



A Study on the Public Perception of Public Service Announcements

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Keywords

public service announcements, social benefit, public perception.

Abstract

Public service announcements aim for social benefit with short-term formats prepared so as to directly create thought and behavioral changes on the target audience in the form of informative and educational video and voice records. The basic purpose of public service announcements is to ensure people to become more sensitive about the issues such as health, education, environment, women's rights, disabled people etc., to focus on their problems, and to meet their needs by large masses. Social consciousness is created through the public service announcements by leaving a high effect on the individuals. Within this scope, public service announcements raise and create awareness in the society on certain issues. The purpose of this study is to reveal the effect of the public service announcements on the public. The study will focus on the public service announcements and the social contribution of public service announcements; in the research part, a public service announcement efficiency survey will be carried out in three major shopping malls within Istanbul, Beşiktaş. The study is important in terms of measuring the effects of public service announcements prepared for social benefits on the society.

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1. Introduction

In the twenty-first century, called as the age of information and technology, information technologies have reshaped the society together with social, economic and cultural life. In modern and democratic societies, understanding of social responsibility has emerged as an important building stone in the continuity of social life. The needs and expectations of societies may differ in different countries of the world. Activities and broadcasts made in fields such as education, environment, health, arts and culture, sports etc. have become one of the most important forces accelerating social development and transformation. As a continuation of this understanding, public service announcements (PSAs) increase the awareness and synergy among the social layers of society. Because, the main concern of PSAs is to inform the society and raise the awareness. PSAs have become one of the most effective communication methods which are widely used since they reach many people in a very short time.

1.1. The Concept of Public Service Announcement (PSA)

PSAs are one of the most commonly used communication methods to reach the target audience via radio and television channels. Organizations can say a lot to the target audience through the announcements that are preferred by the

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broadcasters as they are short and usually prepared in 60, 30, 20 or 10 seconds (Peltekoğlu, 2012, p.253-255). In line with the Law on The Establishment of Radio and Television Enterprises and Their Media Services, made effective within the scope of European Union harmonization process, the provision on the free broadcasting of the public service announcements upon the recommendation of Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) which is the administrative authority in charge of regulation and supervision of audiovisual media services. In this context, all the said public service announcements are PSAs and to broadcast some of them are optional while others are compulsory. Criteria to be complied with in PSAs prepared by public institutions, associations, foundations, non-governmental organizations are expressed in "the Directive on the Public Service Announcement".

According to the definition in Directive on the Public Service Announcement of RTUK (2012) PSAs are defined as informative and educative videos and audios and their sub-bands. In different sources, it is expressed as productions which compose of informative and educational films and audios that include public benefit (Fortana and Ferruci, 2014, p. 50; Kırılı and Sırma, 2014, p. 89). PSAs are known as noncommercial purpose videos that are designed with the purpose of informing a specific target audience and promoting them to the specific behaviors (Bator and Cialdini, 2000). Therefore, they have the function to point the way to the masses. In other words, PSAs are formats that can be presented as short-term radio and television broadcasts which are prepared with the expectation to create direct thought and behavioral change on the target audience and the main purpose of which is public benefit. Based on these definitions, PSAs have the purposes of public benefit, behavioral development, attitude change, awareness raising and informing. The most favorite PSAs in Turkey are expressed as the ones broadcast by the Ministry of Health (Esenler, 2013, pp. 43-44). In this context, it may be said that the discourse used in PSAs is also important (İnal, 2010, p.19). In the PSAs prepared in many different fields from health to the environment, from communication to the education, it is aimed to increase the social consciousness in the individuals as well as to have a high impact on the audiences. Therefore, the content and the design processes of the PSAs have great importance.

2. Social Contribution of PSAs as a Means of Social Responsibility

In modern and democratic societies, understanding of social responsibility has emerged as an important building block in the continuity of social life. The needs and expectations of societies may differ in different countries of the world. The level of economic and social development is another important influence on it. Depending on the development level and other factors, the responsibilities of stakeholders composing the social structure may change (Robins, 2005, p.96). The concept of social responsibility sets forth the prestige of a socially responsible strategy in order to carry out business activities within the boundaries of social responsibility, moral principles and public interests, to show a positive reaction in an extent to meet the social priorities and expectations and to show willingness to take the necessary precautions, to balance the interests of the shareholders against the interests of the society as a whole and to be a 'good citizen' (Transferrer: Özgener, 2004, pp. 157-158). After the 70's, understanding of social responsibility

that has gained importance in various fields such as environment, economy, politics and administration has foreseen some changes in our lifestyle for a more livable world in the direction of sustainable development principles. It is emphasized that due to the various destructive effects of human activities on the nature, the activities on the protection of world should be operationalized without delay (Transferrer Bookchin: 2013, p. 70; Foster and Magdoff, 2014, p. 32). Especially the increase in luxury consumption in the world (Karamehmet and Aydın, 2015, p.161) has led to the depletion of existing resources more rapidly. In this sense, a healthy life balance will be established at the rate of presenting those which are taken from the society to the society again through the social responsibility activities and at the rate of social benefit. Thus, the societies have the opportunity to maintain their existence in a healthier manner at the rate of the provided social benefit. In this context, all the activities such as education, environment, health, art and culture, sport and etc, which are the subject of the social benefit with an understanding of social responsibility have become one of the most important forces that accelerate social development and transformation. As a continuation of this understanding, PSAs increase the awareness and synergy among the social layers of society. Because, the main concern of PSAs is to inform the society and raise the awareness. It is one of the most effective communication methods that are widely used for this purpose.

3. A Survey on the Public Perception of Public Service Announcements

3.1. The Purpose and Importance of the Survey

The purpose of the survey is to show how the public service announcements are perceived in the public. In the survey, firstly the demographic characteristics of the respondents have been introduced and then the effects of PSAs on people have been tried to be determined.

3.2. Study Method and Tool

The survey in the study is limited with Beşiktaş district of Istanbul. A total of 19 questions, 5 of which are related to the demographic variables, have been asked to the visitors of 3 major shopping centers located within Beşiktaş district through the questionnaire technique. The survey has been applied to the people older than 18-year-old with the selection of random sampling. 100 people have participated in the survey. 58 of the respondents are women and 42 of them are men. In the survey the hypothesis of "PSAs have a positive impact on public opinion" has been tested.

4. Findings and Discussion

18 women out of the 58 women who have participated in the survey have stated they graduated from a higher education institution. The age distribution of 18 female respondents with higher education varies between 25 and 65. It has been determined that 3 of the female respondents with higher education are in the 25-34 age group. 4 women have stated that they are in the age group of 35-44, and 2 of them have stated that they are in the 45-54 age group. The remaining respondents are in age group 55 and above. Of the 58 women who have participated in the survey, 22 women have stated they graduated from high school.

A total of 12 female respondents graduated from high school are in the 35-44 age group. 6 women are in the 45-54 age group. 4 women are in the over 55 age group. Of the 58 women who have participated in the survey, 22 women have stated they graduated from secondary school. Of the woman respondents graduated from the secondary school, 1 woman is in the 18-24 age group. 6 women are in the 25-34 age group. 5 women have stated that they are in the 45-54 age group. Of the 58 women who have participated in the survey, 6 women have stated they graduated from the primary school. It has been determined that of the women respondents graduated from the primary school, 4 women are in 35-44 age group and 2 women is over 55 age group.

Of the 42 men who have participated in the survey, 11 men have stated they graduated from a higher education institution. Of the men respondents with higher education, 6 men are in 25-34 age group. 2 men are in the 35-44 age group. 3 men are in the 45-54 age group. Of the 42 men respondents who have participated in the survey, 15 men have stated they graduated from the high school. Of the men respondents graduated from high school, 8 men are in 18-24 age group. 5 men are in the 35-44 age group. 2 men are in the 45-54 age group. Of the men respondents who have participated in the survey, 10 men have stated they graduated from secondary school. Of the man respondents graduated from the secondary school, 6 men are in the 25-34 age group. 4 men are in the 45-54 age group. Of the 42 man respondents who have participated in the survey, 6 men have stated they graduated from the primary school. Of the man respondents graduated from the primary school, 5 men are in the 45-54 age group. 1 man is in the over 55 age group.

The question, what is the first thing that comes to your mind about public service announcement?, has been answered as the message making the society aware of certain issues by 38%, as informative messages by 25% and advertisements by 14% of the respondents. 13% of the respondents have stated that they do not know what the public service announcement means. It is observed that the vast majority of the society defines the PSA concept correctly while there are those who perceive it differently.

The question, when you think about the PSAs you have recently watched, what is the first PSA subject coming to your mind?, has been answered as health by the 35%, as environment by 26%, as education by 14%, domestic violence by 8%, safety by 7% of the respondents. 10% of the respondents have answered this question as "I do not remember". According to the responses, the most remembered PSAs are particularly health and environment, and education, domestic violence and security. Approximately half of the respondents has answered as health and environment. When it is considered that public health spots are required to be broadcast, it may be said that there is a direct correlation for the audiences between the high memorability rate and the frequency of broadcasting.

The question, may you prioritize the PSAs according to their memorabilities?, has been responded as health by 28%, as environment by 19%, as violence against women by 17%, as smoking cessation hotline by 15%, as traffic rules by 13% and as art & culture by 8% of the respondents.

The question, about what issues the PSAs should be produced according to your opinion? has been responded as education by 22%, as health by 20%, as environment by 19%, as work and labor rights by 17%, as women's rights by 16% and as social security by 6% of the respondents. More than half of the respondents think that PSAs should be primarily produced in the fields of education, health and environment. Less than half of the respondents have stated that PSAs should be produced in the fields of work and labor rights, women's rights and social security.

The question, which of the following will be more effective if they play a part in the PSAs?, has been responded as experts by 35%, as university teachers by 25%, as the prime minister by 15%, as artists by 13%, as the president by 8% and as ordinary people by 4% of the respondents. It is seen that people from the profession group having gained the respect and trust of the society come into prominence because the PSAs are short films for the social benefit. More than half of the respondents states that the experts and university teachers should play a part in the PSAs. The others, respectively have marked the prime minister, artists, the president and ordinary people options.

The question, when was the last time you saw a PSA on TV?, has been responded as today by 10%, as yesterday by 14%, as this week by 26 %, as last week by 33%, and as one month ago by 17% of the respondents. It seems that the time of seeing PSA is increasing towards the past. It means people remember more PSA toward the past. This result shows that PSAs have not been remembered very recently.

The question, may you please indicate which of the following statements related to the frequency of broadcasting of PSAs you agree with?, has been responded as more often than it should be by 25%, as much as it should be by 38%, and as less often than it should be by 37% of the respondents. Accordingly, a majority of 75% is aware of the necessity and importance of PSAs.

The question, when you evaluate the PSAs you have watched, would you indicate in general how much you like it?, has been responded as I like very much by 22%, as I like by 43%, as neither I like nor dislike by 18%, as I dislike by 12% and and as I do not like at all by 37% of the respondents. Accordingly, the respondents have stated that they liked the broadcast PSAs with a rate of 65%.

The question, may you state how convincing you find the messages given on PSAs?, has been responded as I find them very convincing by 25%, as I find them convincing by 46%, as neither I find convincing nor I do not find convincing by 14%, as I do not find convincing by 9% and as I do not find convincing at all by 6% of the respondents. Accordingly, the respondents have stated that they have found convincing the broadcast PSAs with a rate of 71%.

The question, may you tell us to what extent you believe in PSAs informing the audience?, has been responded as of course they inform by 38%, as they inform by 35%, as neither they inform nor they do not inform by 12%, as they do not inform by 8% and and as of course they do not inform by 7% of the respondents. A rate of 83% of respondents have stated that they found the PSAs informative.

The questions, which public agencies', organizations', ministries' or civil society organizations' PSA you have watched so far, please name the institution, has been

responded as ministry of health by 46%, as other ministries and other institution of the state by 28%, and as various non-governmental organizations and association by 26% of the respondents. According to this result, the mandatory PSAs are watched more than others.

The question, may you please indicate to what extent a PSA broadcast by a public agency, organization, ministry or civil society organization is effective to create a positive image about that institution has been responded as very effective by 36%, as effective by 38%, as neither effective nor not effective by 15%, as not effective by 6%, and as not effective at all by 6% of the respondents. According to this result, 74% of the respondents indicate that PSAs contribute to the image of institutions in a positive way.

The question, could you please indicate how positive attitudes and behavioral changes PSAs have on the audience? For example, such as smoking cessation, making start sport, stopping violence against women and children, has been responded as they affect very much by 36%, as they affect by 37%, neither they affect nor do not affect by 13%, as they do not affect by 7% and as they do not effect at all by 7% of the respondents. According to this result, 73% of the respondents state that the broadcast PSAs create a positive attitude and behavioral change on the audiences.

The question, would you indicate to what extent you agree with the statement "PSAs has positive influences on our life styles" has been responded as strongly agree by 45%, as agree by 25%, as neither agree nor disagree by 14%, as disagree by 7% and as strongly disagree by 7% of the respondents. According to this result, 70% of the respondents state that the broadcast PSAs has positive influences on our life styles.

5. Results and Suggestions

PSAs based on the purpose of voluntary service for the benefit of society grounds on various subjects which provides social development, informing, development, and welfare. The contribution made to the life quality and development of the society is an important investment made to the future of the society beyond affecting all elements of the social structure positively. PSAs prepared with this understanding meet society needs and expectations.

According to the findings obtained in the survey, it has been observed that the vast majority of the society defines the PSA concept correctly while there are those who perceive it differently. Approximately half of the respondents have responded as those related to health and environment as the first PSA occurred to them. When it is considered that public health spots are required to be broadcast, it may be said that there is a direct correlation for the audiences between the high memorability rate and the frequency of broadcasting. The most memorable PSAs are respectively health, environment, violence against women, smoking cessation hotline, as traffic rules and art & culture. More than half of the respondents think that PSAs should be primarily produced in the fields of education, health and environment. Less than half of the respondents have stated that PSAs should be produced in the fields of work and labor rights, women's rights and social security. More than half of the respondents states that the experts and university teachers should play a part in

the PSAs. The others, respectively have marked the prime minister, artists, the president and ordinary people options. People remember more PSA toward the past. This result shows that PSAs have not been remembered very recently. A majority of the respondents, which is 75%, is aware of the necessity and importance of PSAs. 65% of the respondents have indicated that they like PSAs and 71% of them have stated that they have found the broadcast PSAs convincing. A rate of 83% of respondents have stated that they found the PSAs informative. The most watched PSAs are the PSAs broadcast by the public institutions with a rate of 74%, especially the Ministry of Health. According to this result, the mandatory PSAs are watched more than others. 74% of the respondents indicate that PSAs contribute to the image of institutions in a positive way, 73% of the respondents state that the broadcast PSAs create a positive attitude and behavioral change on the audiences, and 70% of the respondents state that the broadcast PSAs has positive influences on our life styles. According to the results of the survey, the hypothesis of "PSAs have a positive impact on public opinion" is confirmed and it reveals that PSAs create an awareness towards to create an attitude and behavioral change on the people The opinion that PSA's prepared towards the primary needs of the society are more imprinted in the public mind, and that they contribute more to the social awareness and development is shared.

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