



Media Relations with Multicultural Media

By Shanti Hadioetomo and Mauree Matsusaka

With Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi being the three dominant non-official languages spoken in Vancouver and Lower Mainland, IABC and CPRS communication professionals leapt at the opportunity to discover the nuances of ethnic media throughout the Vancouver region.

Are ethnic media interested in the same issues as the general mainstream media? How do they go about their productions? How do you frame the communication effectively to speak to multicultural media? On the evening of March 22, 2007, in UBC Robson Square, four representatives from the ethnic media in Vancouver's Lower Mainland — Feely Chan (Ming Pao newspaper editor), Dianne Collins (Channel M news editor), Harpreet Singh (Radio India talk show host), and Traverna Lee (Fairchild Radio news director) — explored these questions through an insightful panel discussion moderated by Drew Snider, media manager, Translink BC.

Main Challenges

One of the main challenges faced by the ethnic media is lack of funding, hence lack of resources, and lack of time. For example, because of the community-oriented nature of Radio India, employees often perform multiple roles – talk show host, advertising, sales, in addition to acting as a provider for information and referrals.

“Because Radio India’s talk show hosts gain respect from the community, the businesses would only ask for the talk show host that they are confident in to buy their advertisement space,” said Singh.

Is language a barrier?

An interesting discussion ensued over whether language was considered a barrier, with most of the panel agreeing that it was not considered a major issue. For example, while a company or organization wanting to speak on environmental issue, might benefit from having an expert who also speaks Chinese or Punjabi, many stations and media are often able to employ interpreters to assist in translation.

“Writing your news releases in English is not a problem, they do get translated,” said Chan. Education level, however, does make an impact in how the information is presented, causing many stations to tailor the level of English provided to one their populations can understand. Singh says that his audience mainly comes from village backgrounds, so, “the news has to be at their level.”

Audience Demographics

New immigrants who are 50 and over often prefer print and broadcast media to online media, as they are not as tech savvy as their younger counterparts.

“Older South Asians like to stick close to their community,” said Singh. “They often pick up the newspaper from their local grocery store to find out what’s going on here, but primarily back home.”

For Chinese immigrants, their media choices depend on when they came to Canada. Lee noted that Mandarin-speakers who arrived in the 80’s are more likely to pay attention to both local news as well as their homeland news, whereas recent Cantonese-speaking immigrants prefer news from home. Younger immigrants show more concern about health, accreditation, and immigration issues such as sponsorship for their parents, while second-generation immigrants, and those who grew up in Canada, pay more attention to the local news, health, and taxes.

Chan noted that Ming Pao caters to a younger Chinese demographic than the Sing Tao newspaper, whose readers are more likely to have come to Canada in the 1980’s. The third Chinese daily, World Vision, focuses on immigrants from Taiwan.

Each of the panel members provided a unique overview of their media outlets. Radio India invites faxes and calls from PR professionals – they want our news releases. Fairchild Radio shared their detailed news cycle, offering the tidbit that faxes are often picked up by their busy news team, faster than items sent by email. Channel M produces three daily newscasts in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Punjabi, but usually will cover an event once then translate any clips. They also share footage with CTV, so will often get video shot by CTV to use in their newscasts.

The panel event was a very informative evening that brought together communicators excited about the prospect of building new relationships with our diverse array of multi-cultural media.

Harpreet Singh of Radio India encouraged PR professionals to include Punjabi media on their media lists, and to that end, has offered a list of media and phone numbers. For any follow-up, contact Harpreet at hsachal@gmail.com.

Apna G News-604-592-2233
Asaian Star-604-591-5423
Chardi Kala newspaper-- 604-590-6397
Indo-Canadian Times--604-599-5408
Punjab Guardian--604-590-5200
Punjabi Patrika--604-852-2288
Punjabi Tribune--604-584-5577
Radio India--604-592-9191
Radio Shere-Punjab --604-247-1550

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