

14050 Why the 'no make-up selfies' campaign raised £2m

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The selfie has reached a new zenith this week, thanks to the No Make-Up Selfie for Cancer Awareness campaign which has seen £2 million raised for Cancer Research UK in just a few days.

It started as women posted pictures of themselves without make-up on Twitter and Facebook, and urged their friends to do the same.

Cancer awareness became the theme, selfie posters pledged donations to cancer charities and a text number was set up.

But the trend grew organically, making a huge impact on social media and getting attention in national newspapers and on radio and TV news.

So why did it go viral? Was it all about raising awareness and money for cancer research?

No-one really knows how the trend started. It may have been related to the Oscars selfie featuring gorgeous A-list actors which was retweeted endlessly following the film awards.

Or it may have been a reaction to the negative comments directed towards 81-year-old actress Kim Novak following the same event.

People lined up to sympathise with her by posting pictures of themselves in unflattering lights.

With hundreds of thousands of donations, 826,000 likes on Facebook and 140,000 followers on Twitter, Cancer Research UK confessed to being "overwhelmed with donations".

However not everyone is behind the idea that women revealing their face is something brave or altruistic. Commentators say that the campaign made cancer awareness all about vanity and emotion rather than about practical action.

This campaign has undoubtedly captured the imagination, and communication has never been faster, but you have to be careful, as you can lose the depth of message. Still, the money raised suggests this is more than just an exercise in self promotion.

Images sent to the charity demonstrate that people want to show their solidarity with cancer sufferers, and pay tribute to friends and family who have died from the disease.

The Institute of Fundraisers says that combining popular trends with fund-raising is a great way to reach young and untapped audiences. Men are now getting on board by posting selfies of themselves wearing make-up in a bid to raise awareness of men's cancers.

But perhaps there is more to the success of this selfie campaign. Maybe it's about how women feel about themselves, and their private and public faces. The image of women in the media can be so artificial and constructed that body image often becomes an issue. This is almost an act of rebellion.