

A SURVEY OF POPULARITY OF THE SUNSHINE RADIO (FM 107.75 MHz) IN CHONBURI AND NEARBY PROVINCES

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ABSTRACT

This survey of the popularity of FM radio stations in Chonburi and nearby provinces was intended to study the listeners' radio-listening behaviors, their attitudes towards and gratifications of the Sunshine Radio's programs, and the factors affecting the listener's selection of radio programs. This study was based on The Uses and Gratifications Theory's conceptual framework, regarding the opening to and the pursuance of messages for serving individual's desires. The study found that around 55% of the samples listened to the radio every day. The samples usually listened to the modern Thai songs program. The most preferred is the Sunshine Radio's program. As comparing the listeners' gratifications, it appeared that the samples were more gratified with the Sunshine Radio's programs, especially its Thai song programs, the program with listeners' participations, and the occidental song program, than any other station's programs.

INTRODUCTION

Causes and importance of this study

The Sunshine Radio (FM 107.75 MHz) has been broadcasting news and entertainment programs to listeners in Chonburi, Rayong and nearby provinces in the Eastern region of Thailand for a period of time. It then would like to conduct a survey on the popularity of its programs among and the radio-listening behaviors of the target listeners. The study results will be used to improve its program schedule and to present programs as desired by the target group most effectively.

Objectives

1. To study the radio-listening behaviors of the target group.
2. To study listeners' attitudes toward and gratifications of the Sunshine
3. To find out factors affecting the listeners' selection of the Sunshine Radio's program.

Research hypotheses

1. The target group's gratification of the Sunshine Radio's programs is dependent on the frequentness of listening to its programs.
2. The target group's gratification of each of competitive radio stations' programs is dependent on the frequentness of listening to its programs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The effectiveness of communication depends greatly on the scope of knowledge or experiences of both the message receivers and the message senders. That how much a receiver will understand the received message depends on his scope of experiences.

This scope of experiences relies on the social systems, the cultures, and various backgrounds, which are classified as follows:

1. Reading and listening skills or expertise of the message receivers. For example, individuals with differences in volume of daily reading or level of education will have different reading capacity, speed and understanding of the messages.
2. Message receivers' attitude toward the received message and the sender. For example, if a message receiver has a bad attitude toward the sending organization, he will have bad attitude toward that message and refuse to receive it.
3. Level of knowledge of the message receivers. An individual with more knowledge can understand received message better and faster than do others with less knowledge.
4. Social systems and cultures which affect the translation or interpretation of the message receivers. People of different social systems or cultural backgrounds will ponder and understand a received message differently.
5. Desires of the message receivers. In the present information age, the transferred information and messages are so huge in amount and types. Every message receiver will select to receive only specific information that matches directly with one's interests, desires, or objectives, and will put more attention to remembering it.

In summary, an individual will select to receive a message so as to serve one's desires and be in line with one's original attitudes, which are varied according to the scope of past experiences. (Punpimon, 1980)

THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

The Uses and Gratifications Theory emphasizes the importance of the message receiver as the person who selects to use various media and to receive the message that serves his desires.

Peera (1986) explained a series of patterns as "Social and mental conditions that cause personal needs and expectations from the mass media or other sources of information that lead to opening to various types of mass media that results in attaining the expected gratification and other unintended results".

The Uses and Gratifications Theory is a theory about messages receiving and seeking receivers, so as to serve one's desires. What the desires and stimulating forces for receiving the message are, and how the message is used are essential questions that should be pondered by the media users.

The study of McCombs and Becker (1979) indicated that a person used mass media to serve six desires as follows:

1. To do surveillance of occurring events by following the movements and monitoring the surroundings, so as to know what has happened, to catch up with occurrences and be up-to-date, and to learn what are essential to know.
2. To gain guidance to proper practices and to make daily decision, so as to survive in the existing social and political systems.
3. To gain excitement of in-the-event feelings.
4. To reinforce one's opinion by strengthening the original opinions or assuring the previously made decisions.
5. To be used in the anticipated communications.
6. To gain entertainment for joyfulness and relaxation of feelings.

Somkuan Kweeya (1980) studied information-receiving habits of people in the rural areas of Thailand. He found that most of them listened to the radio every day. Making analysis on relationship between educational levels and radio-listening habits, he showed that people of all educational levels listened to the radio every day. Also, he discovered that the age ranges of people affected the amount of time spent

on radio-listening as follows:

The study of Sirichai Sirikaya (1982) discovered that the opening to mass media depended on the differences in modern values, educational levels, professions, political-participation levels, and economic statuses of the people. Besides, he also found that radio, television and daily newspaper were the most popular mass media, respectively.

J.J. Galloway and F.L. Mark (1988) prescribed that media consumption would result in gratification perceptions, which would then encourage or alter the perceptions.

Robinson (1972) found that the educational level of a message receiver related with his uses of media and level of his informational knowledge. Persons of different educational levels would use medias and have informational knowledge differently, i.e. the group of high education had better knowledge of knowledgeable features and tended to raise this type of knowledge by using mass media.

Sears and Freedman (1967) studied about individuals selection of receiving messages. They found that the best personal variables to predict individual behaviors of opening to mass media were the education level and the social status. The latter variable was represented by the type of profession.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was a survey research, covering 3-month period from January 9, 2002 to March 20, 2002.

Sampling method

1) Population

The population of this study was people, aged 15-45 years, residing or working in the urban and rural areas of Chonburi province, Rayong province, as well as some areas of Chacherngsao province and Samutprakarn province. Details are as follows:

1.1 Chonburi province

- Urban areas, covering the following umphers: Muang, Bangsaen, Bangphra, Sriracha, Sataheep, Muang Pataya
- Rural areas, covering all other umphers.

1.2 Rayong province

- Urban areas, covering the following umphers: Muang, Banchang, Mabtapude, and Pluakdaeng
- Rural areas, covering all the remaining umphers in Rayong.

1.3 Chacherngsao province, covering only umpher Bangpakong.

1.4 Samutprakarn province, covering two umphers: Bangplee and Bangbau.

2) Samples

Two thousand persons were sampled to represent the population. They were interviewed to answer the questionnaire.

3) Samples Selection

This research used a quota sampling method to obtain the samples in agreement with interested features. The samples were from Chonburi, Rayong, and nearby provinces. They were categorized as follows:

1. Group of age 15 -19 years, totaling 200 samples or 10% of the sample size.
2. Group of age 20 - 29 years, totaling 1,400 samples or 70% of the sample size.
3. Group of age 30 - 35 years, totaling 200 samples or 10% the sample size.
4. Group of age 36 - 45 years, totaling 200 samples or 10% of the sample size.

4) Sampling places

This study randomly selected samples from varieties of community, i.e. governmental units, working places, department stores, educational institutes, and samples' residences. The numbers of samples from each of the above-mentioned places were very close proportionally.

Data Collecting Method

This study used a questionnaire created in agreement with the study objectives and related theories. The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts, with both open-ended and close-ended questions. Part 1 was about personal information. Part 2 covered questions about the radio-listening behaviors, the attitudes to and the gratifications of the Sunshine Radio's and other radio stations' programs. And Part 3 was open-ended questions for suggestions of the questionnaire answerers. The data analyses were based on descriptive statistics, i.e. percentages, averages, standard deviations, and Chi-square statistics for tests of hypotheses.

RESULTS

Data gathered from the questionnaires was analyzed with SPSS for windows version 9.01. The study results can be summarized as follows:

1. General information

This study gathered information from 2,000 samples in 6 areas. Most of the samples, about 52.5% of the total, were in the urban areas of Chonburi province. The next in rank, around 22.5% were in Chonburi's rural areas. The third, around 14.0%, were in the urban areas of Rayong province. The samples from Rayong's rural areas, Chacherngsao province, and Samutprakarn province were not many.

The number of female samples was a little large than that of male. The females covered 55.8% of the total samples.

The samples with age 20-29 years old were around 70.0%, mostly unmarried (about 83.2%). Those with Mathayom 3-6 education level were 46.2% while those with bachelor's degrees were 34.4%. The samples' average income was less than 5,000 baht a month. Most of the samples, about 50.8%, were pupils and students and around 30.4% were employees of private businesses.

2. Radio-listening behaviors

The samples, who listened to radios every day were 55.4%. Those who listened to radios 5-6 times a week were 14.5%. About 40.1% listened to radios while laying down for relaxations, and 24.7% listened to radios while reading.

The program gaining largest listeners was the modern Thai songs program, about 84.3%. The news and news analysis program got 73.5%, and the occidental song program got 67.2%. Most of the samples spent 1-3 hours a day on radio listening, on both weekdays and weekends.

3. Attitudes toward and desires for the Sunshine Radio's programs

About 84.3% of the samples used to listen to programs of the Sunshine Radio. Those listening to this radio station every day were 50.7%, and those listening 3-4 times a week were around 13.9%. During Monday-Friday, the broadcaster's programs were most listened (about 38.4%) during 5.00-7.00 hours, and around 31.4% listened to the radio station during 18.01-21.00 hours. On Saturday and Sunday, the radio station's programs were most listened (about 31.5%) during 21.01-24.00 hours, and around 30.2% listened to the broadcaster during 9.01-12.00 hours.

Last year, the travel information program and the news update program got more listening frequentness than any other program on Monday-Friday. On Saturday, the fashion update program, the news update program and the Mass Communication Organization of Thailand (MCOT) for communities program were most frequently

listened. On Sunday, the travel information program and the IT update program were listened most.

For the passed period of year 2002, there was an increase desires for listening to the fashion update program and the news panel program on Monday-Friday. The News update program, the MCOT for communities program and the travel information program got an increase in listening desires on Saturday. Additionally, the news update program and the travel information program also got increasing in listening desires for Sunday broadcasting.

On ranking the preference for the Sunshine Radio's programs, it appeared that the news update program and the working today program were most preferred, respectively. Most samples said that they were the programs of entertainment and usefulness.

Around 31.7% of the samples used to participate in the broadcaster's program, via sending e-mail, visiting to the radio station and making telephone call. The reasons of their participation were to release oppressions, to leave messages and to request for favorite songs broadcasting. The samples most wanted the broadcaster to eliminate the disturbance of its radio waves and to alter its program schedule.

To compare the level of gratification of the Sunshine Radio's programs, categorized by professions of the samples, the results are as follows:

The samples in the group of government officials were most gratified with the occidental songs program, the modern Thai songs program and the travel information program, respectively. The program with listeners' participations got the least gratification from this group. This group most preferred the news panel program, the MCOT for communities program and the news update program respectively.

The samples that are government employees were most gratified with the program about technology. The next most gratification programs of this group were the programs of entertainment, fashions and

occidental songs. This group preferred least the modern Thai songs program. Their most preference programs were ranked as follows: the news panel program, the news update program and the working today program.

The group of private-sector employees was gratified with every program of the Sunshine radio at nearly the same level. The modern Thai songs program and the program with listeners' participations were the most preferred programs. The program about traveling was the least preferred.

The group of business owners was most gratified with entertainments fashions, and modern Thai song programs respectively. This group was least gratified at the occidental songs program. The most preference programs for the group of private-sector/s employees and the group of business owners were the news panel, the working today program and the News update program.

The samples classified in the miscellaneous group (agricultural and housewife) were gratified most at the program with listeners' participation, but gratified least at the program on traveling. This group ranked the working today program, the news update program and the news panel as their 3 most preference programs respectively.

The group of pupils and students was gratified with every program of the Sunshine Radio at nearly the same level. This group was most gratified with the modern Thai songs program, the occidental songs program and the program with listeners' participations, respectively. The program about technology was the least gratifying program to them. This group ranked the news update program, the news panel and the entertainment update program as its most preference respectively.

4. Attitudes toward other radio stations' programs
Among other radio stations, the samples listened most to programs of the Royal Thai Navy 5 (104.75 MHz),

around 30.7%. The second most listened station was the Royal Thai Army 14 (98.25 MHz), about 19.1%. The most listened programs were those of the occidental songs and the entertainment.

5. Gratifications of the Sunshine Radio V.S. the competitive radio stations

On ranking the samples, preference for program of each radio station, it appeared that the samples most preferred the Sunshine Radios programs. The next most preferences were programs of the Royal Thai Navy 5 radio station and the Royal Thai Army 14 radio station.

Comparing the gratification of the Sunshine Radio's programs with those of each competitive radio station, the study found that the samples were most gratified with the Sunshine Radio's programs. Especially, the modern Thai songs program, the program with listeners' participations and the occidental songs program were more gratified than the others.

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A chi-square test was conducted to compare the level of gratification to the weekly frequentness of listening to the Sunshine Radio. The test found that the group of samples with different listening frequentness had different level of gratification of the Sunshine Radio, at the significance level of 0.05.

And the difference in frequentness of listening to radio programs had different level of gratification of other radio stations' programs, at the significance level of 0.05 as well.

DISCUSSIONS

In this study of the relation between variables, the researcher aimed at finding the relation of 2 variables, i.e. the frequentness of listening to radio programs, as the independent variable, and the level of gratification of the radio programs, as the dependant variable. The analysis gave a result that the gratification of listening to radio programs was dependent upon the frequentness of listening to the radio

programs, for both the Sunshine Radio's programs and the competitive radio stations' programs.

To study the relation between the education level and other variables, many research studies have been conducted. They found that the personal variables that best predicted the open-to-message behaviors were the education level and the social status. In the study, the professions were used to indicate the latter variable.

The results of this study were in agreement with above-mentioned study. There were many factors affecting individual's openness to messages. The specific ones were age, sex, education level, income, and profession. A message deliver (or sender) should always be aware of these factors, as well as the qualifications of media and other related factory according to concepts and theories, mentioned previously so that he could choose the media channels and the message features appropriate to the message receivers. He then could make communication effectively as targeted.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The listeners to radio programs in three of the six areas, namely urban Chonburi, rural Chacherngsao and rural Rayong preferred most the programs of the Sunshine Radio But the listeners in rural Chonburi, Samutprakarn and urban Rayong liked the programs of competitive radio stations.

Presently, though the Sunshine Radio is the market leader, it has only 37% market share. The Sunshine Radio has to study and monitor the movements of the competitive radio stations, by often examining the popularity of their programs, broadcasting schedule and disc jockeys. Additionally, the Sunshine Radio should make following amendments: eliminating the disturbances of its radio waves in rural Chonburi and Chacherngsao provinces; making adjustment of its broadcasting schedule in all areas; and improving the quality of its disc jockeys in Rayong province.

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