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Social Consciousness: A Fair Trade Campaign

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Campaigns addressing social issues often focus on awareness as the first step. The educational process begins with equipping people with information that is essential to making the choice of whether or not to act upon their newfound knowledge. Coombs' text on public relations emphasizes caring for others (Coombs 2007) as a key approach to understanding social issues. Using the ethical principles outlined by Coombs, a campaign about social consciousness was designed around fair trade. The fair trade movement is about empowering impoverished communities around the world with the means to break the cycle of poverty. The purpose of such a movement aligned with our goal of educating others about making socially conscious choices that have a global impact. A pre-test measured the base attitudes and knowledge held by a convenience sample of participants. The questionnaire instrument measured their knowledge of fair trade concepts. A display was designed to provide a visual reinforcement of the concepts. The evaluation also measured whether or not one agreed or disagreed with statements about the movement. The results indicated the need for campaigns focused on developing an understanding about fair trade.

Information about the Authors:

Laura Van de Carr is a senior art history major and public relations minor. Calin Florek is a junior public relations major with minors in German and gender studies. They decided to focus on fair trade because of Laura's connection to The Welcome Mat, a fair trade store in downtown Valparaiso. She has worked there for five months. Calin also has a connection with the global community, as she has studied abroad and now works in the Office of International Programs. Focusing on fair trade was important because it is a topic that affects numerous people around the world. As students on Valpo's campus, they saw firsthand the lack of knowledge about the topic and wanted to change that by informing fellow students about fair trade and social consciousness in general.

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