

THE MEDIA CAMPAIGN OF THE „PREVENTION PROJECT DUNKELFELD“

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ABSTRACT

Research conducted with patients treated at the Charité Hospital's Institute of Sexology and Sexual Medicine in Berlin showed that men who are sexually interested in children and fear to commit an offence (potential offenders) or either have already committed an offence but are unknown to the justice system (Dunkelfeld offenders) may be reached for therapy via media. Based on these results a media campaign was conceptualized. In 2002 this concept was presented at the 7th Conference of the IATSO in Vienna (Austria, EU), and awarded 2nd prize. In 2005 this media campaign was fully developed and implemented as part of the Prevention Project Dunkelfeld, a research project aimed at reducing child sexual abuse. By means of posters, billboards, print-media advertisements, cinema and television spots, web site and banners men who are concerned about their sexual preference for children and in search of treatment were made aware of the Institute of Sexology and Sexual Medicine at Berlin's Charité providing diagnostic clarification of their problem and therapeutic help within a research project, free of charge and absolutely confidential.



Figure 1: The media campaign's poster and print image.

THE PROBLEM

The present state of knowledge regarding the number of offences which are not reported, i.e. which occur in the so called "Dunkelfeld" (engl. dark field), tells us that of all types of offences, this number is the highest for sexual offences against young women and children. The German word Dunkelfeld refers to the segment of incidences that remain undetected by the authorities and, unlike the cases in the "Hellfeld" (engl. light field), are not accounted for in official statistics. That most sexual offences stay undealt with by the justice system is reflected in the results of representative studies of the general population. They indicate that 13.3% of women (Dansky et al., 1997), 8.6% of girls and 2.8% of boys (Wetzels, 1997) have become victims of a sexual offence in their lives. At the same time the political focus is exclusively on handling and punishment of offenders in the Hellfeld, that is of those sexual offenders who have been prosecuted by the authorities (Fig. 2).



Figure 2: The difference between the "Dunkelfeld" and the "Hellfeld".



Figure 3: The Prevention Project's website.

THE GAP

To date programs designed to prevent sexual abuse of children have consisted essentially of educational programs for potential victims (children) as well as their care-givers and parents. Scientifically based concepts for the treatment of potential sexual offenders are lacking. The prevention of child sexual abuse must aim not only to establish educational programs for potential victims, but also treatment measures for potential offenders.



Figures 4a+b: More than 1000 sponsored posters were placed in hospitals and public pools and over 1000 sponsored billboards in public areas of Berlin over a period of three months.

THE PROJECT

Participants are both men who have not (yet) sexually offended against children but fear they may do so if they are not helped (potential Dunkelfeld offenders) and men who already have sexually offended against children but are not (yet) known to the justice system (real Dunkelfeld offenders). Two of the inclusion criteria were that they must be aware of the problematic nature of their sexual impulses and be self-motivated to seek treatment.



Figure 5: More than 50 reports about the project have been aired on TV- and radio channels.

THE MEDIA CAMPAIGN

The ability to access potential or real sexual abusers of children in the Dunkelfeld through the media was investigated in a research project conducted with outpatients treated for sexual arousal to children at the Charité's Sexological Institute. Based on the results of this study the media campaign was conceptualized. The study and concept were awarded 2nd prize at the 7th Conference IATSO in Vienna (Austria, EU) 2002. The media campaign consisted of interviews and reports in electronic and print media, on TV, on radio, advertisements in print media, cinemas, TV and the internet (banner) as well as billboards and poster-ads in hospitals and public pools. The gist of the prevention project's motto is "So that fantasies do not turn into offences". The media campaign's claim is "Do you love children more than you like?", and the delivered message is "You are not guilty because of your sexual desire, but you are responsible for your sexual behaviour. There is Help! Don't become an offender!" All information and contact details are available at the project's website www.kein-taeter-werden.de (engl. "don't-become-an-offender"; Mail: praevention@charite.de, Fon: +49-30-450 529 450).

Due to the professional public relations efforts the prevention project's campaign has been positively received by the public. In more than 300 media reports in total (print, TV, radio, Internet) it was possible to achieve high quality contributions of a factual nature. This positive representation of the project created an awareness in the community that preventive therapy for potential offenders is active child protection and an important contribution to the primary prevention of child sexual abuse.

The professional public relations work including the project's media campaign has received six awards:

1. 2nd Prize IATSO, 2002, for the conception of the contents of the media campaign.
2. "Politik Award 2005" of the German Press Academy for the best media campaign of a community institution.
3. "Bscher Media Prize 2006" of the Humboldt University Society, Berlin, for the successful communication of scientific research results to the public.
4. "Honoured as a chosen location 2006" in the category "Science" as part of the federal campaign: Germany - 365 locations in the Land of Ideas.
5. "Comprix Finalst" - Award for innovative Healthcare-Communication, Category: Non RX, Non OTC - Social Campaign TV.
6. „The German PR-Award 2006 - Finalist“ of the German PR-Society and the FAZ-Institut of Management of Media and Market Information.



Figure 6: More than 300 reports about the project were published in newspapers, magazines and on the Internet.



Figure 7a+b: More than 150 sponsored placements of the project's campaign image in newspapers and magazines and also as a banner on different websites.



Figure 8a+b+c+d: Screenshots of the cinema- and TV-spot, which was shown for free (probono) over 150 times in several German TV-Channels and Berlin Cinemas.

THE SAMPLE RESULTS

To date (August 2006) more than 400 men inquired about the project, more than 250 were interviewed on telephone, of which 210 took part in the clinical assessment at the Institute of Sexology and Sexual Medicine. Since the beginning of 2006 more than 100 participants could be included in the preventive therapy program.

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