Indian Journal of Extension Education
Vol. 51, No. 3 & 4, 2015 (20-24)

Community Radio: Preferences, Opinion and Listening Behaviour of Farmers

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ABSTRACT

Community radio is an innovative tool for community empowerment catering information needs of the farming community in rural and remote areas in a radius of about 15 kms. The study was conducted in purposively selected five community radio stations during 2012 to 2014. Five community radio stations i.e. CCSHAU, Hissar (Haryana), Vallabh *Krishak* Radio, Saharanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Community Radio, Mewat (Haryana), Pravara Community Radio, Babhaleshwar (Maharashtra) and Sharda Community Radio, Baramati (Maharashtra) were selected for the study. Two villages each were selected randomly from each CRS jurisdiction to see the farmers' responses about the community radio station. Fifteen (15) respondents' were selected randomly from each of the sampled ten villages. Thus, a total of 150 respondents from five CRS constituted the sample for the study. The study revealed that a majority (65 %) listeners preferred agriculture success stories followed by live interactive programme (60 %), experts talk on agriculture and GK test in agriculture (57.50%). Also a majority (52.67%) of the respondents were daily listeners of the community radio programmes followed by weekly (30%) and fortnightly (17.33%). Major strengths of CRS identified were interesting due to local dialect (2.6 MS) followed by quick source of information (2.5 MS), and community participation (2.3 MS). The major weaknesses of CRS identified were problems of sustainability (2.5 MS), followed by low (15 kms) coverage (2.3 MS), low power (50 W) transmitter (2.00 MS) and no operating cost (1.8 MS). Also listening pattern of the respondents revealed that 57.33 per cent listeners were listening CR programme and simultaneously doing some work like cooking, feeding animals, milking etc. followed by about 23 per cent respondents were listening and taking notes.

Key words

INTRODUCTION

Radio is the cheapest and fastest mode of information dissemination. Now a day the role of community radio is coming up in a very big way to cater to the location specific need of the farming community. Due to the effectiveness of community radio for the agricultural technology dissemination, it is becoming popular among the farming community in rural areas. Community Radio is owned by the community and airs programs designed and produced by it specifically for its own developmental needs. It is a significant departure from the primary centralized radio broadcasting paradigm that India has been following for decades. A Community Radio station is one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community. It can be managed and controlled by one group, by combined groups, or of people such as women, children, farmers, fisher folk, ethnic groups, or senior citizens. There is high level of people's participation, both in management and program production. Individual community members and local institutions are the principal sources of support. India's Community Radio Movement, now a decade old, has proved its strength as a people's media by providing a platform to the poor and marginalized communities to articulate their opinions. Community radio (CR) is an innovative tool for community empowerment particularly in rural and remote areas. Considering the importance of community radio, it has been deployed in many states to strengthen the information flow among the farmers, farm women and rural youth. According to Balan and Norman (2012) radio was identified as the most accessible mass communication tool for grassroot people. As a medium, radio, can easily reach the rural mass in short span of time. It is gaining momentum in recent period. It is not simply about producing radio programme, to put on air, but it is by the community and for the community. CR is giving opportunity for the people representation for different ethnic, social and religious backgrounds and gender. There should be community participation in all aspects of the radio station from establishment to management and from administration to financing. According to Arpita and Kumar (2012) the major sources of information to the farmers were friends, *aanganwadi* workers, television, and radio under pesonal localite, personal cosmopolite

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and mass media sources, respectively. In last couple of years, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has created conducive environment for the growth of community radio stations (CRS) in India. As per Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, there are total 184 CRS in India (as on 10.06.2015) operational under educational institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and *Krishi Vigyan Kendras* (KVK). By 10th June 2015, the Ministry of Information & broadcasting, Government of India, had received 1738 applications for community radio licenses, from NGOs and other civil society organizations, educational institutions and Agricultural Universities and *Krishi Vigyan Kendras.* Of these, 416 community radio stations have been issued letters of Intent (LOI). 226 Grant of Permission Agreements (GOPA) have been signed with license applicants under the new scheme. According to Malagar *et al.,* (2011) rural women preferred the programmes to be simple with local language, providing timely information and more information on income generating activities. According to Talwar *et al.* (2012) land holding, annual income, extension participation, social participation, material possession, media utilization and media participation were found to be positively and significantly correlated with listening behaviour of farm women. According to Parab *et al.* (2013) community radio listeners were more interested in rainfall prediction, agricultural news, disease and pest predictions and inputs availability. Considering the prevailing scenario and increasing number of community radio stations in India, a study on five community radio stations was carried out. The paper attempts to analyze the preferences, opinion, and listening behaviour of the listeners of community radio programs. The paper also focused upon the strengths and weaknesses of the community radio.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in purposively selected five community radio stations during 2012 to 2014. Five community radio stations i.e. CCSHAU, Hissar (Haryana), Vallabh *Krishak* Radio, Saharanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Community Radio, Mewat (Haryana), Pravara Community Radio, Babhaleshwar (Maharashtra) and Sharda Community Radio, Baramati (Maharashtra) were selected for the study. Two villages each were selected randomly from each CRS jurisdiction to see the farmers' responses about the community radio station. Fifteen (15) respondents' were selected randomly from each of the sampled ten villages. Thus, a total of 150 respondents from five CRS constituted the sample for the study. Also the opinions of the CRS staff were taken for analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the community radio.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Operational Community Radio Stations in India (As on 10.06.2015)

The state-wise details of community stations in India operational under educational Institutions, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), *Krishi Vigyan Kendras* (KVK) and State Agricultural University (SAU)/ State University are given in table 1 (MIB, 2015). About 49.00 per cent community radio stations are operational under educational institutions in India followed by Non-Governmental Organizations (36.41%), State Agricultural University / State University (10.87 %) and *Krishi Vigyan Kendras* (3.80%). About 15.00 per cent community radio stations are operational in Tamil Nadu followed by Uttar Pradesh (12.50 %) and Maharashtra (9.23 %). Hence, it is revealed that these states are harnessing the potentials of innovative tools for empowerment of the people and to provide information services to the end users. To develop a network of 600 community radio stations (CRS) in the country, Govt. of India has been allocated Rs. 100 crores in the Union Budget, 2014 to encourage local community voices. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) grants permission to educational institutions, registered societies/non-governmental organizations and *Krishi Vigyan Kendras* (agricultural research centres) to set up community radio stations.

Table1: State-wise Operational Community Radio Stations in India .

States/UTs	Operational CRS				Total
	Educational	NGOs	KVKs	SAUs/Uni.	
Andhra Pradesh	03	02	-	-	05
Assam	-	-	-	02	02
Bihar	01	03	01	-	05
Chandigarh	01	01	-	01	03
Chhattisgarh	01	-	-	02	03
Delhi	04	01	-	01	06
Gujarat	02	02	01	01	06
Haryana	02	05	-	02	09
Himachal Pradesh	02	-	-	-	02
J&K	-	01	-	-	01
Jharkhand	-	01	-	-	01
Karnataka	09	03	-	01	13
Kerala	04	04	-	-	08
Madhya Pradesh	06	08	-	-	14
Maharashtra	06	07	04	-	17
Odisha	-	06	-	02	08
Pondicherry	02	-	-	01	03
Punjab	02	01	-	-	03
Rajasthan	05	03	-	-	08
Tamil Nadu	20	05	-	02	27
Telangana	02	03	-	-	05
Uttar Pradesh	12	07	01	03	23
Uttarakhand	03	04	-	02	09
West Bengal	03	-	-	-	03
Total	**90**	**67**	**07**	**20**	**184**

Source: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2014

Edu : Educational
NGO : Non-Governemtnal
KVK : Krishi Vigyan Kendra
SAU : State Agriculture University
Uni : University

Details of selected community radio stations

The particulars and specifications of five selected CRS is given in table 2 revealed that the effective radiated power (ERP), antenna height (30 metres) and coverage range (10-15 kms) in all the selected CRS were found similar as per the Govt of India guideline. A majority of the listeners of the CRS programs opined that the coverage range of CRS needs to be enhanced beyond 15 kms and at least it should cover the entire district.

Table 2: Details of selected community radio stations

CRS Details	Community Radio,CCSH AU, Hisar	Vallabh Krishak Radio, Saharanpur	Community Radio, Mewat	Pravara Community Radio, Babhaleshwar	Sharda Community Radio, Baramati
Year of establishment	29.11.2009	17.05.2011	1.09.2010	2.10.2009	18.11.2011
Frequency	91.2 M.Hz.	90.4 M. Hz	90.4 Mhz	90.8 M.Hz.	90.8 M.Hz.
Antenna Height	100 Ft (30 m)	100 Ft (30 m)	100 Ft (30 m)	100 Ft (30 m)	100 Ft (30 m)
Effective Radiated Power (ERP)	100 W	100 W	100 W	100 W	100 W
Range (Kms)	10-15 Kms	10-15 Kms	10-15 Kms	10-15 Kms	10-15 Kms

Preferences of the listeners about agricultural programme

The data on preferences of the listeners about agricultural programme depicted in table 3 revealed that a majority (65 %) of the listeners preferred agriculture success stories followed by live interactive programme (60%), expert talk on agriculture and GK test in agriculture (57.50%), progressive farmers talk (45.33%) and theme-based talk on agriculture (47.50%), respectively. Hence, it is revealed that a majority of the listeners were interested in agricultural success stories of the successful farmers/entrepreneurs. Similar findings have been reported by Madhu (2012).

Table 3: Preferences of the Listeners about Agricultural Programme of CRS

n=120

Agricultural Programme	*f*(%)	Rank
Agriculture Success stories	78 (65.00)	I
Live Interactive programme	72 (60.00)	II
Expert Talk	69 (57.50)	III
Progressive farmers talk	55 (45.33)	VI
Theme-based talk	57 (47.50)	V
GK test in agriculture	69 (57.50)	III
Dissemination agricultural information through Spiritual talk by folk artists	60 (50.00)	IV

Listening behaviour of the respondents about community radio

The data in respect of listening behavior of the respondents about community radio (Table 4) revealed that a majority (52.67%) of the respondents were daily listeners of the community radio programmes followed by weekly (30%) and fortnightly (17.33%), respectively.

With respect to listening style of was found that a majority (48%) of the respondents were listening community radio programme with their fellow farmers followed by alone (37.33%) and listening with family members (14.67%). Also listening pattern of the respondents revealed that 57.33 per cent listeners were listening CR programme and simultaneously doing some work like cooking, feeding animals, milking *etc.* followed by about 23 per cent respondents were listening and taking notes and only 20 per cent respondents were listening CR programs. Hence, it is concluded that the respondents' listening behavior was positive as a majority of the listeners were listening community radio programs and simultaneously doing some work at home like cooking, animal feeding, milking etc. Similar findings have been stated by Parab *et al.* (2010) and Malagar *et al.,* (2011).

Table 4: Listening behaviour of the respondents about community radio

n=150

Variables	Categorization	Frequency	Per cent
Listening frequency	Daily	79	52.67
	Weekly	45	30.00
	Fortnightly	26	17.33
Listening style	Alone	56	37.33
	With family members	22	14.67
	With fellow farmers	72	48.00
Listening pattern	Only listening	30	20.00
	Listening and simultaneously doing some work	86	57.33
	Listening and taking notes	34	22.67

Opinion of respondents about CRS program

A majority of the respondents (77.33%) opined that quality of content of CRS program was good followed by fair (22.67%). Table 5 regarding adequacy of content, 80 per cent of the respondent opined that the content of the CRS program was adequate followed by somewhat adequate (20 %). The opinion in respect of usefulness of content revealed that the content of CRS was very much useful to 86 per cent of the respondents followed by much useful (14%). In addition, about 79 per cent respondents opined that CRS programs were highly relevant to them followed by somewhat relevant (21.33%).

About 87 per cent respondents opined that the audio quality of community radio program was good followed

by fair (12.67%). Also the time of broadcast of CR program was most convenient to 70 per cent of the respondents followed by convenient (24.67%) and less convenient (5.33%), respectively. According to Parab *et al.* (2013) radio listeners suggested 7 to 9 am and 7 to 9 pm as the most suitable time to listen community radio. Also, they were more interested in rainfall prediction, agricultural news, disease and pest predictions and inputs availability.

Table 5: Opinion of respondents about CRS program n=150

Variables	Categorization	Frequency	Per cent
Quality of content	Good	116	77.33
	Fair	34	22.67
	Poor	-	-
Adequacy of content	Adequate	120	80.00
	Somewhat adequate	30	20.00
	Inadequate	-	-
Usefulness of content	Very much	129	86.00
	Much	21	14.00
Relevancy	Highly relevant	118	78.67
	Somewhat relevant	32	21.33
	Irrelevant	-	-
Audio quality	Good	131	87.33
	Fair	19	12.67
	Poor	-	-
Time of broadcast	Most convenient	105	70.00
	Convenient	37	24.67
	Less convenient	8	5.33
	Least convenient	-	-

Strengths and weaknesses of Community Radio Stations

The opinion regarding strengths and weaknesses of community radio stations depicted in table 6 revealed that major strengths of CRS identified were interesting due to local dialect (2.6 MS) followed by quick source of information (2.5 MS), community participation (2.3 MS), good for creating awareness (2.1 MS), more interaction with experts (1.7 MS) and CR helps to solve the field problems (1.3 MS), respectively.

The major weaknesses of CRS identified were problems of sustainability (2.5 MS), followed by low (15 kms) coverage (2.3 MS), low power (50 W) transmitter (2.00 MS), no operating cost (1.8 MS), low possession of radio (1.7 MS) and less operating personnel (1.5 MS).

Fluctuation in radio frequency and sometimes cross connection with local FM channels which affects the sound quality of the radio programme and less time allocation for broadcast were the other limitations.

Table 6: Strengths and Weaknesses of Community Radio Stations

Strengths	MS*	Rank	Weaknesses	MS*	Rank
Interesting due to local dialect	2.6	I	Problem of sustainability	2.5	I
Quick source of information	2.5	II	Low coverage (15 KM)	2.3	II
Community participation	2.3	III	Low power transmitter (50 W)	2.0	III
Good for creating awareness	2.1	IV	No operating cost	1.8	IV
More interaction with experts	1.7	V	Low possession of radio	1.7	V
Helps to solve the field problems	1.3	VI	Less operating personnel	1.5	VI

*Maximum obtainable score: 3

CONCLUSION

A comparative case analysis of community radio stations revealed some emerging challenges such as sustainability of community radio station for long run, low frequency range as CRS is aimed at covering only 10-15 kilometer radius. Due to its focus on local concerns and aspirations and the interactive nature of its programming and community participation, agriculture community radio can be a powerful medium for technology dissemination in remote areas. The community radio should cover the entire district for the benefit of the farming community, hence, Govt. has to rethink for enhancing the frequency range beyond 15 kms. Also, Govt of India has to plan for reducing the yearly spectrum fee for operating CRS. Sustainability is the major constraints in operation of CRS, thus, this service needs continuous back up from institutions till it reaches to its sustainability.

Paper received on : April 21, 2015
Accepted on : June 4,2015

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