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Broadcast Management 2000:
NTUC Radio Heart

By

Olive Saw
and
Eva Chang
INTRODUCTION

This paper introduces the latest radio station in Singapore. It is the NTUC Radio Heart. NTUC Radio Heart is owned by a co-operative under the umbrella of the Singapore National Trades Union Congress (NTUC). The co-operative is called NTUC Voice Co-Operative Society Ltd. The capital is subscribed by the trade unions, co-operatives owned by the Labour Movement and the Singapore Labour Foundation. NTUC Radio Heart is the first private FM radio station in Singapore. The others are the 9 radio channels of SBC and the 2 channels of Rediffusion.

NTUC Radio Heart began transmission on 2nd March 1991, broadcasting on 91.3 FM and 100.3 FM for seven days of the week.

1. NATIONAL PROGRAMME POLICIES AND PERSPECTIVES

Radio Heart broadcasts under licence from Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA). FM 91.3 is the frequency for
the English and Malay programmes. The English programmes broadcast from 6 am to 11 pm and the Malay programmes from 11 pm to 2 am. FM 100.3 is the frequency for the Mandarin and Tamil programmes. The Mandarin programmes broadcast from 6 am to 11 pm and the Tamil programmes from 11 pm to 2 am.

Under the Licence Provision the station is required to allocate 15% of its broadcast time to Information and Education Programmes. Also 25% of total broadcast time shall consist of locally produced programmes.

NTUC Radio Heart's mission is to inform, educate and entertain all Singaporean workers and families.

The specific objectives are:
- To further project the image of our trade unions.
- To inform our Singapore workers and help them to better understand labour policies and other current issues.
- To provide entertaining programmes to our workers and their families.

In short, it is an Infotainment Station providing information and entertainment.
In conforming with MITA's broadcast requirement, Radio Heart's programme output ration is 22% Information and 78% Entertainment.

The Information content includes News, Current Affairs, Arts and Culture, Sports, Public Service Announcements. There are also variety radio shows for Children, Women and Youth.

The Entertainment content is made up of music. NTUC Radio Heart's Music Policy is that of Adult Contemporary, Middle Of The Road and easy listening.

Radio Heart also supports various Government campaigns and policies which are broadcast by way of interviews, public service announcements, contests, talk back shows, roving reports and outdoor shows.

2. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO RADIO PROGRAMMING

WHAT IS RADIO

Radio can be termed "a blind medium", as well as the most visual as the listener has to visualise in his mind through the audio media. Radio paints a picture. Radio is Intimate. It
is a one to one relationship with the listener. Radio talks to one person in an audience of thousands. Radio is Accessible and Instant and Portable. Radio is also Direct, talking individually to the listener. A Radio Presenter can be a personal friend using "ear contact". Radio is Immediate. News and Reports can be easily disseminated to thousands instantly. Radio is Simple, Flexible and Affordable.

3. NTUC RADIO HEART'S INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO RADIO PROGRAMMING

The radio media is instant, mobile and spontaneous. Radio Heart capitalises on this by having "on location" roving reports which are broadcast "live on air". These include overseas reports as well. This form of programming is also revenue generating as advertisers would usually want to capitalise on the immediacy element.

Sports Commentary is also broadcast live from the match venue, be it home or away.

Visibility is another important criteria of radio programming. Radio Presenters are seen and heard. They present and even perform in outdoor location road shows, some of which are
broadcast "live" via telephone lines to reach the radio listener, thus bringing the show to the listener.

On 26th August 1993 Radio Heart's permanent Satellite Studio started transmission, located in Basement 1 Takashimaya Shopping Centre, in the heart of Orchard Road. It is the first of its kind in South East Asia. Transmission from the satellite studio takes place immediately after 12 noon for 2 hours and later from 7 to 9 pm daily.

As the studio is built with a glass facade both the interview suite and broadcast suite, are in direct view of the shoppers. They can hear and watch the presenters at work. International artistes are interviewed there, thus bringing the stars to the people, through radio satellite studio.

Talk Back shows and Panel Discussions are popular program format as listeners always enjoy being part of a programme and also being able to participate in a talk show. Medical, Legal and Labour Issues are also included in Radio Heart's Programme Output.

Radio Heart also takes part in charity drives and projects through on air and outdoor shows. Another form of Station
Promotion is through the "Heart Patrol" which is a brightly painted jeep which travels around town, and very often stationing itself at a busy area. Live On Air Contests are conducted at site with the crowd.

4. STRATEGIES OF PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

The pre-requisites of a Radio Broadcaster is the ability to speak to one and yet addressing thousands. Ability to communicate through a microphone is no easy task. For one to talk and be heard is easy but for one to communicate and be LISTENED TO is the difference. Our personnel policy is to create the difference.

Radio Heart practices the policy of "Undergraduate Student Attachment Programmes", by offering mass communication students practical assignment in all areas of broadcasting. With "hands on" assignments, various aspects of broadcasting are developed. This in turn creates a pool of potential broadcast personnel. In house and overseas training courses for radio presenters are carried out as and when required.

Overseas exchange programme with presenters of various stations is an on going practice in NTUC Radio Heart.
5. **FUTURE CHALLENGES**

As Singapore moves into the 21st century, information search and transmission has to be current, or else the medium will lose out. Entertainment demands become more apparent and radio has the ability to provide the entertainment element instantly and individually. Radio is able to bring information to listeners within a very short time, if not immediately. There is no medium to replace radio for this quick delivery.

**RADIO IS INSTANT AND RADIO IS MOBILE.** Entertainment wise radio is constantly developing its own identity of being a one-to-one medium of communication. It is only through this personal type approach that radio can compete with the multi-visual media. By reaching out to the masses, and yet speaking to one, is the essence of "LISTENING TO THE RADIO".

The cohort of radio listeners will expand especially with the latest development in FM stations and the wide repertoire of music and information which if easily accessible and affordable. With the setting up to more satellite stations in the near future, listening to the radio will certainly be part and parcel of one's lifestyle.