
TITLE: An analysis of the partnership between radio Yfm and Lovelife

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Abstract

Radio has become an intense, fast and informative way of projecting ideas around certain health issues. HIV/AIDS organisations have utilized this mass media mechanism to influence, adopt and even change attitudes and behaviours. Health promotion through the intricate structures of radio has made possible positive outcomes in some instances. loveLife used the youth radio Station, YFm to broadcast a health promotion talk show (Youth Crossfire) to target teenagers with messages about HIV/AIDS and sexuality. In relation to the concept of 'education-entertainment', Yfm catered to the entertainment aspect of the programme, whilst loveLife provided the educational information. However, both loveLife and Yfm ascribe to a multi-media approach, and thus the boundaries between the entertainment medium (Yfm) and the information carrier (loveLife) became somewhat blurred. Yfm and loveLife have since April 2002 discontinued Youth Crossfire on the airwaves. This paper is an investigation into the relationship between radio Yfm and loveLife, focusing on the reasons behind the partnership, and the reasons behind the discontinuation of Youth Crossfire on air.

1 Introduction

The medium of radio is often used for social benefits. Esta de Fossard (1997: 2) observes that: "Radio is a universal and versatile medium of communication that can be used for the benefit of society. Throughout the world, radio has been used to encourage positive individual behaviour change and constructive social change."

The distinction de Fossard makes here is the capacity of radio to function as 'entertainment-education'. The term 'entertainment-education' (EE) was devised at Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs and is described as "a strategic process to design and implement a communication form with both entertainment and education elements to enhance and facilitate social change" (Coleman, 1999: 76). Thus, this research paper examines (among other things) the *strategic process/es* adopted by loveLife in the implementation of their programme "Youth Crossfire" on radio Yfm (Y - youth). In so doing, this paper focuses on an analysis of the relationship between radio YFM and loveLife, and is organised around the following questions:

- Why had loveLife benchmarked Yfm as the first radio station through which to be introduced to radio broadcasting?
- Does loveLife benefit from such an affiliation with specifically radio Yfm?
- Has Yfm incurred any losses in rating from the discontinuation of the partnership?

Therefore, in answering these questions, this research paper aims to firstly question the relationship between loveLife and Yfm and secondly, focus on an examination of this relationship. Before engaging in such discussions though, we will describe each organisation's background in more detail.

2 Yfm (Youth Radio)

Established in 1997, Yfm had a rapid ascent in popularity and now enjoys unparalleled loyalty from South Africa's urban youth, ages 16 to 29. Yfm is touted as "the biggest regional radio station in South Africa pulling 1,552,000 listeners per week and currently enjoying the 8th consecutive ratings increase" (Yfm, 2003). Yfm combines strong marketing, advertising and promotional skills in creating and maintaining their brand image. This is accomplished by their multi-media approach, using various mediums, channels and outlets to disseminate their brand image. This multimedia approach works as follows:

In 1998, Yfm released a national youth lifestyle magazine called Y Mag, which is kicking, and is still going strong. In 2000, YWorld, its website is now the number one urban youth portal in Africa ... and also in 2000 came the Yfm Rewards Club, a card based loyalty programme targeting loyal listeners (Yfm, 2003).

Apart from the strong branding of the Yfm station, its personnel are actively marketed into strong personality figures in the community. The radio stations DJs are hip and young, reflecting and enhancing the image of the station itself. The uniqueness of Yfm though, lies in the fact that the station does not adhere to a single broadcasting language: "There are no restrictions of the languages used by the station, although English is the most dominant. You can speak Zulu, Sotho, Afrikaans or the unique township street language called tsotsi-taal" (Yfm, 2003). This is seen by Yfm as one of the reasons for the success of the station. Thus it is evidenced that Yfm combines clever communication and marketing strategies in creating not only a strong brand loyalty, but a strong brand culture as well.

2.1 loveLife

The rapid increase in the number of South African youth contracting the HIV virus has resulted in a number of prevention programmes and initiatives in South Africa. loveLife is one such initiative. Launched in South Africa in September 1999, loveLife is an ambitious effort to reduce the number of HIV infections amongst South African youth, targeting 12-to-17 year olds. loveLife often refers to itself as a research-intensive intervention. Major funding for loveLife is made possible by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation, as well as additional funding by the South African government (loveLife, 2003).

loveLife uses "high-powered mass media complemented with service delivery and outreach support to promote alternative lifestyles to youth" (loveLife, 2003). It also uses a multi-media approach, with media programmes that "provide access to knowledge in hopes of influencing attitudes toward sexuality through radio, television,

print and billboard” (Stadler and Hlongwa, 2002: 366). The formative evaluation of loveLife radio programmes (2003) explains that a critical goal of the loveLife media components is to change young peoples’ sexual behaviours, especially to delay sexual debut, reduce the rate of partner change and to assert their sexual limits. This is expected to occur through the behavioural change model used by loveLife as well as the “talk about it”¹ approach.

Apart from using the media to disseminate their messages, the loveLife intervention components are largely broken down into the following categories:

- National access to information and services: national advice and counselling service telephone call center (*Thetha Junction*).
- Local community outreach and access to prevention information and clinical services in the form of love tours, love Trains, loveLife games.
- Community youth ‘Y’ centers which provide a center for youth to be involved in positive recreational activities (Stadler and Hlongwa, 2002: 366).

3 loveLife on Radio

Judi [Judi Nwokedi, Media Manager for loveLife) called and developed the radio component on loveLife and at the time the only thing that was in place was the type of services, so there was a plan around youth development and youth centres and youth friendly clinics. Judi was cast with developing the media component that is going to drive all these loveLife services and make loveLife popular. And she brought me to handle the radio part of it. And our first radio partner was Yfm (Warnasuriya, loveLife Director of Radio, 2003).

The above excerpt from an interview with Tamblyn Warnasuriya explains the reasons for loveLife venturing into radio broadcasting. loveLife began their radio broadcasting on Yfm, with the programme Youth Crossfire in 1999. Youth Crossfire followed the format of a talk show, with expert guests on the show, as well giving the audience the opportunity to call in and voice their own thoughts, opinions and questions. Youth Crossfire was hosted by popular DJ Rudeboy Paul and was aired during the prime 6pm-9pm slot. Youth Crossfire was discontinued in April 2002. The reasons for this will be discussed later in more depth.

loveLife is geared towards creating, developing and maintaining their brand image, and to ensure this, loveLife *the name* needs to be popular amongst the youth of South Africa, to be a recognisable brand.

loveLife’s branding strategy recognizes the high degree of brand awareness, association and loyalty amongst young South Africans. David Harrison [CEO of loveLife] explains that loveLife aims to ‘create a brand so strong that young people who want to be hip and cool and the rest of it want to associate with it (Delate, 2001: n.p.).

In South Africa, the medium of radio as a form of entertainment reaches a far wider audience than any other medium, such as television or the print media. However, radio as a medium through which to entertain *and* educate has not been fully utilised.

¹ “Talk about it” is a loveLife strategy which aims to create a dialogue amongst youth, parents, children, religious organisations, leaders (etc), around issues pertaining to sex and ‘good’ sexual practices amongst in particular, the youth.

loveLife was quick to see this 'gap' and negotiate a partnership with radio Yfm to formulate a radio programme.

4 Theoretical Framework

This research project falls under the broad framework of entertainment education. At its most basic definition, the entertainment education approach is a strategy using entertainment to convey educational messages. Entertainment-education is defined as, "not a theory of communication, but rather a strategy used to disseminate ideas to bring about behavioural and social change" (Singhal and Rogers, 2002: 117).

Underpinning the entertainment education approach are four key factors:

Marketing necessitates an analysis into consumer behavior, needs and desires as well as understanding your product.

Persuasive communication looks at the need to develop messages and programmes that provide rational and/or emotional appeals. It also takes into account the heuristic cues, why people decide to reject or accept a particular message.

Play theory depicts pleasure as a legitimate form of escapism, providing people with information and para-social interaction.

Social Learning/Self-efficacy stresses the impact of modeling behaviours and the belief in the ability for people to make changes in their own interest. It also accounts for collective efficacy, people or a community joining together to facilitate a change (Coleman, 1999).

At this point, we would like to refer specifically to our research project. The first person interviewed for this research project was Andile Gaelesiwe from Yfm, 'Head of the Social Responsibility Desk'. Thus, we are made aware that Yfm "acknowledges and accepts its social responsibility" (Khumalo, 2002: 4) in providing its youth audience with information on sexual awareness. The social responsibility approach "can make a significant contribution ... to helping society cope with its social consequences" (Adam and Harford, 1999: 33).

Social responsibility includes the encouragement of social change and development, which can be brought about through informed, theory-based programmes. Up until the 1960s, communication theories used in programmes to support social change focused primarily in the individual and interpersonal levels of communication. Contemporary research, however, shows that all four levels of communication are interconnected: society and its institutions influence individuals, who, in turn, influence the larger social and institutional groups of which they are members... Four major communication theories are relevant to radio drama for social change (de Fossard, 1996: xiii).

Although de Fossard (1996) refers to radio dramas here, these communication theories could also perhaps be applicable to Youth Crossfire, which follows the format of a radio talk show. The four theories de Fossard identifies are persuasion theory, the theory of reasoned action, social learning theory and the diffusion theory.

Persuasion theory draws attention to the message factors and source factors in influencing an audience. The message factors take into consideration the length of the message, the language to be used, how the message should be presented, using fear, humour or logic etc. It takes into consideration that different audiences will have different preferences for message style. Yfm and loveLife both give careful attention to the dissemination of messages. Yfm does not adhere to one specific language, but

rather, caters to a number of languages, thus 'opening up' the message to a wider audience.

The *Theory of Reasoned Action* tends to focus on the individual person, but it also emphasises the effects of social influences on personal behaviour more than does persuasion theory. It states that before changing behaviour, people weigh the options first, the advantages and disadvantages. This theory emphasises the rationality of the audiences, in thinking carefully before bringing about any changes.

The *Social Learning Theory* draws attention to the social rather than the individual aspects of communication and behaviour, although it is still largely concerned with how individual people make sense of the social environment and decide what to do, this involves efficacy, modelling and parasocial interaction.

The final theory de Fossard illustrates is *Diffusion Theory*, which was developed to explain how a new idea or behaviour spreads through a social system (usually a group or community) over time. In relation to this project, loveLife provides Yfm with the information, and Yfm (an example of mass media) introduces the information to individuals who call into the programme and the listeners, who then sometimes 'carry' this information back into their respective communities (de Fossard, 1996).

Albert Banduras' Social Learning Theory (1977) focuses on Modeling and Trial and error experiences. This notion of social learning centered around the ability of individuals to learn and acknowledge after engaging in an activity and then building on that experience. The second area, of modeling, discusses how individuals actually learn from others in that they want and need to be and act just like the individual being modeled in terms of social responsible behavior (Bandura, 1977:21). This theory as Singhal and Rogers (2002: 117-118) assert, "has tended to dominate most theoretical writing and research about entertainment-education". They argue that:

[I]nvestigations of E-E need to move past scholarly research, on *what* effects E-E programs have, to better understand *how* and *why* entertainment-education has these effects. In seeking answers, entertainment education scholars should pay greater attention to the various types of entertainment-education interventions, including differences in their scope, size, reach, intensity and other attributes. (Singhal and Rogers, 2002: 120-121).

Whilst such a study lies beyond the scope of this research project, however, this project pays attention to a *particular* aspect of education-entertainment, that is, how partnerships between (in this instance) a media channel (Yfm) and a health awareness intervention (loveLife) effects the dissemination of the message, and the creation of an awareness of health issues amongst the youth.

Non-western scholars in particular have criticised 'traditional' strategies for entertainment-education interventions for their reliance on Western theories and models of behaviour change, which are designed in the west yet expected to be applicable elsewhere (for example, South Africa). There exists an argument that health interventions, which do not take into consideration the context and culture from which and into which the message is to be disseminated, are not always guaranteed success (Airhihenbuwa and Obregon, 2000). Yfm is a regional radio station, and thus positions itself within a particular context and culture. The variety of languages spoken on the station and the various communities in Gauteng that the radio station 'reaches out to' indicate the station's strategy in being culture and context specific. loveLife, it could be said, fits into the social reality of South Africa, thus maintaining a culture-context specific 'aspect' in a broader sense.

5 Methodology

The initial aim of our data collection was to understand the relationship between loveLife and Yfm radio and the effectiveness of its programme, Youth Crossfire. This aim was changed since the Youth Crossfire transcripts, which would have been a crucial contributing factor to supporting our hypothesis, were not available. We thus had to rely on an alternate method, which comprised of in-depth, semi-structured interviews as well as extensive Internet research. These interviews were conducted with key personnel at both Yfm radio station and loveLife. Qualitative research is based on concepts and meanings, and involves interpreting this within a wider framework of meaning, so that we can understand the situation being studied (Alreck and Settle, 1985: 91).

It became apparent, when carrying out our research, that there was little research into LoveLife in relation to Yfm's Health Initiative. This lack required us to gather information on both Yfm and loveLife separately. Both Yfm and loveLife approach the Health Initiative through a multi-media channel. We narrowed our research to focus solely on loveLifes's radio programme in conjunction with Yfm, which broadcasted Youth Crossfire.

Key members from both organizations were interviewed:

- Director of Radio (loveLife) : Tamblyn Warnasuriya
- Yfm DJ, Head of Social Responsibility Desk at Yfm: Andile Gaelesiwe
- Yfm DJ, Advisory Board member of LoveLife, host of Youth Crossfire: 'Rudeboy' Paul
- Yfm Station manager: Dirk Hartford

These were informal and semi-structured yet focused interviews (Judd *et al*, 1991).

5.1 Limitations of Research

As stated previously, having been unable to receive the transcripts of the radio talk show it was impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of Youth Crossfire in encouraging dialogue amongst its listeners.

A second constraint is that Yfm encourages a listenership of 1.6 million listeners weekly, making it difficult to identify whom exactly listens to Youth Crossfire. We were unable to obtain ratings figures from radio Yfm as to the popularity of the show, as both loveLife and Yfm maintained that 'this [Youth Crossfire] has not been researched'. However, general RAM's (Radio Audience Measurement) figures have been obtained and will be discussed in the findings.

It was difficult to conduct intensive interviews with *all* the key members from both loveLife and Yfm, as they adhered to very tight schedules.

Another constraint was the 'location' of the research. Both loveLife and Yfm have their head offices in Gauteng, and, to ensure only one trip to the region, it became imperative that our interviews were well planned with focused questions to maximise our output.

A further limitation was that all the key members from both organisations knew in advance of the interview session. This could have impacted on their responses to the questions. By this we mean that they may have consolidated their information, and even perhaps 'agreed on a common position' with regards to the discontinuation of Youth Crossfire.

6 Findings

- *Why was Yfm benchmarked as the first radio station by loveLife through which to begin their radio broadcasting?*

We approached Yfm because at that time they were the most identifiable youth station you know. There were lots of other youth stations but Yfm had always prided themselves that they were targeting youth in the context of what we see youth and not over 30 (Warnasuriya: 2003).

loveLife is basically the information carrier, they know what is out there, the stats and the info on HIV. They bring it to us, we are the vehicle that actually sends it across to young people (Gaelesiwe, 2003).

We can see that loveLife was aware of the benefits of targeting radio Yfm, in that they have a strong youth audience and a loyal youth brand image. Yfm acknowledges that they provided the channel through which to disseminate the messages.

- *Why specifically radio Yfm though?*

From the interview with Dirk Hartford (2003), CEO of Yfm, Yfm asserts that their radio station "is a great outlet through which to disseminate health awareness messages, which pertain to the youth, as Yfm has the largest regional youth audience in South Africa."

Tamblyn Warnasuriya (2003) also acknowledges the brand image of Yfm, stating:

Well at that time, to grow, loveLife hadn't been launched. When we first went on air, we knew that this organization, which had been a working title of National Adolescence Sexual Health Initiative was going to do, but were still developing the brand.

What Warnasuriya verifies here is that it was a strategic move on the part of loveLife in targeting Yfm initially. loveLife needed Yfm in order to develop their brand, and to an extent, this suggests that loveLife 'piggy-backed' on the Yfm brand image, using Yfm's brand loyalty to their advantage.

- *Why was the programme Youth Crossfire discontinued?*

Although all the key members interviewed agreed that Youth Crossfire was a success, they disagreed as to the reason why the programme was discontinued.

Well, a number of issues. At the time Yfm had changed their format. They went from three-hour slots to four-hour slots. Paul [the host of the show] was no longer from six to nine; he was from one to five. We both agreed that we could not have a one-hour talk show during a one-to-five slot,

where people are out at that time: universities, schools, work, in their cars. So we re-designed a couple of things (Warnasuriya, 2003).

Warnasuriya attributes the discontinuation of the programme to changing time slots of radio Yfm. However, he contradicts himself at a later stage when he articulates:

While this is going on, we signed an agreement with the SABC. I mean while Youth Crossfire was running, I was busy negotiating partnerships with Ukhozi, Goodhope, 5fm (SABC radio stations). So we had partnerships already, but we took this large scale into an official contract with SABC where loveLife would be producing programmes for all SABC radio stations. And part of that agreement is that it would be exclusive to the SABC, which means we cannot work with other radio stations (Warnasuriya, 2003).

Although Warnasuriya strongly stresses that loveLife wanted a 'one hour' programme on radio Yfm, this is in fact not the format at the SABC radio stations (Systems Approach, 2003). This suggests that the hour-slot format was not the *only* reason for discontinuation.

Hartford (2003) acknowledges that the change in the time slots at the radio station had affected the partnership with loveLife. But he also claims that the programme was discontinued as "it became too boring and monotonous". However, he was under the impression that loveLife would later contact them to resume their partnership, developing a new programme on air.

Rudeboy Paul's (2003) reason resonates with the above to an extent. He also acknowledges the change in programme scheduling, but he brings in another factor. He states: "I think at the end of the day it's much more than management. It would maybe get into politics and money matters as well".

- *Has Yfm incurred any losses from the discontinuation of the partnership?*

The partnership formed between loveLife and Yfm was the development of a 'health awareness' programme for radio. Since loveLife and Yfm have discontinued their initial project, there has been no clearly discernible ratings loss at Yfm. RAM figures from the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) in 2002 indicate that Yfm has been steadily increasing their listenership. This study would have accounted for the programme Youth Crossfire. The SAARF study up until March 2003 still indicates that Yfm has increased its listenership in the 16 - 24-year-old target audience. SAARF also lists Yfm as Gauteng's top radio station in the 16 – 34-year-old category (SAARF, 2003). This indicates that the success and growth of Yfm has not been limited to the success of Youth Crossfire. Thus, the discontinuation of the programme has not made any marked differences in the RAM figures.

Perhaps Yfm has not incurred any losses in their RAM figures. After the discontinuation of Youth Crossfire, Yfm developed a new health awareness programme in partnership with the Department of Health.

Well we are currently running what we call Ikhasi Fm, which is in conjunction with the Department of Health. It takes place every Thursdays at 3:30 pm, it's only just fifteen minutes though, so you don't get much time to sort of dig deep into whatever topic you would like to get into. It's with Superstrickers in the Department of Health. They've got a weekly sort of comic magazine that comes out in the Sunday Times, no it's monthly (Paul, 2003).

Gealesiwe (2003) also states:

I know there is a feature still on Rudeboy's show which is done more by the Department of Health than loveLife, it's called Ikhasi and it's based on a radio station format as well and it's focusing on HIV.

The question that still needs to be further answered is why did loveLife discontinue their partnership with Yfm? Was it purely a management problem, or a change of scheduling on the part of Yfm? Was the programme becoming 'too boring and monotonous'? From the interviews conducted, it seemed that Yfm was expecting loveLife to resume their partnership and develop a new programme. Warnasuriya and loveLife however, had another development in mind; loveLife began negotiations with SABC radio stations whilst still on air at Yfm. Why did loveLife leave Yfm for the SABC? The answer that immediately springs to mind is the likelihood of a greater target audience, thus increasing the popularity and branding of loveLife amongst South African youth, across cultural barriers. The stipulation in the new contract, which states that loveLife has to produce programmes exclusively for SABC stations though, suggests that loveLife was fully aware that they would have to terminate their partnership with radio Yfm. This implies that the discontinuation of Youth Crossfire on Yfm was a strategic move on the part of loveLife. However, why would loveLife cease a programme that was considered by all the key stakeholders (our interviewees) to be popular and successful?

Perhaps the answer here lies with the strong branding of *both* loveLife and Yfm. At the outset of the partnership, Yfm was the stronger brand, having a loyal target audience and a recognisable brand extending to the Y Mag, YWorld, and clothing franchise. loveLife on the other hand, still needed to establish their brand image within the youth market and to nurture and grow brand loyalty. This suggests the notion that loveLife used the Yfm brand to establish itself (in developing, sustaining and maintaining brand loyalty), and once this was achieved, loveLife discontinued with the programme, taking away what they had initially set out to achieve – a 'fledgling' brand image of their own. The strategic move to cease the partnership also suggests that loveLife did not want to be synonymous with the brand image of Yfm only, but rather wanted to develop a fledgling brand image into something which would be able to 'stand on it's own', and be recognized on it's own merit. Succinctly put, loveLife wanted to *be* a brand and not just 'piggy-back' on an established brand forever.

7 Conclusion

"Youth Crossfire though, laid the foundation for all other radio shows. A lot of what we do on UKhozi and other stations is based on Youth Crossfire" (Warnasuriya, 2003).

loveLife acknowledges the advantages of beginning their radio broadcasting on Yfm. They go so far as to boldly state that they 'piggy-backed' on the strong brand image and youth loyalty of the station to launch themselves into the youth market. In all partnerships, there are normally mutual benefits earned by both partners. In this instance, it seems that loveLife emerged as the partner that gained the most. Yfm, although not displaying any clear benefits, did not clearly exhibit any losses.

This study has made a *preliminary* attempt at evaluating the partnership between loveLife and Yfm. The emphasis on the word tender is a precise and deliberate move on our part, as whilst doing initial research for this project, it was uncovered that not

much scholarly research and investigation has been carried out into the partnerships formed by loveLife, and specifically radio Yfm. Thus, we recommend further study into the loveLife organisation, particularly since news through the industry grapevine suggests that loveLife has applied for their own radio broadcasting license.

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