

*The Action Research of Synthesizing Lessons of Suitable Radio Program for Children
in the East of Thailand,*

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0060

The Asian Conference on Media and Mass Communication 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013

Abstract

This study consists of three main purposes are; To study patterns and details of suitable radio for youth; To study children's behavior and requirement of receiving information and To synthesize the suitable radio broadcast lessons for youth from the community radio station.

The study of radio station for youth which broadcasts on Chonburi wave 99.75 megahertz says that mostly are the stations for teenagers, for example, "Tales from Dad" is telling a story to listeners doing a good deed by inserting flipside. "Smart Kids" is presenting living skills of teenagers and gives real experience to teach them how to divide right and wrong. "Teen Club" is a radio program providing a chance to children to participate in the program by presenting their experiences to listeners. "Happy Family" is a variety show that presents teenager's way of life and reminds them about danger that can possibly happen in their daily life. "Our Parliament" is about political that simplify the constitutional law for the listeners. "Health Tips" gives some tips and diversity of sex for teenagers. "Scholarship Foundation for Thai Youth" gives the information to students and their parents about the student loan.

Community radiobroadcast has nothing involve with children, but it gives them a chance to run the radio program by themselves in some parts. However, it's discontinuing, because their parents and radio station are not support them for any transportation fares.

The behavior of listening radio broadcast shows the target audiences (children) prefer listening to the radio at home. Many people prefer listening to the radio on the internet, mobile phone, and car audio. Most of them listen to the radio by their friends or neighbors. The most popular programs for children are music, news and knowledge, respectively, and few others.

The program has put a little bit knowledge in form of fairy tales which enclosed a motto. Speakers should tell a story with interesting voice and emotion. In addition, they need variety program with music, interview, news, knowledge and games.

Keywords : Radio Program, Children, the East of Thailand

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Rationale

The performances from both the Working Group of the Media for Children in the East and 12 associates in the eastern regions reflected that they lacked bodies of knowledge. As a consequence, the activities had been dispersedly conducted without any uniformity. Besides, after a year of the operation, lesson distilled process had not been conducted yet. Only the project evaluation and report existed.

The working mechanism set for the year 2010 aimed to 1) produce a pilot radio station for children, youth, and family, 2) develop media producers' proficiency, 3) create spaces for children, and 4) present media literacy.

First, the production of a pilot radio station for children, youth, and family would be operated by providing training courses on radio broadcasting for children, youth and family.

Radio programming was academically outlined which would be about the suitable forms of radio programs for the stations and the children, the opportunity to take part in the radio station, and the limitation of each community and station, the search for radio contents, station management, audience evaluation etc.; however, in a real life situation, radio programming was not focusing on children as the main target. The certain concept or academic principle of the radio programming for children was not obviously existed.

The researcher aimed to study the suitable radio formats for children, youth, and family. The local radio at Ban Na would be used as a representative of the local radio. In addition, radio programs for children at the National Broadcasting Services of Thailand, Chonburi would also be studied.

Objectives

1. To study suitable formats and contents the present day radio.
2. To study the exposure to information and the needs of information.
3. To synthesize lessons on suitable radio programming for children and youth

Methodology

The action research on synthesis of the lessons of suitable radio program for children in the east of Thailand was qualitative research. A focus group discussion between radio programmers and their audiences from both Chonburi and Nakorn Nayok was

used. The researcher acted as a moderator. The discussion was audio and visually recorded, and information gained was categorized by variables.

Results (from the 2 study objectives)

1. The suitable radio programs for children in Chonburi are as follows:

The program called “Lao Nitan Hai Lan Phang” (Tales for Grandchildren/ Tales from Dad) is formatted as a story telling program. It teaches the audience to do good deeds for example the awareness of sins and merits, respect of the seniors, and what is good and what is bad.

A news program comprises “Yaowachon Kon Keng” (Smart Kids). It is formatted as a news report. It reports news occurring in Chonburi and neighboring provinces. The program is divided into 2-3 sessions. News is reported for 1 or 2 sessions and then it is switched over with Buddhist teachings. A variety programs. It presents life skills for teenagers. This program targets on teenagers. The host of the program will teach the teenagers to learn to think what is appropriate and what is not through the real life situations. The session is switched over with music. The audience can call in and express their opinions. -“Teen Club” is formatted similarly to “Teen Talk”; however, it contains different contents. The host offers chances for children and youth in the eastern provinces to present information to the audience for example products of the province, and tourist attractions. -“Happy Family” is formatted as a variety program. It is divided in 3 sessions.

The first is about teens’ life styles. Real life situations will be used as the examples. Both boys and girls are able to discuss and show their opinions toward the situations. The second is about the roles of parents whose children are in teenage level. Some of the audiences of this session are parents. The example used in the talks will be a family with teens. And the third is a teaching session. It provides information about danger that might occur in teens’ real life.

-“Our Parliament” provides contents related to politic and government. Constitution laws are explained through the program.

-“Teen Talk” is contented about life skills for teenagers. There are talking session and “teen talk”. This program targets on teenagers. The host of the program will teach the teenagers to learn to think what is appropriate and what is not through the real life situations. The audience can call in and express their opinions.

-“Rok Phai Sukaphab” (Illnesses and Health) provides information for teenagers.

Monday to Thursday program emphasizes on health of those working people and sleep late people, while Friday, Saturday, and Sunday program focuses on teenagers. It is contented about how to take care of oneself during adolescence period, and the

diversity of sexes. The program is informal and friendly. Music is switched over with the talking.

-“Kor Yor Sor Sarn Phan Yaowachon Thai Khem Khaeng” (Student Loan for Thai Youth’s Dream) focuses on giving information for youth, students, and their guardians or parents. It lasts 1 hour. Khun Suwapee said the program provides information; therefore, the students know the principles, movement, and progresses of the Student Loan.

2. Selective behavior

The study found that children and teenagers were merely interested in listening to the radio programs because there were many more media responding their needs better. However, those who chose to listen to the radio selected the radio programs as follows:

2.1 Music program was the most frequently listened. The types of music the children listen to were Thai country, and string music. The participants of the discussion stated that most of them listened to the music at home. Some chose the station themselves, while some just listened to what their parents or siblings chose. Also, most of them said they favored Thai country music because they had heard and listened to this kind of music since they were very young. They would choose the station that gave the best radio signal, so they could hear the clearest sound for example “Sunshine Radio” at 107.75 MHZ. Some said they listened to the radio while on a car, while some said they listened to Thai country music while doing chores. Also, some mentioned that they listened to the music through their mobile phones.

2.2 News program was listened to by students from primary schools. The news they listened to was as follows:

- general news about children was listened to because the host would read the news about children which could be what happened in the province or news related to children and youth in the eastern region, Thailand, or other countries.
- education news was listened to because the host would provide information about activities held in different schools for example sport day, education fair, exercise day or any academic competitions.
- entertainment news was listened to because the host would give information about what happened in entertainment industry, so the audience knew more about actors and actresses. Children and youth favored this type of program because they loved to follow their favorite stars’ movements from every type of media.
- politic news was also listened to. The children listened to election news

particularly during the national election. The host would frequently talk about the election. Also, s/he would give information about the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Ministers, or other political figures' missions.

2.3 Other programs were fable telling programs, general knowledge programs for example telling the knowledge the hosts gathered from newspaper, televisions, communities, or other news in the community.

3. Children's Views regarding the Information needs

The group discussion reflected their needs as follows:

3.1 Music program should broadcast music responding the children's need which was string music. The host should provide information about the music for example the profiles of the music, song writers, or whether the songs were based on true stories. More than 1 host should run the program because it would be more intriguing while talking. In addition, the host should use natural and friendly language that got along with the children's life style.

3.2 Fable telling program should be broadcasted because quite a number of children were waiting for the program called "Lao Nitan Hai Lan Phang" (Fables for My Grandchildren). This program was enjoyable to listen to, and it also met the need of the children.

3.3 Informative programs should offer academic and general knowledge. They needed something enhancing their knowledge gained from the schools. The host should switch the talks over with music in order to make the program more enjoyable. The general knowledge they needed was about the products of the province, food especially best restaurants or delicious vendors or famous food of the province, and computer games. Besides, they said the program should give information about tourist attractions in the province or the places nearby. However, some thought there should be information about sports because they were interested in sports.

Discussion

Encoder/sender

Regarding this research, the encoders were the hosts or creators of the radio programs whose audiences were children and youth from local radio station in Ban Na at 98.25 MHz, Ban Na District, Nakorn Nayok Province, and the National Broadcasting Services of Thailand, Chonburi at 99.75 MHz. They were studied in different aspects as follows:

1. Regarding the messaging efficiency or the accessibility to the receivers, the National Broadcasting Services of Thailand, Chonburi contained

stronger signal and covered broader areas; therefore, this station offered better messaging efficiency than that of Ban Na local radio station which acted upon the regulation to limit the height for a radio mast and transmitter power.

2. Regarding budgets and supports from surrounding communities, the National Broadcasting Services of Thailand, Chonburi had enough budgets from the government; hence, the station did not encounter any obstacles. However, Ban Na local radio station always lacked budgets for its management. In addition, the station was a non profit figure, so there were no commercials to support it financially. Even though, the working committee existed in the station, but only very few of them pay attention on the local radio. The work here then became a “one man show” discipline. It was not a participatory working atmosphere.
3. Regarding the encoder, most of the hosts in Ban Na local station were senior citizens, so they programmed their sessions in accordance with their own interests. As a consequence, the apparent children programs that allowed children to participate in programming were not existed. In addition, some of the children had to help their parents at work, and there were no allowances to pay for the transportation fees. Without supports from their parents and other organizations, it was difficult for children to take part in programming the radio station.

The National Broadcasting Services of Thailand, Chonburi followed the regulation that required the station to provide children programs. The proportions of children programs in this station were quite large; however, it found that the programs mainly focused on teenagers. Radio media or the encoder did not really pay attention on the preadolescence.

Messages or the programs

1. “Lao Nitan Hai Lan Phang” (Fables for My Grandchildren) was followed by anumber of children. The host would teach the children about good deeds and what to do and what not to do. Apparently, the primary school children had no authority to choose the radio programs they wanted to listen to. Their parents had the absolute authority over radio media at home. Accordingly, in order to offer suitable radio programs for children, the parents must be well aware of the advantages of the programs.
2. “Yaowachon Kon Keng” (Smart Youth) was formatted as a news report. The host aimed to report news about children and youth occurring in Chonburi and neighboring provinces.
3. “Our Parliament” provided contents related to politic and government.

Constitution laws were explained through the program. The group discussion revealed that the children listened to this program while on the cars with their parents or while at homes with their parents.

From social and political contexts, people in Nakhon Nayok listened to the program "Our Parliament". The discussion showed that when the parents listened to the program their children were attached with the chance to listen to the program. So the children participated in the group discussion confessed that they listened to "Our Parliament".

Receiver or listener

Receivers or listeners were the major interest of this research. They comprised children and youth who were the representatives of the listeners of The National Broadcasting Services of Thailand, Chonburi, and Ban Na local radio station, Nakorn Nayok. The study results were found as follows:

Children rarely listened to the radio.

Firstly, the highly developed technology allowed the children to get access to more attractive media. Radio was considered outdated because it offered only sound. Its audience needed imagination while listening to the radio. Television, on the other hand, provided both pictures and sounds. In addition, with technology of monitor and screen, a better transmission, and the computer graphic supports, television gave more comfort and convenience to its audience while receiving messages. Moreover, computer development allowed a computer device to become a one-stop-service media channel. It contained information and news like that of the newspaper, it offered sound like a radio, and it provided sound and pictures like television. Besides, computer had a search engine which one could search for information anytime without time limit. Nowadays, people always had portable computers with them or had them in the form of mobile phones. It found that children in the city area used the internet everyday, while in the uptown area 1 out of 3 children used the internet. Still, most of the children got information from television more than that of the radio.

Secondly, the study found that the parents themselves preferred televisions to radios. They worked outside and after they were back homes they watched televisions to relax, while those housewives who stayed homes watched the television to entertain themselves and get some knowledge. This behavior could be imitated by their children. Watching television caused their children to get used to with television. These children then when they grew older use the internet to search for information, so they lacked the interest of the radio.

Thirdly, the message sent from the radio could not compete with other media. It found that media television and computer was virtually created and they could attract more audience. Televisions were rapidly developed and their audiences were allowed to

take parts in some programs. On the other hand, radio media faced problems from the government's permission to establish local radio stations. Signals were jammed. Worse than that, it was recently reported that Thailand was the only country that the local radio signal jammed with the Aeronautical radio. The quality of the local stations was never improved. Some were only programmed with music and commercials, while some focused on selling products of unclear sources. However, the national radio stations tried to develop and improve themselves. Still the radio media itself was the limit because it could not generate any interest or attraction. Also, there were too many stations and frequencies, the audience never knew what to listen to. They just listened to the one program with the music they liked without knowing the frequency or the name of the program or station. For those children in the uptown area, even their houses were close to the radio masts, their parents would listen to the stations that offers clearer sound.

Listening behaviors were various as follows:

Firstly, children from downtown and uptown areas reflected different results. The children from the downtown area listened to the radio less than that of the children from the uptown area. The downtown children preferred to listen to string music in order to relax from their schools and their special tutorial lessons. They added that they used the internet for searching for information and they watched televisions to relax. Some of them said they listened to music through the internet or mobile phones. These children could choose what they want to listen to and they listen to the music by themselves. On the other hand, most of the uptown children watched televisions. Some use the internet, and some stated that they listened to the radio, but the stations were chosen by their parents, so they listened to news, Thai country music, and information.

Secondly, ages revealed different results. It found that youth or adolescence preferred string music, while preadolescence liked music and fable telling story.

Thirdly, the authority to choose the programs indicated that youth or adolescence could choose what they wanted to listen to; however, the younger children had no authority to choose the programs. They just listened to what their parents wanted for example the children had to listened to Thai country music as their parents wanted to even they claimed that they liked string music, or they had to get information from a particular political side.

Finally, the children's interest showed that children from both areas preferred string music the most. Those who could choose the radio station themselves would find the station with the music they like. When the host said something boring they would turn to other stations. The music lovers disliked the host who talked too much. They said there was no need for the host to talked, but if the host wanted to talk s/he should be friendly and fun. Some liked the stations with games and prizes. For those who could

not choose the stations, they just listened to the music without any thought, but with the station they were interested in they would listen to. Some listened to the radio with their parents so often that they turned to like the station. Some listened to the radio with their parents and would then ask their parents to turn to the station of their favorite programs for example they would ask their parents to turn to “fable telling stations” when it was on air.

The children’s Participation while receiving the message could be indicated in 2 types: active listeners and co-producers. Active listeners would call the program and make a request for songs, or play games and answer questions. At present most live programs allowed their audience to phone in. In terms of co-producing the programs, both stations offered chances to children to take part in contenting the programs more and more. The National Broadcasting Services of Thailand, Chonburi had continually allowed children to co- produce the programs because of the set policies, enough financial support, and enough mentors. In contrary, Ban Na local radio station lacked financial support and cooperation from the surrounding communities, so the children’s participation in radio programming was not continually existed. All in all, the participation at policy level had not been occurred yet.

Suggestions

The chance for children to participate in programming the radio was a good practice especially among local radio stations. Parents or schools should support them in terms of expenses because this participation taught the children to learn to search for information and knowledge, arrange ideas, and present their opinions and message.

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