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Merits and Demerits of TV Programs Aimed at Charity Broadcast in Japan



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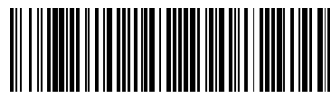
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ABSTRACT

In Japan, TV programs aimed at charity are broadcast for a long time every summer. The content includes marathons, challenge projects for people with disabilities, dramas, songs, games, and laughter. However, such programs may be problematic. The talents who perform are paid a performance fee. Nevertheless, performers solicit donations from viewers. It also includes content that seems unrelated to charity. As a result, TV stations are making huge profits. This study determines issues regarding this type of TV program and provides opinions.



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INTRODUCTION

Charity is a public interest act and activity based on the spirit of philanthropy, compatriots, or happiness. Charities often take the form of social welfare for the physically challenged and the elderly, hunger relief in poor areas, refugee relief in conflict areas, or support activities for victims and bereaved families in disasters and accidents. In essence, charity is not limited to the above-mentioned activities but is an overall contribution to society. Charities costs and outgoing are often funded by donations.

A major television station in Japan broadcasts a special program for charity for two days every August. Part of the program is connected live to affiliated local small and medium-sized TV stations, and local cities are introduced like a festival through the planning of linked games. On the other hand, a particular celebrity runs a marathon live for 24 hours, spanning almost the entire time of the program. It also introduces activities to fulfill the dreams and hopes of people with physical disabilities. For example, co-starring with a famous musician, engaging in challenging sports, or mountain climbing. In some respects, these have become a Japanese summer tradition for viewers.

However, there may be some issues associated with this type of program. The talents who appear in the program are paid a performance fee as usual. Nevertheless, donations are solicited from viewers. The local TV stations and stores in the vicinity take actions to promote donations. The sponsoring companies volunteer in addition to advertising expenses such as commercials and will solicit donations by opening stalls in or in front of the store. As a result, TV stations are making huge profits (Table 1)¹⁾. Such behavior has received criticism from some people. We will clarify the composition of this TV program and determine what is considered a problem. We also present our opinions on these issues.

Program structure

Marathons by celebrities are held throughout the program. The distance of the marathon is determined by the physical strength of the celebrity and they are not forced to run a full marathon. Trainers support celebrities for more than half a year and they are carefully prepared. The program runs for approximately 24 hours with a break. It always seems strange to start at the

beginning of the program and finish at the end of the program unless there are special circumstances. During this marathon, people with physical disabilities face various challenges, such as climbing mountains. In addition, a documentary drama that makes viewers consider everyday life is aired. Other projects include the introduction of local gourmet foods by local TV station announcers, games, songs by entertainers, and laughter projects. During this time, sponsors often open branches and other stores overnight, open stalls, and sell charity-related goods such as T-shirts. Although general viewers may watch it in the same way as a normal TV program, they will be inspired by the content and engage in donation activities. This has raised large donations over at least \$1 million²⁾. To the best of the author's knowledge, the proceeds are donated to medical organizations and used to purchase equipment and vehicles used for long-term care³⁾.

Achievements of program

Some people say that such a program is hypocritical, but it seems to have some good points. First, we discuss the achievements of the program. The first is the fact that these programs have become a summer tradition and some people look forward to them. This program symbolizes the height of summer for some people. This is reflected in the fact that such programs have been broadcast more than 40 times (44 times by 2021). Viewers may not benefit or actively participate, but they may be uplifted. There is also cooperation with local stations. Celebrities, such as singers, come to each region in a dispersed manner to liven up the program. If viewers visit TV stations to donate or purchase goods, they may be able to meet such celebrities in rural areas, which they may not otherwise have the opportunity to do. We believe that local TV stations themselves are also activated by program promotion.

Depending on the content of the program, it may also be an opportunity to learn about people with disabilities or to consider donating. It can also be an opportunity to learn about disability or illness itself³⁾. There is also the idea that it is better to do something than to do nothing. Unfortunately, anyone should be able to do such things in advance at the individual level, but since many people do not usually take the initiative, it will be an opportunity to raise awareness and take action.

Possible problems and their solutions

Outside Japan, charity activities are often carried out such that the people involved do not earn income. If it is a TV program, there is no appearance fee, and it seems that all the income is donated. This is not the case with the Japanese program introduced in the current work. Rather, a high guarantee may be paid to those appearing on the program for a long time (Table 1)¹⁾. It seems that differences are depending on the person, but marathon runners receive a guarantee of 100,000 dollars due to long-term commitment and training⁴⁾. This is very different from other countries in that they are not understood as purely charity programs. The people who appear on the program are directly or indirectly inviting and asking for donations from viewers. On the other hand, it is also considered a problem that performers themselves have not donated or it is not known if they have done so. There is also an aspect that people with disabilities become the subject of interest, and not necessarily in a positive way. Some people believe the situations presented in the programs are not genuine⁵⁾.

In our personal opinion, performers can be limited to those who are willing to waive their fees. We feel that TV stations can also donate almost all of their income, except for expenses. This is not the case, and the major problem is that viewers feel that the TV station sees it as an opportunity to earn a lot of income. In recent years, some performers have announced that they will not receive fees or will donate performance fees, so we hope that such activities will be promoted, and such TV programs will become purely charity programs.

CONCLUSION

TV programs aimed at a charity that is broadcast in Japan are different from pure charity programs in other countries. This is clear in that there is a performer's guarantee. However, it is a great achievement that the viewer is supposed to pay much attention to charity. It seems that projects involving local areas contribute to their revitalization. It is also true that some people consider this program hypocritical. One way to avoid this is to make it a complete charity program. Results indicate that some performers would be happy to perform even if there is no guarantee. However, these programs may have to incur certain costs to be able to continue in their current format. As a result, celebrity appearances may decrease, but the purpose can be achieved. Considering the continuation of the program structure as it is now, it may be better not

to claim that it is a charity program. It is clear that there is a charity aspect, but it is also true that it is not a purely charitable event. As a result, it seems better to produce under the pretext that some charity acts are also performed. In the latter case, celebrity appearances may continue as now, and viewer numbers may even increase. We cannot decide which is better, but at the very least, the desires of the viewer should be considered. Perhaps the latter is selected in terms of gaining TV ratings.

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Table no: 1 Overview of a balance of the target program

Spending	Overall production cost		Over \$ 4 Million
	Guarantee	General moderator	\$ 50,000
		Main personality	\$ 100,000
		Personality	\$ 50,000
		Karaoke members	\$ 20,000
		Marathon runner	100,000-300,000 \$
		Drama performers	\$ 20,000
		Other performers	0.1-10,000 \$
Income	CM		Over \$ 202 million

The total amount of donations in 2021 is more than \$ 4 million, and, likely, donations are not included in the income.

Based on the 2020-2021 costs using data of reference 5).