult population".

7) "Vaccination is voluntary and is a free decision of every citizen" (HZJZ, 2021a).

What is not visible from the official announcement of the Croatian Institute of Public Health are the specific goals related to the vaccination promotion campaign, i.e. the exact numbers of vaccinated until precisely defined dates. According to the common EU targets of January 2021, "by March 2021" Member States should "vaccinate at least 80% of health and social care workers and people over the age of 80", and "by summer 2021" Member States should "vaccinate at least 70% of the adult population" (European Commission, 2021). The Croatian authorities did not communicate these goals likely because they were afraid that they would not achieve these goals (and did not achieve them, see below). A precise definition of goals, namely, enables a clear and accurate evaluation of the success of the implementation of campaigns. On August 20, 2021, only 50% of the adult population in Croatia was vaccinated, i.e. 41.69% of the total population (HZJZ, 2021e). From the available official data, it is impossible to find the campaign's communication goals, such as the exact number of views of the website cijepise.zdravlje.hr, interaction and opinions on the social networks of the campaign until a precisely defined date, however, the campaign was not successful in meeting the EU's goals.

Communication tactics

When it comes to the use of communication tactics, the campaign *Think of others - get vaccinated!* communicated through the official profile on Facebook and Instagram, the conceptual content of the campaign, a media plan that includes three publications per week in the next six months, graphic solutions that include text and video, writing and adapting informational and educational materials to all target groups, crisis communication, answering citizens' inquiries through social networks, communication with the coordinator and experts, and the development of information material related to vaccination in the form of questions and answers (HZJZ, 2021b).

Analysis of the content of the campaign shows how the campaign *Think of others - get vaccinated!* addresses the legally capable population of Croatia, all genders, urban and rural, from different educational and economic backgrounds. The emphasis is, clearly, on the people sceptical about the vaccine. The website cijepise.zdravlje.hr explains how ”all citizens residing in Croatia can (..) be vaccinated against COVID19”, but that ”vaccines against COVID-19 are not intended for children under 16 or 18 years of age” and that ”the age limit for vaccination depends on the type of vaccine” (Ministry of Health and HZJZ, 2021). A particular target group is the chronically ill and the elderly, i.e. those who have priority in vaccination, such as people ”with respiratory, cardiovascular, malignant diseases, kidney disease, diabetes and immunodeficiency” (Ministry of Health and HZJZ, 2021).

During the campaign and by placing conspiracy theories that vaccines can cause female infertility, the Croatian authorities informed concerned women that the vaccine does not cause infertility (HZJZ, 2021c). Although all adult citizens residing in Croatia were proclaimed target groups, the analysis showed that the primary target audience is sceptical people. The target public is segmented according to priority groups such as healthcare workers in nursing homes, the elderly and sick populations, the chronically ill, especially those with autoimmune diseases, educators and sceptics. It is also visible how the target groups change during the campaign, which indicates the adaptation of the campaign goals.

The campaign's main slogan is also the title of the campaign *Think of others - get vaccinated!*. When it comes to appeals used in campaigns to attract the attention, persuasion, and action of targeted publics, this slogan is based on a call to responsibility or an appeal of love. The astonishment of the slogan, which is one of the most important indicators of creativity, lies in the use of the antithesis. Croatian citizens are urged not to protect themselves by vaccination, which would be a logical consequence of vaccination, but to protect others. By the act of vaccination, they show selflessness, even if they are sceptical about the vaccine, not in risky health groups or more exposed to the virus. The element of the antithesis of the slogan shows how the slogan of this public-health campaign is creative because it causes astonishment and thus attracts attention. This approach of the Croatian campaign is also in line with WHO (2021) guidance where WHO outlines that the safe and effective vaccine is crucial for ending the pandemic, however, they make a distinction between vaccines and vaccinations thus arguing it is not vaccines that will stop the pandemic, but vaccination, this also being the approach of the Croatian campaign centred on promoting vaccination as a way of ending the pandemic in Croatia.

Visual communication

When it comes to the campaign logo, two colours are used, blue, which dominates, and white, which is used for the verbal element of the logo. The logo consists of a blue circle in which the campaign's main slogan is written in white letters of different sizes and different fonts. The message *Think of Others* (Misli na druge) dominates visually. There is a noticeable dot at the end of the message and the use of lowercase letters in addition to the first letter of the sentence. Below the message *Think of others* there is a key message of the slogan GET VACCINATED! (CIJEPI SE!) which is written in a smaller font, but with the use of capital letters and exclamation points that are associated with shouting.

The description of the campaign logo also shows that the logo uses elements of antithesis because the logo size is dominated by a message with an appeal to responsibility and love, and the call to action is written in small letters but with written initials and exclamation marks. Blue in communication in the Croatian cultural meaning symbolises responsibility and trust and white purity and health, so the logo's choice of colours is appropriate for visual communication that has public health purposes.

The conclusion is that the logo fulfils the idea of the campaign. Although the logo is not attractive and dominant at first glance, it is creative and surprising, not so much by choosing colours, but by matching the relationship of the blue circle associated with responsibility and trust, or integrity, and the association of different font sizes.

Figure 1. Campaign logo
Think of others - get vaccinated!
Source: https://cijepise.zdravlje.hr/

Another important visual element of the campaign are testimonials, i.e. video messages of twenty celebrities (television presenters, singers, chefs, athletes, coaches, actors, directors, composers, etc.). The author of the videos is the famous Croatian actor and director Dejan Aćimović, and in the "videos of celebrities of various professions from Croatian public life talk about their experiences with the COVID-19 epidemic and vaccination against this contagious disease that has spread around the world" (HZJZ, 2021d). The CNIPH website explains how these videos are broadcast "on Youtube, Facebook and Instagram, and the messages are transmitted by other media in order to reach as many people as possible throughout Croatia" and that the goal of this segment of the campaign is to "encourage as many citizens as possible to obtain information on the effectiveness of vaccines in protecting their health and reducing the possibility of further spread of the infection to other people". The reason why the Croatian authorities decided on this form of campaign is that in a tourist country like Croatia it is extremely

> "important to achieve the highest possible level of protection for both the local population and tourism workers, as well as guests who stay in large numbers or are coming to the Adriatic coast in the midst of the main tourist season" (HZJZ, 2021d).

Videos in which celebrities from Croatian public life promote vaccination have a common matrix. Celebrities speak into the camera, are shot in close-up, close or semi-close-up plans. The exteriors are during the day and bright colours dominate videos. The background is blurred. The narratives rely on recounting some personal experience or hope. Video clips are shot with a small number of frames, and they have between two and four frames. The camera is generally static. The duration of the spots is between 20 and 40 seconds. Each video ends with a top in which the campaign logo appears with the message *Think of others - get vaccinated!* accompanied with the voice of a male narrator who seriously utters the campaign slogan. The messages of celebrities are as follows:

> Ana Brdarić Boljat (news anchor at RTL): "I want to hug my grandmother who is at home" (24 sec); Dejan Aćimović (actor and director): "The vaccine is available and there is enough for everyone" (34 sec); Nina Violić (actress): "Let's not miss the opportunity to hug, kiss and love again" (26 sec); Nevena Rendeli Vejzović (tv presenter): talks about family, health and the importance of vaccination (24 sec); Robert Prosinecki (ex football player): "Don't let clubs play in front of empty stands next year" (18 sec); Goran Bogdan (actor): talks about empty theaters and cinemas (23 sec); Ecija Ojdanić (actress): "I want to play plays and make movies again" (23 sec); Ivan Pažanin (tv chef): has an important message about the importance of vaccination addressed to all caterers (17 sec); Morana Zibar (socialite): "I don't want to be someone who will prevent others from returning to normal life" (21 sec); Jole (folk singer): "Let's do something to be together again" (17 sec); Gibonni (pop singer): "I miss people" (28 sec); Ćiro Blažević (former manager of the Croatian national footbal team): "Get vaccinated

for yourself and all those you love" (sec 25); The Sinković brothers (rowers): "We chose vaccination and did not regret it" (23 sec); Željko Bebek (folk singer): "I still sing only on my terrace" (30 sec); Tonči Huljić (music composer): "I chose vaccination and summer" (17 sec); Bojana Gregorić Vejzović (actress): "I want my children to go to school normally" (24 sec); Ida Prester (tv presenter and singer): "I couldn't live with it" (23 sec); Enis Bešlagić (actor and film producer): "Until you realize that you need to be vaccinated, a year will pass" (34 sec); Andrija Jarak (reporter): "I lost two dear friends, two young men" (28 sec); Zoran Šprajc (TV news anchor): "If you don't want this pandemic to end, you don't have to get vaccinated" (34 sec).

Testimonials rely on love appeals for family, especially older family members, friends, responsibility, and the dominant narrative is that life will return to pre-pandemic normality only through vaccination. The irony is used in some testimonials. The antithesis present in the campaign slogan is perpetuated, such as Zoran Šprajc's message, "If you don't want this pandemic to end, you don't have to get vaccinated". Similarly, Željko Bebek transmits positive comments from his fans about his music, but in the family circle, on his terrace and thus creates an effect of astonishment (HZJZ, 2021d). Relying on celebrities as proponents of a policy or product is common in political and economic propaganda. It is one of the techniques connected with the feeling of insecurity, which is often based on the strongest of all appeals - the appeal of fear (Šiber, 2003). Techniques connected with insecurity include the use of authority (Šiber, 2003), for example, politicians, experts, scientists, and celebrities). Authorities are people who have support in the target public and serve them as a kind of leader. There is also a technique of using the popularity of certain persons (Šiber, 2003), which transfers the positive attributions that famous people have to their admirers to political ideas, products, or services that those persons promote.

Influencer marketing is based precisely on this propaganda technique. Interestingly, Rojek (2001) connects the rise of celebrity culture with the phenomenon of God's death and the weakening of authorities that were guaranteed to both spiritual and secular authority until the period of rationalism. Celebrities entered the vacated, glorified place of kings, aristocracy, clergy, and God. This best explains the mechanism of psychological action of propaganda techniques connected with insecurity, including the so-called celebrity PR or celebrity propaganda with the commodification of celebrities.

The last technique aimed at feeling threatened and insecure is the manipulation of conformism because people want to be part of a group accepted by society (Šiber, 2003). When it comes to the propaganda principle of needs (Šiber, 2003), techniques aimed at feeling threatened and insecure also rely on biological needs (fear for health and life); material needs (economic benefit); psychological needs (self-confidence) and social needs (social acceptance, status, etc.). All these needs are used in the messages of celebrities in the campaign *Think of others - get vaccinated!* Following the above, the use of celebrities in a public health campaign in itself cannot be considered particularly innovative and creative. The messages themselves, although based on a similar matrix, still differ from each other. Nevertheless, a few individual messages, primarily those that rely on antithesis, can be considered creative.

Unfortunately, we have not received answers from institutions about the price of the campaign, and this information is not publicly available. The previously mentioned Call for Proposals of the Croatian Institute of Public Health (HZJZ, 2021b) from February 1, 2021, acknowledged that the amount of HRK 195,000 (approximately €26,000) was envisaged for a limited range of services. However, this amount does not include the costs of the campaign's creative concept, slogan and logo, videos, advertising on television, newspapers, radio and new media, so the assumption is that this campaign cost millions from the state budget or EU funds.

Since the amount spent on the campaign is unknown, it is difficult to judge its effectiveness. However, judging by the fact that Croatia has not achieved the agreed common European vaccination targets of "at least 80% of health and social care workers and people over 80" by March 2021 and vaccinations "at least 70% of the adult population" by the summer of 2021, the campaign *Think of others - get vaccinated!* can be considered a failure. However, it is entirely possible that without implementing this campaign, the vaccination results in Croatia would be even worse and the fact Croatian authorities attempted to use WHO messaging and focus on solidarity can be seen as a good attempt to mobilise the sceptical public in getting vaccinated if not for trust in the vaccine, to at last support others in society.

What is more, a campaign alone is not always responsible for vaccination rates because other elements affect the willingness of the population to get vaccinated. Other than the campaign itself, a cause for failure could have been a legacy of Communism in Croatia where the Yugoslav regime was forcibly vaccinating the population against variola vera in 1972 in a snap vaccination programme after instituting a lockdown of an area where the infection first appeared (Hadžović, 2021). Therefore, it is possible that some senior citizens did not accept the vaccine because of an experience of forced vaccine or because they know someone has had this experience through word-of-mouth, which requires further research.

5. Discussion

By putting the *Think of Others campaign – get vaccinated!* In the Sutton, Balch, and Lefebvre (1995) matrix, the following is evident:

(1) The campaign detects the target public, but it is not possible to conclude whether it fully understands the motivation of the different segments within the target public.

(2) The campaign has established general goals, which is to achieve the most significant possible vaccination of the population, as well as their information and education about vaccines, but the disadvantage of the campaign is that the goals are not SMART, i.e. not precisely defined, not measurable, obviously not achievable, not entirely relevant to the campaign and not timed;

(3 and 4) The campaign relies on the appeal of love, i.e. responsibility and solidarity, and only marginally on the appeal of fear. Simply put, the campaign relies only on carrots. Still, for the campaign to be effective, it is necessary to balance the appeal of love/responsibility and fear, i.e., apply the carrot and stick strategy. Carrots in this campaign are not attractive enough to motivate a sceptical population to vaccinate;

(5) Campaign *Think of others – get vaccinated!* Relies on a wide range of communication tactics, from media relations, community management, traditional and new media advertising, and celebrity PR. The disadvantage of the campaign is the lack of mutual integration of the used communication tactics, but also the integration of the target public into the communication activities of the campaign, which is evident from the non-response to research questions, which is why the campaign does not achieve synergy;

(6) The campaign in the slogan, logo, partly in individual testimonials, is based on antithesis, a stylistic figure that "opposes but also connects two expressions or concepts (e.g. good and evil) in the range of one word, phrase or sentence, verse, stanza or songs" (Hrvatska enciklopedija 2021). The result is astonishment that indicates something different, new and original. In that sense, the campaign *Think of others – get vaccinated!* Despite many shortcomings in planning and implementation, it can be considered a creative information-educational public health campaign.

Finally, the public institutions in Croatia communicated the COVID-19 challenges and educate the public about vaccination as one of the prevention strategies via campaign Think of others – get vaccinated! But the campaign was not successful. It is visible from the small percentage of vaccinated population, but also from the fact that the campaign was not planned according to postulates of strategic communication. The campaign adopted the principles of creativity, which is visible from the use of the antithesis in the campaign message, logo but also in the content of a few testimonials. Creative industries can improve health communication in the future with ”out-of-the-box thinking” and appliance of elements of wonder and originality in the narrative, visual and auditive aspects of the campaign.

6. Conclusion

The campaign *Think of others – get vaccinated!* Can be seen as unsuccessful if EU vaccination numbers are taken into consideration, as outlined above. However, Croatian authorities never publicly outlined their target numbers, and therefore, it is not possible to establish whether internal campaign goals were met. But, the fact the authorities never revealed their target numbers also reveals the lack of transparency in communication and clearly an attempt to prevent criticism. As already mentioned, the campaign was met with criticism right from the start due to the campaign website not working and with all scandals on politicians and their friends jumping the queue in getting the vaccine.

What is more, the campaign focused on visual effects and visual communication, as well as implementing creativity as its main method and it is clear that the authorities tried to follow WHO guidance on focusing on vaccination rather than vaccines, with which the campaign may have achieved more than it is known since it could have been worse due to general hesitancy of citizens in Croatian against the vaccine, which is visible in low vaccination rates in Croatia.

It is also clear that the public authorities attempted to influence the change of behaviour of Croatian citizens and tried to influence the particular segment of the population, in this case, those sceptical of vaccines by implementing a persuasive campaign (Morrison, Kukafka & Johnson, 2005). In addition to that, the Croatian campaign also matches what is known as health promotion effort because it made

> ”purposive attempts to inform or influence behaviours in large audiences within a specified period using an organized set of communication activities and featuring an array of mediated messages in multiple channels generally to produce noncommercial benefits to individuals and society” (Rice and Atkin acc. To Zhao, 2020, p. s11).

Therefore, to answer the research questions set up for this study, it appears that the Croatian public institutions communicated the necessity of getting vaccinated by implementing a WHO approach of focusing on the vaccination rather than the vaccine and their primary target audience were citizens sceptical of the vaccine. The authorities clearly adopted the principles of creativity with the implementation of antithesis messaging and an attempt to cause astonishment, with which this campaign can also be seen as a persuasive campaign that utilised a variety of sources, including celebrity endorsement, in an attempt to push the message. The campaign does not meet the strategic definition of public campaigning because of its failure to clearly communicate vaccination targets and the fact authorities did not meet EU’s target vaccination rates for member states, however, it remains unclear what the vaccination rate would be if this campaign had not been enacted.

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Marketinška komunikacija preventivnih mjera za vrijeme pandemije u Hrvatskoj

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SAŽETAK

Pandemija COVID-19 otvorila je raspravu o službenoj zdravstvenoj komunikaciji i time postavila novu normu u marketingu zdravstvene skrbi. U fokusu analize ovog rada je marketinška komunikacija hrvatske kampanje za cijepljenje protiv COVID-19 *Misli na druge – cijepi se!* s glavnim istraživačkim pitanjima: kako su javne institucije u Hrvatskoj komunicirale o izazovima COVID-19 i educirale javnost o cijepljenju kao jednoj od strategija prevencije; jesu li kampanje kao službena zdravstvena komunikacija usvojile principe kreativnosti i kako su koristile vizualne elemente u kampanji. Nalazi pokazuju da je kampanja usvojila principe kreativnosti jer je koristila antitezu u poruci kampanje, logotipu i svjedočanstvima, međutim kampanja nije dosegla ciljane brojke cijepljenosti.

Ključne riječi: COVID-19, krizno komuniciranje, alati za promociju cjepiva, mediji, kreativne industrije