



## Marketing Organ Donation in Universities: A Literature Review

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective** – The objective of this paper is to review university organ donation campaign in foreign universities and determine the potential strategies that could be adopted by our universities.

**Methodology/Technique** – This paper is using systematic literature review to select past articles that met the inclusion criteria.

**Findings** – From the review articles, the authors suggested a proposed framework for organ donation campaign to be applied and tested in Malaysian universities

**Novelty** – This paper attempts to contribute to the literature by developing a framework for organ donation campaign in local universities. In addition, the paper also gives insight to the Organ Procurement Officers (OPOs) in designing organ donation campaign in local universities.

**Type of Paper:** Conceptual

**Keywords:** Organ Donation; University; Organ Donation Campaign; Marketing.

**JEL Classification:** I10, M31.

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### 1. Introduction

The shortages of available organs have become critical issues globally and even worse, the number of patients suffering chronic diseases and in dire need of organs are reported increasing every year. The World Health Organization (WHO) has listed Malaysia as among the countries that have lowest organ donation rate (Lai, 2013). For every 1 Million population in a country, organ donation rate in Malaysia is 0.68% only. The organ donation rate in Malaysia is far behind other Asian countries for instance, Thailand (1.28%) and Singapore (5%). The number of patients waiting for organ transplantation in Malaysia is 19,353 (“Statistic Organ Pledges,” 2015) and the number is expected to keep on increasing because of poor lifestyles and food intakes which deteriorating our health. Meanwhile, the number of organ and tissue cadaveric donors until present is 507 only.

The communication campaign promoting organ donation has begun since 1997, but there is only 0.88% of the Malaysian population registered as organ pledges. The gap between the demand and supply of organs in

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Malaysia is huge and therefore, various efforts are needed to educate and promote the cause. According to the President of Malaysia Medical Association, Datuk Dr N. K. S. Tharmaseelan, various campaigns on anti-smoking, AIDS, tuberculosis and dengue are held (Dhillion, 2015). However, little attention is paid on organ donation. The President also mentioned that educational campaign on organ donation is supposed to be held at schools and universities in an effort to alleviate taboo, myths and misconceptions.

According to Morgan, Harrison, Chewing, DiCorcia, and Davis (2010), organ donation campaign is unique and different from other health campaigns. Firstly, the behaviour of donating organs does not provide benefits to the donors themselves but to other people. Secondly, the act of giving is not time or money, however, a part of the donors themselves. Thirdly, the decision to sign up as organ donor is a one-time decision only, and there is no reinforcement needed unlike smoking cessations or exercise programs. Hence, although organ donation campaigns are usually conducted like any other health campaign, the uniqueness of the cause should be considered to ensure the effectiveness of the programs.

## **2. Why Students?**

Previous authors have provided different findings between age and the organ donation motivation. According to Nijkamp, Hollestelle, Zeegers, Van den Borne, and Reubsaet (2008), age is not significant to determine organ donation behaviour. Data gathered by Boulware, et al. (2002) showed that the elders are less keen to donate organs compared to the younger people. Contrarily, a research conducted in Malaysia found that young Malaysians are adverse towards organ donation. The young generation reported they have no knowledge on organ donation. In addition, they presume they are too young to talk about the issue (Wong, 2010).

Feeley, Anker, Vincent and Williams (2010) noted that university and colleges students are excellent target group for organ donation campaigns. The authors stated that the students are the best ready market because they are young and healthy. In addition, students are deemed as potential 'opinion leaders' that can shape communities' attitude and beliefs especially in issues related to social and public health. In the United States of America, the university students are cited to show favourable attitudes towards donation and are easier to educate about organ transplantation (Feeley, 2007). Moreover, the researcher reported that the university students find the topics of organ donation as an interesting topic and are open to discuss about it.

Even though, the young generation in Malaysia are negative towards organ donation and are not ready to discuss about it, they can still be considered as a great potential segment for organ donation. Urbain, Gonzalez, and Le Gall-Ely (2013) highlighted the importance of the young generation in social network and communities as well as horizontal links. The researcher recognized the ability of young generation to share and respond to information within their social network. Feeley et al. (2010) added that the students have huge social network and tend to share their attitude and views within their network either directly or using non-directly approach (e.g. using social media).

## **3. Methodology**

A systematic literature review is performed to meet the objective of this paper. Search terms were developed using the keywords of "organ donation" and "university campaign" in Google Scholar from all periods until 30<sup>th</sup> July 2015. The inclusion criterion to be accepted in this review is that the papers need to discuss the organ donation campaign conducted in universities. At the end, there are thirteen articles obtained and included in this review. The discussion of the reviewed papers is developed in the next sections.

## **4. University Organ Donation Campaign**

According to Morgan, Miller, and Arasaratnam (2002), organ donation campaign is considered as successful if the campaign can (i) increase the knowledge and positive attitudes of the target audience pertaining organ donation, (ii) increase the numbers of targeted audience register as organ pledges and (iii)

and encourage the targeted audience to discuss about their decision to donate organs to their family members. Feeley et al. (2010) proposed two objectives of organ donation campaign and they depend on the current situation of the targeted audience. If the university students are positive towards organ donation but they have little knowledge on the issue, therefore, the aim of the campaign should be to educate the students on the importance of donating organs, the critical need of organs worldwide and the process of transplantation. Meanwhile, if the authorities aimed to get the students to discuss about organ donation within their social networks, then the aim of the organ donation campaign is targeted to encourage the students to discuss their beliefs and organ donation intention to their families and friends.

The most common methods in university organ donation campaign discussed in the literature are mass media campaign and interpersonal approach. Feeley et al. (2010) stated that direct campaign is appropriate to educate the students through pedagogy for instance classroom lectures, videos and discussions as well as using mass media. However, if the aim is to go beyond the targeted audience (i.e. university students), the Organ Procurement Officers (OPOs) must educate the university students whether in groups or classes through educational methods such as lectures and encourage them to use other communications such as social media networks and outreach programs to share the information on organ donation to other student populations, salient others and communities.

Morgan et al., (2011) investigated the effectiveness of two universities organ donation campaign strategies. The implications of the campaigns were measured based on the number of registration to sign up as organ pledges and the number of organ pledges that have discussed about their intention to donate organs to their family members. The two behavioral outcomes are tested using three experiments; a media only campaign, a mass media and interpersonal approach and a control condition. The researchers concluded by combining the use of mass media as well as using interpersonal outreach, the campaign has superior effect compared to using mass media only. Interpersonal outreach is the most important contributor to the success of the campaign and, surprisingly, using mass media alone was reported to be no difference than the control condition of the experiment (Morgan et al., 2011). The underlying factor to explain the phenomenon is because organ donation is an unsought decision that often elicits defense mechanism to some individuals. Hence, media messages are less effective because they are usually unattended and rarely processed by the audience. Interpersonal intervention is therefore proposed to make the persuasion process become personal. In addition, interpersonal intervention aids OPOs to clarify misinformation, alleviate myths and eradicate fears.

Direct approach campaigns execute top-down appeal where organizations emphasize the importance of signing organ donor cards and discussion with family in regards of the intention to the students. In addition, they also distribute informational materials to encourage registration among the students. Organ donation knowledge is shared to university students and has the ability to reach larger groups. However, the effectiveness of the message is not guaranteed (Feeley et al., 2010). Previous researchers have conducted studies to examine the effectiveness of incorporating organ donation awareness in the curricular. Deborah (2007) studied the effectiveness of organ donation campaign by Public Relation students in an effort to raise awareness and organ donation rates among students. The author selected Public Relation classes because apart from conventional lectures in classes, the course requires students to design Public Relation campaigns. To determine the effectiveness of the organ donation awareness campaigns in the PR course, Deborah (2007) conducted survey of newly registered PR students, recorded number of signed organ donor cards and attendance during campaigns and studied the students' reflection papers.

For the first eight weeks of the semester, lectures on organ donation issues, research and organ donation campaign development by the students took place. The students were then executed their organ donation campaign, evaluate and present their failures and successes to clients. It was reported that the number of students signing up as organ donor has increase drastically from 18.5% prior the intervention to 52% after fifteen weeks of the PR campaign course. This has shown that the campaign has a significant effect towards the students' knowledge, attitude and behavior towards organ donation. Besides, the number of individuals signing organ donor cards reported came from the students' social networks such as families, friends and classmates. Hence, the campaign provides the students an avenue to share their knowledge within their social

networks. However, according to the author, to integrate the organ donation campaign in a Public Relation course requires grants or financial allowance from OPOs. So far, there are not many universities and colleges are entitled to receive financial assistance to run such class activities.

In another case study of organ donation education, Anker, Feeley, Friedman and Kruegler (2009) highlighted in teaching organ donation issues to medical and nursing students, several concerns need to be addressed. The authors examined the curriculum content and methods of instructions in medical and nursing schools in New York. The researchers found that there is a number of schools that rely on lectures only in delivering information on organ donation related topics. The authors suggested implementing active learning methods and curriculum changes give more benefits. The medical and nursing students are the most appropriate targets of organ donation education as they have the potential to be involved in the organ donation procurement and transplantation procedures. Therefore, they must have a strong base of knowledge related to organ donation so that they could deliver correct information and execute proper procedure.

Meanwhile, campaigns that utilize two-step approach (i.e. direct-approach and students classes or groups) has been discussed in the literature as more reliable in creating advocate messages due to the effect of peer-to-peer influence. Individuals who are involved in the communication of the desired behavior play the role as referents and role models for others in the society (Morgan et al., 2011). However, the effectiveness of the campaigns is varied as it depends on the students' motivation (Feeley et al., 2010). Furthermore, using two-step approach empowers students to be creative and resourceful. For instance, a group of political science students in Stanford run polls, produced videos and webpage to create organ donation awareness among their peers (Parker, 2014). Based on the findings of the poll initiated by the students, they learnt that there are much misconception exists among the community. The students managed to produce videos using different appeals like informative and humorous but the key challenge is to run a campaign based on a real-world issues. In the United Kingdom, NHS Blood and Transplant has collaborated with St Andrews students to establish University Organ Donation Society in an effort to raise awareness of organ donation among the communities of the university (Cook, 2013). The idea came up when one of the students at St Andrews, Alex Richardson, died and has donated his organs and saved 4 lives. NHS Blood and Transplant planned to have similar society to be introduced in other universities across United Kingdom in the near future.

In addition to what have been discussed above, another strategy by OPOs in the United States should be given attention. The United States of Health and Human Services conducted National Organ Donation Campus Challenge since 2009 has united OPOs, universities and colleges in educating communities of campuses on the urgent needs of organ and tissue donations and to improve the number of organ pledges through its campus partners. The challenge has helped the country to obtain more than 100,000 new donors so far ("National Organ Donation Campus Challenge," 2015). The Anthony J. Fulginiti PRSSA Chapter at Rowan University has also conducted annual National Organ Day Awareness Competition (NODAC) aiming campuses across the states to create an organ donation campaign. Participating campuses stand a chance to win cash prizes in the fight to disseminate knowledge of the importance of organ donation and transplantation ("National Organ Donor Awareness Competition," 2015).

In Malaysia, the Malaysia Association of Colleges and Private Universities (MACPU) has also started an effort to run organ donation campaign to participating colleges and private universities. The goal of the initiative is to raise awareness about organ donation among the staff and students of the colleges and private universities as well as the public. Furthermore, the campaign which has been introduced in 2012, is also aimed at encouraging the individuals who have registered as organ pledges to share their intention to their family members and get them to sign up as organ pledges too ("Organ Donation," 2015). The activities in the campaign include organ donation exhibition, inter-religion forums, seminars and road show targeting the public. However, so far, there is no report has been made to determine the effectiveness of the said campaign.

The use of social media and college student organization have been reported to facilitate in recruiting organ pledges within communities of universities (D'Alessandro, Peltier, & Dahl, 2012). In a two-year of the study, the researchers have implemented intervention using social media and personalized message to campaign about organ donation. The outcome of the study revealed that the use of social media and personalized message

helped in raising awareness and creating favorable attitude towards organ donation. Besides, the number of organ donor registration has been reported increased by 20% during the intervention. The social media metric used in this study are Facebook fans and likes, Facebook posts and comments on organ donation issues/ Saves Lives Facebook page, videos uploaded, You Tube video views, Tweets from followers on organ donation/ Saves Lives Facebook page and Blog posts and comments. The attitudinal and behavioral change during the intervention documented provides evidence that the use of social media has multiply effect on the campaign and showed that university students are excellent opinion leader in the community, D'Alessandro et al., (2012) suggested similar intervention should be replicate in other universities. Based on the discussion above, a framework for university organ donation campaign is proposed (see Figure 1).

### 5. Conclusion

From the review, it is concluded that organ donation campaign at universities holds promising platform to raise awareness on organ donation and to increase the number of organ pledges. Targeting university and college students are relevant as these groups have strong influence within their social network and thus, has the ability to encourage others become organ donors. Behavior change alone can be difficult and therefore, social support and peer influence are important (Morgan et al, 2011). Nevertheless, before developing any university organ donation campaign, OPOs or the university must conduct situation analysis to identify the right method to run the campaign. To integrate organ donation education in the curricular require thorough planning and budget compared to one time campaign. Establishing society and organizing challenge and competition are strategies that encourage discussion and knowledge-sharing.

The documented literature has shown that the university organ donation campaigns facilitated in the organ donation education within a particular community. Although the campaigns in the western universities are successful, the influence of cultures and religions in Malaysian scenario should be given attention. Different race, ethnic groups and religions might uphold beliefs and myths that require a sum of effort in persuading the university students in Malaysia and this will become a challenge to the OPOs. In addition, though some private colleges and universities in Malaysia have begun working with the National Transplantation Unit to promote organ donation in their social network, the effectiveness of the campaign is remain unknown. Hence, there is a call for future research to measure the effectiveness of organ donation campaign in local universities and to determine which methods are the most appropriate to be executed in Malaysian's context. To sum up, this review proposes that university organ donation campaign as a hopeful intervention method in an effort to raise the number of organ pledges and to save others' lives.

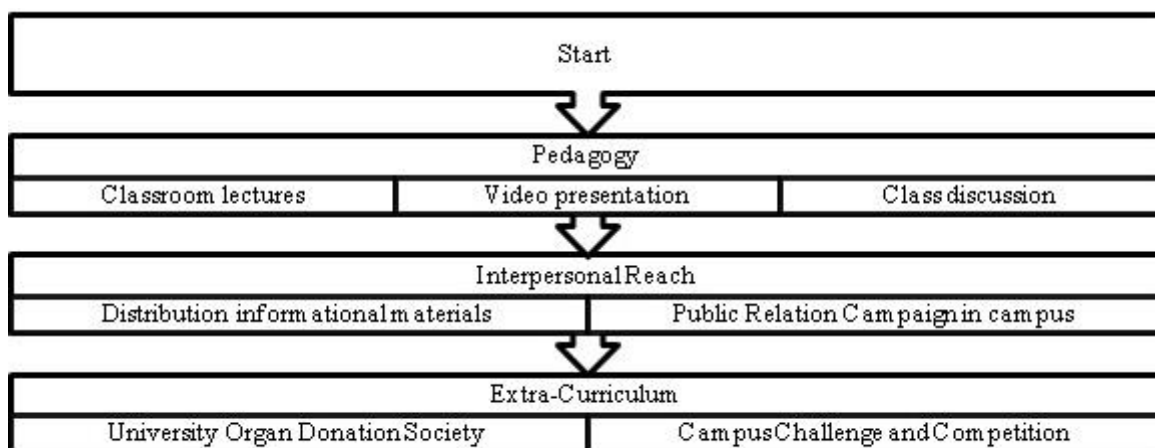


Figure 1: Proposed Framework for University Organ Donation Campaign in Malaysia

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