

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY RADIOS ON BUSINESS PROMOTION

By

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ABSTRACT

Community radio is a medium of expressing and sharing views, thoughts, ideas, problems and prospects of rural, disadvantaged, vulnerable and hard to reach population with the mainstream population. As the media of root level people of the disadvantaged areas, Community radio has become popular in recent years and it has opened a new arena for both the policy makers as well as grassroots people to be involved in the development process of their community. The Community Radio can help us in addressing social, economic, cultural, educational, health, water and sanitation and disaster related issues more effectively and strategically. In order to highlight the importance and effectiveness of community radio for the community development, this study has been conducted based on the secondary data. This group effort has become successful by the co-operation of many individuals and institutions. As this is a new concept, there is no significant study has been conducted. Therefore the study has been directed to explore the importance of community FM radio in particularly in remote and rural areas in business promotion.

Key words: Community radio, Community Development, Business, Promotion

1. INTRODUCTION

Community radio plays a vital role in the communications of a country. Community radio mainly serves a definite community and is a form of public-service broadcasting. It reflects the culture, ideology and thoughts, norms and values of a particular community. Community radio as the media of citizens of a particular community has become popular and new opportunity for both the media practitioner and grassroots people. Community radio helps to avail utilities and amenities for various development aspects of our society like education, health, water and sanitation, protection from natural disasters, address social issues at the community level and connect rural population with the government. It can be useful for the development of a particular target group like elderly, women and children. Community radio helps to ensure people's right to information and community participation by expressing the voice and thoughts of grassroots people in the development process.

Moreover, the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, and prestigious economists such as Amartya Sen, Joseph Stiglitz and Jeffrey Sachs, among others, have recognized the relationship between sustainable development and freedom of expression, reflected in a pluralistic and independent media sector (Buckley, 2008). On March 8th, 2008, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has given approval of the "Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy". The principle purpose of the policy is to open up the radio spectrum to community broadcasting for exploring the potentialities of community radio.

As GoB is emphasizing decentralization of media which has been reflected in the issuing of licenses for community broadcasting and Policy, as a way to facilitate and encourage people's privileges, in order to build a platform for community-level communication and sustainable development, through the accumulation of communities' energies, views and thoughts, initiatives, and resources. The initiatives of the Government to achieve the Right to Information Act 2009, Vision 2021, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been considered in articulating the national strategy (Ministry of Information & Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Government of Bangladesh. Dhaka. 2012).

1.2 Objectives

The main objective of this analysis is to explore the importance and effectiveness of community FM radio worldwide especially in remote rural areas. On the basis of the general objective, this analysis has following specific objectives; *f*

- To analyze the effectiveness of community FM radio programs *f*
- To know about the forms and features of community FM radio *f*
- To explore the development and need of community FM radio in business promotion

1.3 Future of Community Radio Industry

FM Radio can play its part in building a stronger business future for India. Providing free-to-air local broadcasts of music and entertainment, helpful information – traffic advisories, community announcements and public service messages provide a real value-added service. But at current levels of advertising support, each radio station is reeling under the brutal financial impact of high costs. With more players in the fray the FM radio industry would grow and also enhance the government's yield from licensing radio naturally.

The new India deserves an active private FM radio sector. It can provide a level playing field with benefits for listeners, for advertisers, employment & career options. Spearhead the government objective of growing the FM radio business in India.

With the government ready to reduce the license fees it will help in attracting new players like Reliance which had earlier backed out only due to the entry fees. Also government allowing foreign players to enter the Indian market it will help the industry grow. Virgin group has already started exploring the Indian market for suitable partners. Various radio stations are coming up with IPO for example Radio Mirchi thus helping them expand.

The future looks bright as the reach of radio is expected to rise post the increase in the number and quality of players in the industry. It is on the basis of these key drivers of growth, it is being predicted that radio's share in the total advertising pie will see an increase in the medium term. There are an estimated 150 million radio sets across the country. The Rs 1.6 billion industry is reported to be growing by 31 per cent every year and should touch the Rs 6.2 billion by 2007, with revenue rising at 23 per cent annually. Also, though radio has only a 2 per cent share in the Rs 6,000 crore Indian advertising market, advertising spending is expected to amount to Rs 500 crore this year.

1.4 Radio Advertising

Radio is still the king when it comes to getting your music. The best way for a new band to get heard by the public and record label executives is over the airwaves. Paradoxically, radio currently has only a 2.9 per cent share of the total advertising pie in India. Globally, depending on country, radio has a 5 per cent to 12 per cent share of the advertising cake. On the higher side are countries like the United States, with 13 per cent, Canada, with 12.7 per cent and Spain, with 9.1 per cent. Companies that advertise on FM channels today such as Hindustan Lever (HLL), Dr Morepen, Amul, Castrol, Santro, Britannia, Parle, DSP Merrill Lynch etc are dominating the advertising on each one of the FM channels, be it Radio Mirchi, Go 92.5 Red 93.5 or Radio City.

Today, 70 per cent of the advertising comes from big-budget, national advertisers and the balance 30 per cent comes from retail. It is a known fact that retail advertising will grow because radio presents the perfect advertising medium for local businesses in a local environment. But national advertisers are also operational in the local market, implying that it is as important to them as it is to a retail advertiser, if not more.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that radio can be integral in exposing a new artist, new product or services to new fans and taking a local market to a national level. Accordingly, it is extremely difficult to obtain meaningful airplay. Putting it bluntly, successful radio promotion revolves around making and managing relationships.

Radio promotion is an art that demands a certain style you may simply neither have nor desire to cultivate. On top of that, it can take a great deal of time to make all the contacts and connections that are required for successful radio promotion.

Advertising agencies that control the national picture will be slow to move on to radio for creative reasons. They have people who love to make television commercials, but don't have anybody who knows how radio works. Here, only about 2.9 per cent of the money spent by advertisers goes to radio, and up till now, all of that went to ALL INDIA RADIO.

However, in revenue terms, money from advertising has gone up. Revenue from commercials on AIR, including on Vividh Bharti and Primary Channel (including FM) rose from Rs 393 million in 1990, to Rs 808.4 million in 2000, & Rs. 600 crores in 2002, representing a growth of about 7.5 per cent per annum.

2. Radio and the Development of promoting business

One of radio's most enduring legacies is its impact on music. Before radio, most popular songs were distributed through piano sheet music and word of mouth. This necessarily limited the types of music that could gain national prominence. Although recording technology had also emerged several decades before radio, music played live over the radio sounded better than it did on a record played in the home. Live music performances thus became a staple of early radio. Many performance venues had their own radio transmitters to broadcast live shows—for example, Harlem's Cotton Club broadcast performances that CBS picked up and broadcast nationwide.

Radio networks mainly played swing jazz, giving the bands and their leaders a widespread audience. Popular bandleaders including Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and Tommy Dorsey and their jazz bands became nationally famous through their radio performances, and a host of other jazz musicians flourished as radio made the genre nationally popular (Wald, 2009). National networks also played classical music. Often presented in an educational context, this programming had a different tenor than did dance-band programming. NBC promoted the genre through shows such as the *Music Appreciation Hour*, which sought to educate both young people and the general public on the nuances of classical music (Howe, 2003). It created the NBC Symphony Orchestra, a 92-piece band under the direction of famed conductor Arturo Toscanini. The orchestra made its first performance in 1937 and was so popular that Toscanini stayed on as conductor for 17 years (Horowitz, 2005). The Metropolitan Opera was also popular; its broadcasts in the early 1930s had an audience of 9 million listeners (Horowitz, 2005).

3. METHODS

The study was carried out as an in-depth evaluation using participatory approaches. The approach involved desk study and field visits. The desk study reviewed studies already carried out. The field study was designed to allow staff of Simli Radio to participate fully in the process. The specific techniques used to collect data were meetings, focus group discussions, stakeholder interviews, debriefing sessions and observations.

The GDCP programme covered 518 communities in two districts, Tolon-Kumbungu and Savelugu-Nanton. A multi-stage sampling technique was used. In the first stage, 4 zones and 2

zones were sampled from a total of 6 zones each in the Tolon-Kumbungu and Savelugu-Nanton districts respectively. The second stage involved the sampling of 4 skins¹ from 17 skins in Tolon-Kumbungu district and 4 skins from 20 skins in Savelugu-Nanton district. The third and final stage involved the selection of communities and this was guided by five factors. The first was communities that host projects relevant to all three sectors of the GDCP, namely, DNK, Simli Pong or Women and loans and Simli Radio.

The second factor was the size of the community (small or larger community measured by population) whereas the third guiding factor dealt with whether the community was a new or old friendship community. The remaining two factors were availability of satellite centers and convenience in terms of transport accessibility. In all, 7 communities were selected from Tolon-Kumbungu and 5 communities from Savelugu-Nanton districts bringing the total number of sampled communities to 12. Details of the sampled communities are presented in Table 1.

CONCLUSION

Radio is popularly known as the mass media which has the maximum number of listeners. It has significant effect on the societal condition of our country till now. In today's world, people are acquainted with FM radio and community FM radio has the capacity to reach the local level rural population. For ages, there is a criticism in context of presented radio broadcasting environment in Bangladesh that air broadcasting has been strongly influenced by political forces. Since the starting journey of Radio in Bangladesh, it has been largely used for state supported propaganda. Though there are some commercial radios' but community radio is yet to be legitimated in Bangladesh.

Besides, professional or commercial broadcasters believe that community radio will lessen the superiority of commercial radio in Bangladesh. Also, they think that their stations will lose listeners if community radio can be established everywhere. Community FM radio can focus the voice of vulnerable and marginalized population of our community, facilitate rural development and agricultural promotion, ensures local level good governance and accountability, disaster preparedness and management, ensuring gender equality, community empowerment as well as protect the local and community culture. Community FM radio station can be a blessing for local level population.

Community FM radio will help, inter alia; *f*

- To facilitate the social advancement especially for hard to reach areas *f*
- Setting up more community FM radio station is necessary to spread the voice of marginalized and vulnerable group to the policy makers, social scientist and others *f*
- To build up awareness about social issues, social problems like child marriage, poverty and unemployment problems can be ensured through community FM radio station *f*
Any area based upcoming natural calamity could broadcast towards the focused group of people *f*
- Education and training could be provided easily Community broadcasting would be sustained by the principles of access and participation, volunteerism, diversity, independence and locality.

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