

A Study On The Importance Of Research In Community Radio Programs

Submitted by

Dr. K. Usha, Head, (Associate Professor), Post Graduate and Research Department of Public Administration , Anna Adarsh College for Women, Annanagar, Chennai -40

Ms. N.Meenakshi, Head, (Assistant professor), Department of Electronic Media , M.O.P.Vaishnav College for women, Chennai 34

Ph.D Scholar, (Part Time)

meenakshirashmi@gmail.com, 9080055629

ABSTRACT

The examination of radio as a medium cannot be justified without taking into consideration, the magnanimous role of community radio. It is often described as a third tier broadcasting medium along with public and private radio broadcasting. Just like the nature of a democracy, community radio is a medium designed by the people, of the people and for the people of a community, to serve the needs, aspirations, interests of the community. Community Radio (CR) gives marginalized people, a platform to voice out their opinions and be heard by all. A significant tool that facilitates education and infotainment, community radio is generally held by voluntary organizations, civic groups, NGOs, educational institutions, women's groups, etc to facilitate the change the society is in dire need of. Community radio is fundamentally not a technical enterprise, but a venture into building humanity. Such a powerful medium, which has brought several communities together, requires extensive research to design the content of broadcast in such a way that it truly empowers the people of the community and facilitates a positive shift towards the ultimate development of the community and the society as a whole. This paper will discuss why this is so and how this is being done currently and will also throw light on what can be done further to enhance the field of research for Community Radio and its programmes.

KEY WORDS: Community Radio, NGO, Radio Broadcasting, Development Communication

Introduction

With the advent of new media opening up various avenues for education, entertainment, information and infotainment, the role of mainstream media has been replaced significantly, thanks to the competencies and creativity that new media has imbibed in itself in the past decade. In such an arena, mainstream media is expected to be more innovative, user friendly, and more feedback oriented to become the 'go-to' medium for audiences. This calls for a revamp of the broadcast content by mainstream media houses, for them to compete in par with new media. A revamp not only requires ingestion of new and creative content, but also the elimination of that content, that do not fit the dynamically changing media industry and audience anymore. This inevitably demands a thorough research across the fabric of the media industry, involving the study of consumer needs and expectations, potential competition, and an extensive SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) by media houses that will elevate them to the subsequent levels in the process of attaining that 'go-to' status. It is the study of the effects of the different mass media on social, psychological and physical aspects. Research survey that segments the people based on what television programs they watch, radio they listen and magazines they read.

Talking about research, one particular medium that perfectly fits into the glove is radio, which has been reaching more and more audiences every day. Radio broadcasting is any use of radio waves to send messages to large groups of people which is used to send audio signals such as talk or music programming. Thanks to its portable, cost effective, inexpensive, simple, and quick nature, radio is becoming a part of audiences' daily life. The entry of private players into the broadcasting fray has been one of the paramount reasons for this boost in listenership, which was previously much insignificant because of lesser options and conventional programme formats. Today, we have radio stations competing with each other in grabbing the market share with their thematic programming styles, interactive audience participation, making 'visualization' in programming possible through effective writing for radio, and so on to such an extent that audience have started directly or indirectly playing a major role in the programming for radio.

What role does research play in community radio programming?

- Community Radio Programming Research helps in facilitating interaction between the political leadership and the community. This is because it aims at finding out

whether importance is being given to the community by bureaucracies, and if not, it helps in finding out ways to get the political attention and reach the political bodies with their queries and get them solved.

- Community Radio Programming Research catalyses community participation in social, economic, and political processes and promotes more open and inclusive attitudes, and helps to mitigate conflict. This can be done so as research opens up the avenue to study and know more about the voiceless people in the community, and identifies them and brings them accordingly into the system.
- Community Radio Programming Research facilitates an open forum for dialogue, debate and interaction at the local level, and also connects them with access to members of civil society organizations and the general public.
- Community Radio Programming Research helps in identifying the social, economic and political issues prevalent in the community and helps in coming up with effective defence mechanisms to tackle with them.
- Community Radio Programming Research helps in indentifying and empowering specific groups like women, who form a major portion of any community's demography. It helps in improving their role and contribution towards the development of especially those communities in which women are not granted the freedom and encouragement to tap the abilities in them and work towards personal and social betterment.
- Community Radio Programming Research is also said to help in agricultural development, by providing a vivid picture of the current agrarian trends, opportunities and threats in the markets to farmers.
- Community Radio Programming Research helps in paving way to decentralization and local governance. It helps in devising programmes that facilitate an interface between duty bearers and rights holders, especially for people living in marginalized communities.
- Community Radio Programming Research helps in enhancing the entertainment and cultural promotion factor in the community by identifying aspiring artists and performers who keep alive the traditional arts and culture of the community and providing them with a platform to showcase their talents on an open forum.

- It enhances the economic activity of the community by organizing them into self help groups, and helping the people know what kind of business they can take up, what kind of goods can produce, what kind of income generating avenues are open for them.
- Community Radio Programming Research indirectly helps in social cohesion and integration by identifying the problems of the community which will encourage the people of the community to collectively work towards eradicating them and thus, achieve togetherness.

How is the research process undertaken?

This Research on Community Radio contributes to generating audience friendly content in the following ways:

1. This Community Radio Research demands the broadcasting body to reach out to the end of the audience (community) and get interactive feedback from them on how they receive and perceive the existing content. This will help in tracing the loopholes in programming content, if any.
2. This Local Radio Programming Research involves studying the demography of the community in terms of age, gender, socio – economic position in the society, and so on. This means that the broadcaster will have to take all these variables into consideration and cater to all of them.
3. After studying the demography of the community, a thorough analysis on what they expect must be made, and participatory communication must be adopted to do so. This means that the broadcaster will solely rely on the information gathered from the audience and devise the broadcast content in par with their expectation.
4. It is important to draw a comparison between the current programming and the inputs received from the two way communication, to decide on what content to eliminate, what to retain, and what to revamp.
5. Once the revamp process is begun, constant supervision is required to check if the process is scoring on the right track. This can be done by making temporary ingestions of the changes devised into the existing system and call for audience's reactions, opinions, and views.

6. Based on whether the collective opinions are positive or negative, the revamped system can be made permanent.

Outcomes of a proper research process

A systematic and successful research process will assure the following outcomes and changes in the broadcast content. Thus, the revamped content will assure:

- Projection of democracy and freedom among the community and encourage them to strive towards the same.
- Encourage education, especially among girl children.
- Importance given to the healthcare and sanitary facilities in the community and bring in inputs and better resources in the form of talk shows by doctors, nurses, medical representatives, etc.
- Pave way to strive for achieving higher living standards
- Projection of moral values and need to adhere to them.
- Bridging of the community and the government by establishing a more transparent, and participative connection between the two.
- Equality among individuals of the community, and eradicate differences based on caste, creed, race, religion, age, gender, and so on.
- Prevention of social evils prevalent in the community, if any.
- Projection of civilization, by broadcasting progressive stories, and inspiring people to follow so.
- Development of rural areas and marginalized communities, by encouraging their active participation in the programmes and make them feel empowered.
- Will compensate competently for the absence of any other forms of media that may not be available in certain communities such as television, new media, and so on by ensuring quick and authentic information. This will help the community stay in par with the rest of the communities that might be much forward in terms of communication and media facilities.
- Development of arts, tradition and culture among the community.

Conclusion

It can thus be concluded that research can help community radio achieve that 'go-to medium' position among the audience due to the array of roles and outcomes it assures. Community radio is growingly recognized today in India, thanks to its participatory, audience friendly, beneficial content that it produces which is possible only through extensive research. Although radio has the drawback of the lack of a visual element to keep the audience gripped in attention, it definitely cannot be ruled off as a fading medium, as certain groups of the audience believes due to the fact it is one of the mediums that implements continuous community dialogue between the public and the political framework, and also within the public themselves. While new media is extensively growing owing to the broadening of the internet network, radio is anytime equally an approachable medium as it can operate even in times of adversities such as natural calamities, and continues to serve its audience without a break. "Radio is the Theater of the Mind", it demonstrates the power of the spoken word, and the ability of audio alone to create powerful and vivid pictures in the mind of the listener. Thus, research will help this powerful medium to stay on toes with the changing dynamic media industry and last as an equally interesting, innovative, and the quintessential 'gen next' medium for times to come.

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