

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE OUTREACH STRATEGY OF CANCER SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES IN SINGAPORE: A PRE-POST ANALYSIS WITH FACEBOOK DATA

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Objective

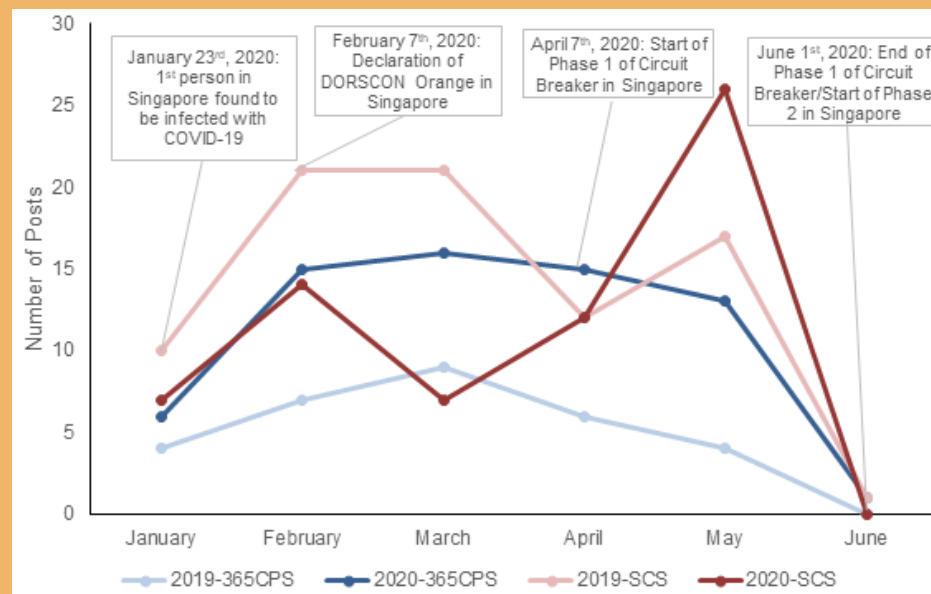
Understand how Singapore's cancer-SSAs utilized the social media platform Facebook to overcome the restrictions which were introduced due to COVID-19

Background

Social service agencies (SSA) provide aids to their beneficiaries. These aids include rehabilitation facilities that provide counselling services for patients. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected how they provided support whilst adhering to social distancing guidelines. No studies have been conducted to assess the effectiveness of social media for cancer-SSAs in Singapore in sharing information and promoting health to their followers.

Methods

- Two prominent cancer-SSAs were identified for the purposes of this study. They are *Singapore Cancer Society (SCS)* and *365 Cancer Prevention Society (365CPS)*.
- Data was extracted from Facebook for these two SSAs for two time periods: January 23rd 2019 to June 1st 2019, and January 23rd 2020 to June 1st 2020.
- 2020 was split further into the three nominated periods: (i) Period 1 (P1): January 23rd 2020 to February 7th 2020, (ii) Period 2 (P2): February 8th 2020 to April 7th 2020 and (iii) Period 3 (P3): April 8th 2020 to June 1st 2020.
- Two coders classified the Facebook posts into their respective categories.
- Krippendorff's alpha coefficient was calculated and used to assess intercoder reliability, with a coefficient of 0.80 or higher being deemed acceptable.



Categories

- Promotion of services
- Educational material on cancer
- Promotion of programs and events
- Nutritional information and advice
- Lifestyle changes
- Psychosocial Support
- Donations
- Appreciation posts
- COVID-19 related news
- Others

Results & Discussion

- During the three nominated periods in 2020, 365CPS posted the most in P2 compared to the other periods.
- For SCS, there was an increase in the number of posts in P3 compared to the other periods.
- Both SSAs posted contents related to activities and events which the public could undertake at home during CB.
- SCS attempted to reach out to their beneficiaries, encouraging active cancer screening to continue during CB and continuing to provide accessible care for their patients
- 365CPS did not publish any posts related to educational materials on cancer in 2019, but published five posts in 2020 to promote cancer-related information to the public, with most of these posts in P2 of 2020.
- SCS had fewer posts on educational materials on cancer in 2020 than 2019.
- Number of posts related to psychosocial support dropped significantly from P1 to P2 and P3 in 2020 for SCS, with no posts from P2 and P3. 365CPS did not post for this category.

Conclusions

- 365CPS published more posts in 2020 than 2019, especially during the period where more people were encouraged to stay home. SCS published fewer posts in 2020 than 2019, even though in 2020, they published more posts during the lockdown
- The different restrictions implemented across the three nominated periods had a slight effect on the type of content published by the SSAs.
- Overall, the efforts taken by the SSAs in adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic and providing important health information and support for their beneficiaries online are applaudable, solely based on the Facebook posts of these SSAs.

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