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A Multi-Media Campaign For Young People:
Did Anybody Listen?

By

Aurora Silayan-Go
"A MULTI-MEDIA CAMPAIGN FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: DID ANYBODY LISTEN?"

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INTRODUCTION

The organizers of this seminar must be congratulated for addressing what many people will admit but few are seriously aware of — the unprecedented challenge of today's adolescent development.

The young who is forced to outgrow the dependence of a child and heed the call of independence of adult life almost always is caught in a trap of uncertainty — a period of tumult where he questions norms, searches for the truth, dreams, hopes, battles with himself, and keeps step with a fast changing society. And you will certainly agree with me that never before has the external world been more threatening to the young than today.

Modern day living affords quick and multiple forms of mass communication. Newspapers carry special sections on the youth. Magazines featuring fashion, health, beauty, food and even sex abound for the youth's taking. Television, a most powerful medium, has become the major means that reaches out to majority of the population in urban centers. Neighborhood sharing practices even further multiply the effect on the urban marginal population.

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Radio remains an all time communicator with the old form of soap operas. Most of all, whether in print, TV, radio, or on billboards, the creative art of advertising has become a real science. Target markets are segmented and studied. Messages, artwork and special effects are all systematically concocted to produce the desired effects on the target audience.

On the interpersonal level, we do find a variety of occasions for communicating with the young. While the debuts or "coming out parties" have become rare events, teeners have substituted these for "Tia Maria" bars, discos, music lounges, pub houses, dinner shows, special concerts in "The Park" and theatre. And an extra brought about by the high-tech culture is the computerized matchmaking model, common in more developed countries like Singapore, which makes dating and life-partner hunting a push-button operation.

When we consider the media bombardment the modern youth is subjected to, with all its messages that seem to undermine the system of values past held, and combine them with the natural biological and physiological changes he is experiencing, are we still surprised that the young are at a loss?

The home and the school are challenged by alternative values and models of behavior which are reinforced by peer approval. The competition to communicate is tough. But if media can serve commercial interests, why not development programs? Can media entertain and educate at the same time?
THE PCF PROJECT

My purpose in this paper is to describe a project implemented by the Population Center Foundation (PCF) and sponsored by the Johns Hopkins University/Center for Communication Program (JHU/CCP). The project is entitled "A Multi-Media Campaign for Young People" (YPP). The time frame was one and a half years (June 1987-December 1988), targeting ages 12 to 24 with selected messages on the considerations that go with responsible behavior in boy-girl relationships. The approach is music and media that is linked to the telephone hotline. The question I ask is "Did Anybody Listen?"

BACKGROUND

Before I discuss this project in detail, allow me first to give you an idea of the program framework from which this project was conceived. As a non-governmental, non-profit organization, PCF has several program areas, one of which is the Program for Adolescent Development (PAD). Our initiatives in this area started in 1979 with a focus on adolescent fertility. Our concern was based on census data reflecting a proportion of a 9 percent of all live births contributed by mothers ages 19 and below. Amongst teenage mothers, 17 percent are illegitimate births.
Most of our projects have used individual and group counseling and have experimented in a variety of venues that have access to young people. These venues included health centers, hospitals, schools, industries, and a number of other youth serving agencies like the Girl Scouts of the Philippines (GSP), Boy Scouts of the Philippines (BSP) and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Except for 3 multi-service youth centers created primarily to address adolescent sexuality, most of our projects were integral in approach meaning, we worked with existing personnel, structures and youth programs.

To date, PCF's Program for Adolescent Development has expanded its concerns beyond the provision of information as a major intervention to prevent teenage marriages and premarital sex. While direct information and counseling continue, the same problems are now addressed in the broader context of adolescent health, values clarification, life planning and parent-child communication.

Initially, the focus was on fertility awareness and reproductive health. Now we are campaigning for a more comprehensive view of responsible adolescent behavior. Saying "NO" to sex has other related dimensions.

The adolescent is now encouraged to say no to a host of temptations that adversely affect his entire health --- not only
physically, but also mentally, emotionally, and socially. The adolescent is assisted in evaluating his whole system of values that will eventually provide direction to his future. The adolescent is also walked through a process of planning his future - how to set goals, make sound decisions, be responsible parents, decide on a suitable and fulfilling career and how to communicate effectively. Finally, the adolescent is taught how to link the gaps that are eroding what could be a beautiful parent-child relationship.

YPP PROJECT CONCEPT

It was with the technical assistance from JHU that we were able to venture on a communication strategy to reach a large number of young people in ways we never explored before. Originally designed as a telephone hotline to serve young adults, JHU suggested that we redesign the project to utilize music and media. The approach was to release and popularize through regular channels in the industry songs that will deliver relevant messages to the young --- relevant to responsible adolescent behavior in boy-girl relationships.

PCF produced two songs, released and promoted them through a recording company. Music Television Videos were produced as support materials. Once the songs were popular, four TV commercials and three radio spots were produced using the songs as background music.
The ads were intended to do two things: to promote the availability of the telephone counseling hotlines labeled "Dial-A-Friend" and to deliver "self-contained" messages to young listeners and viewers.

The telephone service did not stop at the provision of information/counseling service. Twenty five referral centers were linked to the counseling service.

Music, television/radio advertising, telephone hotlines and referral centers --- these were the major components that combined to reach out to a great number of young people in a city of seven million people where 1.4 million make up ages 15 to 24.

HOW THE PROJECT WAS IMPLEMENTED

1. THE SONGS

The decision to use a recording company to release the songs commercially while PCF stayed silent in its involvement was a conscious decision. The songs had to be a commercial success before PCF could use it for our promotions without turning away young people with our social development objectives.

After a series of pre-testing among students from six schools and undergoing meticulous review by a panel of musicians, composers, musical directors and managers of popular singers, "That Situation", (a fast number sung by Lea Salonga with the Menudo) and "I Still
Believe" (a ballad sung by Lea and Charlie Masso, formerly of the Menudo) emerged as having the most appropriate message and best musical scoring among 15 entries. "That Situation" was composed by Gary Valenciano and "I Still Believe" was composed by Manny Aquino. These songs were pretested among representative groups of the target audience.

A number of criteria were used in the selection of a female artist. She had to be a positive role model for the Filipino youth; with a following among the targetted audience; talented in singing and dancing; active for production and promotional work.

To bolster the promotion of the two songs, a Music Television Video (MTV) was produced for each of the songs.

Exactly what message do the two songs convey?

"That Situation" tells young people that they should avoid serious boy-girl relationships and that their future is in their hands. Thus to be careful and "not get into that situation".

Similarly, "I Still Believe" is a duet between a boy and a girl who are very attracted to each other and suspect that they are meant for each other. But because they are still very young, there is the message of caution, to take time, for love must stand the test of time as the lyrics say "I don't think you should need me for just a lonely night".
Corollary activities were designed to reinforce the message of the songs. We undertook campus tours in 12 public and private schools in the Metro Manila area, always hosted by Lea Salonga. A question and answer portion built into the program of the tour of schools zeroed in on the message of the song and drew from the audience their reactions to the message. Approximately 40,000 students participated in these tours. A second corollary activity was an art contest in schools to interpret the message of the songs. Finally, there was a systematic effort to ensure that our artist guest in TV entertainment shows for interview. In all these activities, our artist, Lea Salonga, would advertise the telephone hotline as well.

2. TV/RADIO ADS

In producing our TV/radio spots, a creative advertising agency was systematically selected by PGF using a common criteria. Agencies were invited to bid for the contract.

Four ads were developed: three were "crisis" ads that depicted crisis situations faced by young people today, namely, peer pressure to have sex, sexual identity crisis, and unintended pregnancy. The fourth was a special TV ad produced using footages from the MTV with Lea Salonga giving a message. The taglines to these ads were: "not to lose hope and despair when faced with a deep problem"
(unintended pregnancy), "not to give in to confusion when things are happening too quickly? (pressure to have sex) or when sexual identity is in question. There is someone you can count on — just "Dial-A-Friend".

The radio ads gave us more room to dish out positive messages, and not necessarily crisis situations while simultaneously referring to "Dial-A-Friend". Our communication objectives included "saying no to sex", "respect for the values of another - your partner" and "shared responsibility". How these messages were developed into creative advertising was the challenge assigned to the ad agency.

3. DIAL-A-FRIEND

Four telephone hotlines were installed and manned by six counselors, two of whom were relievers and four regulars. Counselors recruited are trained in psychology or have had counseling experience. Staff development activities of the counselors were special trainings in telephone counseling, time management, values clarification and knowledge upgrading on sexuality issues.

Telephone services operated from 1:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. daily, except Sundays and occasional days of inclement weather. The counselors received an average of 200-250 calls per week with problems ranging from issues of boy-girl relationships, parent-child relationships, sexual identity, pre-marital/extra-marital sex, marital problems, drug problems, depression, suicide and abortion.
A total of 7,797 calls was received from June 18-December 29, 1988. Data compiled from the problems documented by the Dial-A-Friend counseling forms over a six month period show us that the five most frequently called on problems as presented were about:

1. boy-girl relationships - 2,453 (31.5%)
2. parent-child relationships - 515 (6.6%)
3. peer relationship - 515 (6.6%)
4. self concept - 507 (6.5%)
5. sexual behavior - 341 (4.4%)
6. husband-wife relationships - 198 (2.5%)

Calls were heaviest in the early afternoon, between 1:00 P.M. and 4:00 P.M. and are usually done from the homes of the callers. Seven out of ten callers were females, most of whom were single (85%). Close to half have had some college education (46.5%) while about a third have reached high school. The campaign obviously reached the intended target as shown by the 45 percent callers composed of 15-19 year olds and 22 percent between 20-24 years.
4. THE REFERRAL NETWORK

The referral network consists of 25 centers such as local government health centers, school-based guidance centers, one home for unwed mothers, one legal assistance office and six professionals who are experts in various disciplines e.g. STD, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry.

Services provided through this network include drug abuse prevention and rehabilitation, legal advice, marital counseling, job placement and medical consultation.

The network is important especially for problems requiring long-range intervention. These are the rare cases of homosexuality, incest, sexual frustration, exhibitionism, marital problems, pre-marital pregnancy, and drugs.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have endeavored to weave together all the components of the project so that we maintain one unifying, connecting theme throughout the campaign. This way, our youth will be aware not just of songs with a message, but more importantly, of the support systems available to them that would provide correct information, facilitate clarification and decision making, make referrals, and serve as a "friend". A Friend committed to self worth, respect for others, shared responsibility and understanding of parents --- one who believes in saying NO to Sex as a teen, NO to drugs and smoking, and above all one who must plan his life for a complex future ahead of him.
As an innovation in the use of media and music to educate young people, the question I raise is --- "Did Anybody Listen?"

The survey findings from a mid-project evaluation four months after we launched the ads (June 1988) show that a large majority of youths (92%) covered in the study have heard of "I Still Believe" and liked it (90%), despite the fact that the song was launched seven months before. In our post study in January 1989, the aided recall was still 82% and was chosen as one of the favorites by 85% of respondents. There is evidence of a spread effect when one considers that half of those who heard it discussed the song with peers and brothers/sisters. More interestingly, the callers of Dial-A-Friend know of the song seven months later (75%) as reflected in the counseling forms.

The Music Video was spontaneously recalled in January 1989 by 22% of surveyed respondents but jumped to 64% when probed. This makes it the fourth most popular music video among the top MTV's of 1988, four of which were foreign. These data all the more strongly suggest the impact of the song when one considers that "I Still Believe" was launched in March 1988 with the MTV.

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<th>&quot;VIDEO&quot; SONGS RECALLED</th>
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<td>Only you (British)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Power of Love (British)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything for you (USA)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Still Believe (Philippines)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make it Real</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>5th</td>
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When asked if "I Still Believe" had any impact on themselves, more than half (56%) said yes. Among these, 7 out of 10 claimed the song stimulated them to:

a) seek more information or discuss boy-girl relationship issues (64%)

b) seek more information/discuss with others about contraceptives (59%)

The use of the song as background music to the advertisement has probably produced a synergistic effect. The claimed impact of the song on the listeners is further reinforced by the perception by many (43% unaided) that Dial-A-Friend is a campaign on "responsible boy-girl relationship (BGR). And BGR is interpreted by majority (82%) as relating to love/care, commitment and understanding, fidelity and respect.

Dial-A-Friend is known by majority of those interviewed six months after the launch in June 1988. TV was the primary source of awareness (92%), seconded by radio at 60%.

Half of the respondents perceived Dial-A-Friend as

- availability of advice and willingness to help others
- caution on decision (20%)
- caution in sexual involvement
- preparation for the future by studying first or planning for it
We hope the implementation of this project has shown the way toward the development and communication of socially responsible messages for boy-girl relationships through commercial entertainment and media.

As a non-profit development agency, it is possible to combine commercial and development objectives. We provided the challenge to composers, to a video producer, a recording company, to disc jockeys, to an advertising company. Creative advertising can communicate values in a manner acceptable to young people.

Music that entertains can indeed get a program value across to the targeted market. Alternative interpersonal approaches such as school tours can reinforce and elaborate on the song's message and produce a multiplier effect to many more who may not have been aware of the campaign.

Overall, I believe our audience of 15-24 year olds did listen to the message of our songs carried further by creative advertising, and supported by Dial-A-Friend and its corresponding network.