

# RURAL DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION COVERAGE OF RADIO STATIONS SERVING THE EASTERN VISAYAS

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## ABSTRACT

All station managers or program directors of radio stations serving the Eastern Visayas were interviewed to determine the rural development (RD) information coverage of their stations. A purposive random sample of 600 radio-listening farmers from 12 municipalities in the Eastern Visayas provided additional data on listenership to RD information. All the radio stations surveyed broadcast RD information mainly on agriculture. Government agencies were the sources of RD information for most stations. Radio was perceived to be the most effective channel for communicating RD information while drama was the most listened to format. Persons, usually extension technicians, were the most preferred sources of RD information by the farmer-respondents. About 91.5% of the farmer-respondents listened to RD information broadcast which dealt chiefly with agriculture.

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**KEY WORDS:** Rural development. Information. Radio. Programming. Format. Broadcasting. Listenership. Spot announcements. Jingle. Eastern Visayas.

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## INTRODUCTION

Radio has been regarded primarily as a tool for entertainment rather than for education by many people. This is especially true in the Philippines where the radio broadcasting system has been predominated by commercial stations whose main vehicle for delivering messages are

entertainment programs. However, Presidential Decree 1081 declaring martial law in the Philippines has been influential in making the people who are managing, operating and working in the radio stations more development-conscious. Under martial law government, the Broadcast Media Council was created. The Council became the

regulatory body of the broadcast industry and formulated policies to remind the broadcast media of their social responsibility.

A look into the programming of government and non-commercial or non-profit radio stations would reveal that very few are engaged substantially in rural development broadcasting (EDPITAF, 1977).

Most studies on the broadcast media deal with audience listenership and program preferences or feedback studies (Agreda, 1964; Chua, 1973; De la cruz, 1974; and Tetangco, 1967). Very little research has been done to determine the nature and extent of rural development information coverage of radio stations (Gomez, 1972) particularly those reaching the Eastern Visayas, and to find out whether or not such types of programs are listened to by their intended audience. This study was conducted to determine the rural development information coverage of radio stations serving the Eastern Visayas.

#### METHOD

Due to a relatively small population, personal interviews were conducted with all station managers or program directors of 29 radio stations serving the Eastern Visayas which were located in Tacloban City, Ormoc City, Calbayog City, Catbalogan, Cebu City, Cagayan de Oro City, Valencia town in Bukidnon, Davao City, Butuan City, and Surigao City (Fig. 1).

Besides the survey on the radio programming staff, personal inter-

views were also conducted on a sample of the radio audiences. Considering the coverage areas of radio stations reaching the Eastern Visayas, the study used the purposive random sampling procedure. Thus, each of the two islands (Samar and Leyte) comprising Region VIII was divided into two divisions, namely Eastern Samar and Western Samar; Eastern Leyte and Western Leyte. From each division, three municipalities were selected for a total of 12 municipalities (Fig. 2). Fifty farmers were randomly selected from each of the 12 municipalities resulting in a sample size of 600 radio-listening farmers.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### *The Radio Stations.*

Nearly all (90%) of the 29 radio stations included in the study were commercial stations. Only 7% were non-commercial and the rest, (3%) were non-profit stations. On the average, radio stations were broadcasting 18 hr per day. The power of the stations ranged from 1-10 kw but a big number were operating on 5 kw power.

##### *Number and Extent of Rural Development Information Coverage.*

All the stations broadcast rural development (RD) information. Those on agriculture comprised 25% of the total RD programming content; health and nutrition, 23%; public service, 22%; family relations

and home management, 15%; and land reform, 5%.

Most of the rural development programs were aired from Monday to Saturday, and a greater number of these occupied the 5:00-6:00 a.m. time slot. Rural development messages aired during this time slot dealt chiefly with agriculture. The duration of these programs ranged from 1 min to 2 hr with a mean duration of 25 min.

Table 1 shows the format used by the radio stations in broadcasting rural development information. More than one-half (53%) were in the form of spot announcements and plugs which were either dramatized or in jingle form. One-third were broadcast using the talk or news format interspersed with music.

Rural development programs were generally sponsored by government agencies. Majority of these had been broadcast for about 1-3 years.

Drama was considered by radio station respondents to be the most listened to format in broadcasting rural development messages.

Station respondents perceived radio (90%) as the most effective

**Table 1.** Format used in broadcasting rural development information.

Format	Frequency of Mention *	%
Spots and plugs	103	53
Talks with music	65	33
News	15	8
Drama	11	6

\* Multiple responses

channel for communicating rural development information followed by persons (10%).

In broadcasting rural development messages, problems related to broadcast resources (78%) were most frequently mentioned. Among them were inadequacy of broadcast references, delayed arrival of broadcast materials, too much information on certain areas and very little on others, difficulty in translating rural development information into the dialect of the audience, and lack of trained manpower. Other problems cited were loss of audience listenership due to indifference of listeners to rural development programs, lack of money and inadequate feedback on rural development programs.

To solve the problem of loss of audience listenership, the most common suggestion was to "sugar-coat" messages by including music and using other production techniques to make the program more appealing. On the problem related to broadcast materials, talent, and facilities, the solutions suggested were to obtain materials from various government agencies, write to concerned agencies and have a dialogue with them, and for government to subsidize radio stations by providing equipment.

On the problem of lack of revenue for rural development programs, the suggested solution was to select better broadcast time for such programs. Coordinating with extension workers and conducting surveys were suggested to solve the problem of inadequate feedback on rural development programs.

Majority of the stations (97%) conducted some form of station listenership evaluation. The methods used by the radio stations in evaluating station listenership are presented in Table 2. Audience survey by an independent research group was primarily used by 85% of the stations. Twenty-eight (28%) stations relied on letters sent to them by listeners and five (18%) learned about their audiences through informal surveys. Other stations obtained information indirectly through rumors while only one conducted its own evaluation.

#### *Radio's Farmer Audience.*

The ages of the farmer-respondents ranged from 16-75 years with a mean age of 46.6 years. Eighty percent were male, 91% married, 6% were widows/widowers, and 3% were single. Their educational attainment ranged from no schooling (4.3%) to college graduates (3.5%); majority reached the

elementary level. About half of the respondents had a monthly income of ₱101-₱300; their mean income was ₱331 per month.

#### *Rural Development Information Listenership.*

Eighty-seven percent of the radio-listening farmers owned a radio set. Only 13% did not own a radio set but claimed that they listened to the radio sets of their neighbors, relatives, or friends.

More than three-fourths (78%) of the farmers listened to agricultural programs which were broadcast during the 5:00-6:00 a.m. time slot.

Generally, respondents in the Eastern Visayas listened to station DYVL. However, respondents in Eastern Leyte and Western Leyte tuned in to station DYVL and DYHP, respectively. Most of the respondents from Samar listened to stations DYVL, DYMS, and DYHP, in that order.

**Table 2.** Methods used for evaluating radio station listenership.

Evaluation Method	Number of Stations *	%
Audience survey by an independent research group	24	85
Letters to the station	8	28
Informal survey	5	18
Rumors	2	7
Formal evaluation by station	1	3
Others	2	7

\* Multiple responses

It is interesting to note that 91.5% of the respondents had listened to rural development programs on radio. Majority of these programs (94.17%) mostly listened to by respondents were on agriculture such as vegetable raising, poultry, and swine production.

The respondents indicated a positive reaction toward rural development information heard on radio. More than half said they would want to hear more about the topics they had heard. More than three-fourths suggested having radio broadcast on health.

Persons, usually technicians, were the most preferred sources of rural development information, followed by radio, brochures, newspapers, and magazines, in that order.

#### IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There appears to be a glut of information on agriculture and a dearth of materials on other development topics, particularly on health. Government and private agencies dealing with health, nutrition, and other development projects may have to come out with more and appropriate materials intended for broadcast. Also, a more efficient distribution system of these materials may have to be devised so that stations would receive them regularly.

Results show that rural development information was generally broadcast in the form of dramatized spot announcements or jingles.

However, radio station respondents perceived drama as the most effective format for broadcasting rural development information. This finding points to the need to conduct research on the comparative effectiveness of different radio program format as vehicles for communicating development messages, e.g., drama vs. the short, dramatized spot announcement or jingle.

The language used in broadcasting rural development information must be that spoken by the audience to which it is beamed to ensure that the information is understood. Rural development information is usually technical in nature and using the language of the audience would be one step toward minimizing difficulties in understanding.

A shortage of trained broadcasters who could talk on technical topics, as reported by station managers, seems to underscore the need for training programs on specific development or technical areas such as health, agriculture, nutrition, etc., for radio broadcasters. On the other hand, information officers of rural development agencies should also be given some form of skills training and attitudinal orientation on the proper use of radio for development support.

Despite the wide ownership of radio sets and high radio listenership among farmer-respondents, there still appears to be a strong preference for personal channels as sources of rural development information. In view of this, the chances of getting research or technical information utilized by the

end-users might be increased if a mutually enhancing mix of radio and interpersonal channels was employ-

ed by development agencies and communication specialists concerned.

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