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Current Role Of The Broadcasting Media
In Promoting Health And Nutrition In Singapore

By

Jumilah bte Koming
CURRENT ROLE OF THE BROADCASTING MEDIA IN PROMOTING HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN SINGAPORE

By Jumilah bte Koming

Morning, Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like if I may say that I have to share with you today a very brief report on the current role of the broadcasting media in promoting health and nutrition in my country, Singapore. It is with some trepidation that I share this with people who probably have far more experience and expertise with the mass media.

When we say upon the role of Broadcasting, it is a fact that broadcasting is a powerful tool in the aid of promoting certain aspects that needs highlighting and promotion. The only difference is that, it differs from country to country, related to the existing problems, degree of urgency and other aspect that needs attention.

Singapore Broadcasting Corporation is a National Station which has to provide a mix of information, education and entertainment in that order of priority. As a broadcaster we are aware of the fact, that a viewer and a listener is in control of the switch-off - switch-on knob. It is a tall order that whatever programme we produced, it must be presented in a creative way so as to able to hold the audience, the listener and viewer...and that is what we are always trying to create, to reach out to listeners and viewers in promoting informational type of programmes including promoting HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN SINGAPORE.

In promoting Health and Nutrition to listeners we have programmes that vary. Besides live shows, presented straight from the studios, we have packaged programmes like health science programme, drama for children and adult targeted for the needs of viewers and listeners.

Currently, we carry information relating in promoting Health and Nutrition almost daily from the early morning to say till transmission closes down. Planning is all important so that the information we give must be relevent to the world of the listener and viewer and to his environment. We cannot fill the gap that lies between the individual

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and the whole wide world of knowledge. But we can show him how to get on with it by getting him interested. Therefore, the theme we choose in our programmes must be those of social relevance within the country itself...and at the same stage we should take him outside his own space.

Since April 1983, in the morning itself from 6.30 a.m... onwards over Radio, we have Chat Shows presented live in which each day the contents vary. Besides interviewing professionals like doctors, lawyers, engineers and other profession in their own field, to answer questions posed to them we have and will contact by phone a listener whose child has just won certain merits. That can be of interest, like winning baby contest, dental care and many others.

During the interview certain points conveying health and nutrition beneficial to all is attractively conveyed without really making it sound obvious as one is trying to teach the other.

Our scheduling has in fact put in order children's programme as from 10.00 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. In a form of dramatizing which is much more interesting, we intend to catch the young listeners...attention in promoting good health and good habits which is actually promoting Health and Nutrition in a simpler way.

As from 10.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. for the women, we have various programmes in which we have been successful in educating, informing and entertaining in a different version as to produce contents that give not only insight but also delight.

A presentation on health can be boring and dull to some if it is a straightforward presentation with medical terms that is difficult to understand, anyway we tried our best as producers, to attract them to listen, we have prizes awarded if they could answer certain question on the talk they had just heard. It is a sort of bribery, but it is beneficial and rewarding relating to the feedback that we producers get. Actually there is all sort of ways to attract viewers and listeners to be with us

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in a programme catered for them...so much so, we can also spin their
favourite number if a listener could off hand supply us with information
relating to/certain campaign.

Similarly, during live presentation throughout transmission, hints and
tips on health and nutrition always get our priority.

Recipe presented by listener need to be selected by a producer to assure
that the ingredients used is nutritious yet cheap, and easily available
to all - another way Broadcasting role in promoting Health and Nutrition.

So as to inform and be aware of modern lifestyle that can be disastrous
if given no limits, we have actually/able to reach and talk to patients /been
suffering from heart diseases, diabetes, person receiving renal treatment
on the problem they face, the actuality that leads them to suffer the
agon. To be more actual we have programme in which we invite panels
of professionals in medical field to discuss certain problems on area
they work on. This is successful and is well received by viewers and
listeners.

In Singapore a Radio and Television is a sort of necessity in every home,
and as such, national campaign used Broadcasting besides other media to
reach and inform. Dramatizing of campaigns like the dramatizing of the
Family Planning Campaign, Keep Singapore Clean, Keep Singapore
Pollution Free and the recent Stop the Spitting Habit is popular
and it is, I would say, able to reach the target in a catchy way.

Besides programmes, Singapore Broadcasting Corporation has in fact
broadcast jingles in a form of slogans or dramatization or songs to
promote campaigns, including on health and nutrition anytime of day
where air time is available. These jingles serves as fillers or
interlude when and where possible.

I think I need to tell you that Singapore Broadcasting Corporation is
multi-lingual, catering for society with/multiplicity of languages.
Though Singaporean is mostly English speaking, the role of Broadcasting still stay to put across messages and information in the language that the person can understand. On the other hand, it is said that multi-lingual broadcasts tend to diversify interests and sectionalise, but the role of broadcasting in a multi-racial and multi-lingual society is a multiple one in that it aims at fostering unity while at the same time catering to the diversity that prevails.