‘EDUTAINMENT’: A NEW APPROACH TO HEALTH ENGAGEMENT

HOW IS EDUTAINMENT DEFINED?

Edutainment is defined as the act of learning through a medium that simultaneously educates and entertains. Entertainment education is the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message both to entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitudes, and change overt behaviour. The purpose of entertainment education programming is to contribute to directed social change, defined as the process by which an alteration occurs in the structure and function of a social system. This change can occur at the level of individual, community, or some other system.

EDUTAINMENT IN HEALTH: CASE STUDIES

Edutainment has long been an internationally-recognised approach to delivering complex messages and building awareness on a range of issues. The approach has been used to engage people on topics such as sustainability and energy efficiency and there are a number of examples of its use in healthcare across the globe.

TEEN HEALTH IN SWEDEN

In Sweden, Swedish Television (SVT) broadcast a TV show called “Top Shape” in 2008, to tackle the poor health of teens and students. The programme was filmed in a school with the participating class selected on the basis that they would represent a “normal” ninth grade (15-16 year olds) with no explicit health problems or fitness activities, and educational materials were provided online in response to the content on the show. As well as showing the students at home, and not just school, the person who hosted the series was famous in Sweden, bringing an additional element of entertainment. The study found that, rather than simply sharing messages, edutainment was effective for sharing tools and advice.

FAMILY PLANNING IN INDIA

In New Delhi, for example, All India Radio (AIR) broadcast an entertainment-education soap opera called Tinka Tinka Sukh (Happiness Lies in Small Things) which centered around the daily lives of a dozen main characters in Navgaon (New Village). These characters provided positive and negative role models to audience individuals for the educational issues of family planning, female equality and HIV prevention.

SOUTH AFRICA AND HIV

In South Africa, the Soul City Institute has become a force for social change with diverse interventions reaching more than 80% of South Africa’s population. They created a TV show to deliver public health messages such as discussions on HIV or antiretroviral medication, helping to reduce stigma around HIV and encourage more people to get tested. As a result, countries such as Colombia, Egypt and Suriname are trying to implement this concept in their countries.
A SHORT HISTORY TO EDUTAINMENT

The technique dates back to the 1970s when Miguel Sabido developed the ‘Sabido methodology’, a theoretical model for stimulating positive change in social attitudes and behaviours through commercial television and radio programming. Since the 1980s, this methodology has been used to motivate changes in attitudes and behaviours on a wide range of issues, including child slavery, women’s rights, environmental protection and diseases such as HIV/AIDS.6

Sabido recognised that entertainment, whether via a nation’s airwaves, popular magazines, or newspapers, was the most pervasive mass media genre. Entertainment programmes featuring believable characters and storylines forge emotional ties with the audience that can influence values and behaviours more forcefully than purely cognitive information provided in documentaries. To put it another way, the viewer is “educated” by the entertainment media, often unwittingly.6

According to the University of Kent in the UK, “through edutainment, individual and collective curiosity can be stimulated… if information can be presented in an interesting manner, people would be more inclined to indulge in natural curiosity and further their knowledge. Parallels are evident between gaming and learning through the drive for self-development from a setting that encourages more interaction”.7

“Edutainment attracts audiences that are hard to reach. While young people might not come to a lecture, they enjoy a music video.”8

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

MILLEFEUILLE®
REACHING THE ‘UNREACHABLE’ USING EDUTAINMENT

Millefeuille (A Thousand Leaves) is a short, fictional film, which tells the story of Élodie, a French woman living a solitary and lonesome existence in London, where she moved after having to give up on her career as a pastry chef due to worsening health issues. Struggling with the effects of psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis, Élodie one day meets Holly – the girl next door who, full of life and ambition, changes her outlook on life and her sense of belonging to a community.

Millefeuille was informed and inspired by both qualitative and quantitative research in this space, exploring the complexities of living with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. The research uncovered a number of patients whose wellbeing is severely impacted by their disease(s) and who are merely ‘coping’, rather than feeling empowered to address their condition(s). As a result, many people disengage from the health system completely – they either stop seeing their doctor or see them much less often – which in turn make them harder to reach.

Because of this, the aim of an approach like Millefeuille – which goes beyond the definition of what might be perceived as ‘standard’ disease information and uses fiction to bring the message to life – is to reach and inspire those individuals even if they might be less motivated and perhaps not proactively seeking out education and care.