

Development Broadcasting in Malaysia and Thailand: An Analysis of Concept and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Broadcasting has played a significant role in motivating, educating and mobilizing the population of a country for social and economic development. This distinctive role of broadcasting is termed as *Development Broadcasting*. The analytical approach was used via documentary studied relevant to the development broadcasting as mentioned earlier. This paper will discuss the concept of *Development Broadcasting* as it has been applied in Malaysia and Thailand. It will also analyze and compare the approaches and strategies of using broadcasting for development in the two countries. As the two countries are politically and socially different so are their broadcasting system. Broadcasting in Malaysia has been a driving force in term of social engineering and political commitment that has contributed to the country's development. Through broadcasting the country was united in facing the threat of communist insurgency in 1944-1960's. After that broadcasting was mobilized to set the stage for economic development through motivational and educational programs. Both radio and television have significantly played their roles in shaping the past and present achievement of Malaysia. Unlike Malaysia, Thailand has specific agency to carry out educational or development broadcasting. Educational Broadcasting Network of Thailand has dedicated radio stations throughout the country which broadcast in-school programs, non-formal education programs, in-service teacher training, Open University programs, agricultural extension programs, health programs and news relayed from National Broadcasting Station. Besides that, there is the Agricultural Extension Service Radio operated by the Department of Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture & Cooperatives. Many Thai television broadcast special agricultural programs for the rural population. Especially Radio Thailand program has its weekly talk directly from the Prime Minister on every Saturday morning to inform and wrap up any important event to the general Thai people to provided motivation and knowledge that enhanced positive attitudes towards national development among the population of Thailand.

Key words: development broadcasting, Malaysia, Thailand

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INTRODUCTION

The role of mass media for development in the developing countries has attracted a lot of attention from scholars, politicians, international and national agencies and communication practitioners. The works of Lerner (1958), Schramm (1964), McClelland (1961), Pye (1963) and Rogers (1969) have molded the early theory and practice of utilizing mass media for national development. As Schramm (1964) stated,

Mass media can widen horizons and thus can help build empathy. They can focus attention on the problems and goals of development, increase aspirations and all these they can do largely themselves and directly. This creates an informational climate in which development is stimulated. (p. 114).

The works of Lerner and Schramm were supported by other scholars such as Rogers, Inkeles and Smith, Pye, and Rao. Rogers (1969) had carried out extensive cross-cultural research on the diffusion of agricultural innovations among farmers. He found that farmers who were more successful had certain characteristics such as more education and a cosmopolitan outlook. Exposure to mass media was found to be highly correlated with most of these characteristics. The role of mass media in national development has been well described by Schramm (1964). The roles are:

1. The Media as Watchmen
 - a. Mass media can widen horizons
 - b. Mass media can focus attention
 - c. Mass media can raise aspirations

2. The Media in the Decision Process

a. The mass media can help only indirectly to change strongly held attitudes or valued practices.

b. Mass media can feed the interpersonal channels

c. Mass media can broaden the policy dialogue

d. Mass media can confer status

e. Mass media can enforce social norms

f. Mass media can help form taste

3. The Mass Media as Teachers

Mass media can help substantially in all types of education and training.

In developing countries when one talks of the developmental role of mass media, one mostly refers to radio (Jamison and McAnny, 1978). Nevertheless, increasing attention has been given to utilize the power and potential of television for development purposes.

Analytical Approach

This paper was used the analytical approach from all relevant documents of “development broadcasting” in the two countries : Malaysia and Thailand. The analytical comparative topics were categorized into three main topics in the two countries as follow : 1) History of broadcasting ; 2) Broadcasting for development; and 3) Strategies of development broadcasting.

History of broadcasting in Malaysia

Broadcasting in Malaysia began with the

formation of The Kuala Lumpur Amateur Radio Station (KLARS) in 1930 began to broadcast programs for 2 hours for three times weekly. In 1940, the British Malaya Broadcasting was made part of the British Information Ministry and was known as the Malayan Broadcasting Authority.

On the historic date of September 6, 1963, when Malaysia was announced the words “Inilah Radio Malaysia” or “This is Radio Malaysia” then moved to another big step in television service started with one TV network – Saluran 5 TV Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur. The radio and television broadcasting operations were officially merged and kept under the purview of the Ministry of Information Malaysia

The first private-commercial broadcasting station was established in June 1984 by Sistem Televisyen Malaysia Berhad (STMB) named as TV3. This is the decade of privatization. Began with the shifting of a new administration from the former Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn's to the new : Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. This new administration has steered up the establishment of many private radio and broadcasting stations namely TV3, NTV7 which are free to air broadcast and one subscribers' satellite station the ASTRO which began in 1996 (Radio Television Malaysia,1989).

History of broadcasting in Thailand

Broadcasting took hold in Thailand in its early days of 1927 with its short-wave transmitter used of 20 watts with King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) in his address to broadcast at the beginning as

“...Radio broadcasting is meant to enhance education, trade and entertainment for members of the public” For the purpose, this came up to be the “Telegraph Act” amended with more high quality transmitter. Although the power output for radio broadcasting at the time was low, it served as the main source of information and entertainment for the people.

Till after “the Second World War”, the country found itself under varying degrees of authoritarian and military rules, with some brief respites at times. Radio and later television became powerful tools for those in power. However, the broadcast media have been consistently developed, with the Public Relations Department playing the lead. The first television broadcast in the year of 1952 then followed by the first commercial radio broadcasting service went on air in 1954, followed by a television service in 1955. All broadcasting stations maintain their own editorial control, even when the country was under an emergency rule. Economic boom in the 1980s precipitate the commercialization and the broadcast hours became more and more precious together with the fast pace of modern technologies that has transformed radio and television broadcasts. The emergence of technology such as the phone-in, the participatory programs and the ever-increasing use of computer technology in broadcast, including the creation of web-site contributed to the growth of broadcasting industry.. All those technologies converge into many of the participatory programs such as many emerging phone-in programs, which can create the unique communities, the emergency response network, and others (AIBD,2002).

Broadcasting for development in Malaysia

Radio Television Malaysia has an established the Development and Agriculture Service (DAS) responsible for rural and development broadcasting started during the emergency period of 1948-60 to produce specialized programs intended for the rural population to fight communist propaganda. The aim was to form a link between the rural population, including the farmers, mine workers and rubber plantations laborers, with the government, in addition to provide them with entertainment and information (Ahmad, 1981). Radio sets were distributed to community centers especially in sensitive areas of the newly resettled Chinese villages and the far-flung rubber plantations.

The programs were both entertaining and informative : consisted of news, drama, music, and talk on baby care, cooperatives, democratic government and others. Music was used to deliver patriotic and developmental messages as well as entertainment. Programs were broadcast in English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil (Ahmad, 1981) In 1960, the state of emergency was lifted. The new government created a Rural Unit at Radio Malaya in 1961, this made more systematic and unified strategies for programming. Two programs were produced initially, a thrice weekly *Siaran Kemajuan Kampung* (Progress of the Village) and once a week *Halaman Pertanian* (Agriculture Digest).

In 1962 a special program for adult education was started, more than 1,500 radio transistor sets were distributed to rural areas to facilitate listening

by the adult education students. Most of the program's contents centered on a model farm family (Pak Omar's family), and how to improve their quality of life, etc.

To achieve this, a four-fold aim of DAS services were formulated. These aims were:

1. To create awareness, encourage new ideas and aspirations in line with the New Economic Policy and modernization.
2. To disseminate information and knowledge to the rural community in simple and understandable language.
3. To motivate and provide advice to farmers for healthy competition in order to increase their productivity by using modern farming techniques.
4. To encourage and motivate the rural people to actively participate in socio-economic and political activities (Musa and Hussin, 1979).

Types of programs produced by DAS have specific target audiences : farmers, fishermen, rural population, low-income urban population, youth and the extension agents (Kayat, 1983). DAS utilized the regular programs in English, Chinese and Tamil focus on the respective target audiences which represent the other ethnic groups of the country then both local and regional stations also supported.

And for their Television Development and Agriculture Service produced two programs per week in 1988. The first program was *Halaman Pertanian* (Agricultural Digest) mainly consisted of highlights of successful farmers. The second television program was *Belia* (Youth) mainly consisted of reports, interviews and career information for the youth in general (www.rtm.net.my).

Strategies of development broadcasting in Malaysia

The main strategies of Development Broadcasting in Malaysia could be categorized into two main factors as follow: 1) there is the specific agency responsible for the Development Broadcasting called DAS (The Development and Agriculture Services) responsible for both rural and development broadcasting; 2) there is the specialized programs both in entertaining and informative intended to serve various specific target audiences : farmers, fishermen, rural population, low-income urban population, youth, and the extension agents, etc.

Concept of development and educational broadcasting in Thailand

The utilization of radio broadcasting as a medium for development and educational purpose in Thailand was given a serious effort in 1978. The aim was to raise the standard of formal education and also to enable people in distant rural areas to obtain life -long education. Educational Broadcasting Network (EBN) was initiated in 1978. The Public Relations Department was assigned the function of planning and implementing the project.

The EBN Project called for the setting up of 11 broadcasting stations: three 100- KW AM stations in Bangkok, Lampang in the North and Khonkaen on the Northeast; four 50-KW AM stations in the lower Northern provinces of Nakhon Sawan and the

Southern provinces of Surat Thani, Krabi and Songkla; two 20 -KW AM stations in Ubon Ratchathani in the Northeast and Chan Thaburi in the East; and 2.5- KW FM stations in the Northern province of Mae Hong Son and the South province of Ranong. The project was designed to achieve a combined service area of at least 90 % of the population areas of the country. Each station has to originate its own educational programme for listeners in its own area according to the criterion of suitable time and listening opportunity.

Types of educational radio programs

Educational programs provided by EBN consisted of:

- a. In-school education programs,
- b. Non-formal education programs,
- c. In-services teacher training and direct mailing programs,
- d. Open university programs,
- e. Agricultural extension programs,
- f. Health programs,
- g. News relayed from the National Broadcasting Station of Thailand.

Six government agencies are responsible for the production of these programs. They are the Non-Formal Education Department and Teacher Training Department Under ministry of Education, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, The Ministry of agriculture and Co-operative, the Ministry of Public Health, and the Public Relations Department under the Prime Minister Office.

The Public Relations Department's Educational Broadcasting Network Division serves as a central

coordinating organ of the program production, providing technical and artistic services.

In 1990, the EBN broadcasted for 19 hours and 40 minutes a day. Most of the programs were taped. From the main studio in Bangkok, the signal is sent in two directions, one to the PRD's radio station in Pathum Thani about 38 kilometers north of Bangkok, and the other to the microwave system of the Telephone Organization of Thailand, which is received by EBN stations in the provinces via the UHP link.

Program contents and target audiences

Non- formal education programs are aimed at the general public both in urban and rural areas. Emphasis was naturally given to rural audiences who make up more than 80% of the total population. The programs contents involve:

1. Knowledge of agriculture, advice on improvement of farming and marketing techniques and ideas on how to improve the quality of life and income earning;
2. Knowledge of health and sanitation, nutrition, population study and family planning;
3. Some legal advice, regulations, rights and duties as well as politics and administration;
4. Knowledge of art and culture, customs and traditions, languages history and sociology;
5. Religious talk;
6. Educational programs for specific target audiences such as woman, children, youth, farmer, labors and other occupational groups.

Agricultural extension service

A farm broadcasting station is operated with

the following consideration by the Department of agricultural Extension, the ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives Purposes.

a. To provide agricultural technology to farmers in rural communities in central Thailand.

b. To increase the efficiency of agricultural extension officers in using the mass communications media.

c. To cooperate with the government agencies in distributing timely information to the public.

In 1990 the program contents were agricultural program (15%), news (20%) including agricultural news reported frequently, entertainment (50%), and commercial (15%) (SEAPA,2002).

Agricultural information through television

In 1990, agricultural programs on television in Thailand were few in numbers. The only nationwide agricultural program is "Farmers' News" broadcast by the Army Television Channel 7. The program offered for 3 minutes daily between the local and foreign news. Apart from this program, the documentary, agricultural news is also reported during local news program in each region by regional television channels around 1800 to 1830 hours and during local news program. Here again, agricultural news or information constitutes a small part of the program. Apart from the "farmers' News" (channel 7) the mass Television Network Communication Organization of Thailand Color Channel 9 offered on Early-Bird program (0630-0700 hours) every weekday Radio Thailand : Annual Report,2002).

Issues of development broadcasting in Thailand

In principle, public service broadcasting has not yet come into concrete existence in Thailand, but it will certainly take root in the future. Its existence is mandated by Article 40 of the present constitution, which leads to the establishment of “the National Broadcasting Commission” and “the National Telecommunication Commission”. The concept of public service broadcasting is ideal, as “*the system belongs to the public*”, “*is operated by the public*”, and “*is made for the public*”. This system is important and necessary for democratic development, taking into account its human, social, and local independent dimension.

Public service utmost important must be in its operation. When under the control of the bureaucratic system, public service broadcasting are not able to operate independently. Then one of the most important role of the public service is that the public service will handle the work that the commercial broadcasting system can not or will not, guarantee people’s rights and freedom. Apart from independence, the council must be flexible and decentralized.

The new Constitution especially the Article 40 has brought about dramatic changes in the mass media, some people describe as “a media revolution”. They believe that frequencies used of radio and television broadcast should not be distributed to all groups, since the frequencies are regarded as national communication resources. The Constitution also stipulates that there must be independent regulatory

bodies committees : 1) **the National Broadcasting Commission**, and 2) **the National Telecommunication Commission** who will jointly map out Thailand’s master plan on frequency bands. Both committees will have the duty to distribute the frequencies and supervise radio or television broadcasting and telecommunication businesses with not less than 20 percent of the frequencies must be distributed or provided to the civic or the community sector, who will form part of “the public broadcasting system” to let the public sector or the community sector can seek to operate frequency bands for their public services only.

It is preposterous to assume that “**the Constitution 1997**” will bring about abrupt changes to media operations in any form of broadcasting. During the period, numerous radio programs went off the air, while several concessionaires cancelled their contracts, due to their inability to pay for the concession air-time. Government agencies and state enterprises which own broadcasting stations could find them a financial burden rather than an asset. Regular spending budget faces several cutbacks as well.

Obligations imposed by the Constitution, coupled with economic necessities, can result in the ownership status of radio and television stations and transmitters which will change hands, from government agencies and state enterprises to public at large. Media organizations in the form of corporations can be expected. This can be realized even faster than anticipated. Such organizations, even though incorporated and operated on a commercial basis, can still perform their duties in public broadcasting,

serving the public as their audiences and customers (ESCAP,1981).

Strategies of development broadcasting in Thailand

The main strategies of Development Broadcasting in Malaysia could be categorized into two main factors as follow: 1) there is a specific agency responsible for the Development Broadcasting called “The Public Relation Department” which has its countrywide broadcasting network; 2) there are two specific committees (the National Broadcasting Commission, and the National Telecommunication Commission) both jointly map out Thailand’ policies and master plan on frequency band; and 3) there is the increasing opportunities in the Development Broadcasting for all sectors in Thailand because of the obligations imposed by the 1997 Constitution identified that not less than 20 percent of the frequencies must be given to any civic group for them to run their own “public broadcasting system”.

Comparative overview of broadcasting for development in the two countries : Malaysia and Thailand

Even the two countries are politically and socially different but when the study focus specifically on “development broadcasting” it found quite similar in many aspects as follow: 1) both countries have their specific agencies to responsible for their

development broadcasting; 2) both countries may use the same “Western broadcasting theories” even though the differences of their politics and social contexts, but the development broadcasting programs are similarly designed aimed for both rural and development broadcasting. The only main difference is Thailand’s political atmosphere is more opened for broadcasting communication including the development broadcasting as reflected in the present constitution under the policy of “public service broadcasting”.

Benefits and potential of development broadcasting

In developing countries, radio is important for informal education to enable the people to gain knowledge and skills relevant for socio-economic development. The effectiveness of a media as a tool for development communication and the level which people will rely on it for information depends largely on the benefits in terms of useful and relevant information they gain from it (Fett, 1974; Hurst, 1978).

The future

Broadcasting for development is a never ending corporation of struggle in building a better society. The logic is simple. As long as there is a future, we need to plan ahead. In planning ahead, the broadcast programs must always be reformed to fit the needs of the ever-changing society (Baran, 1995). Therefore, the future is already here. We may witness the changing of the society along with the

development programs everywhere nowadays.

New broadcasting paradigm

Basic broadcasting principles like globalization, democratic ideals, global tolerance and cultural responsibilities are predicted to be fully reformed in this millennium. The progress of the formation can be seen everywhere in this region. Where as, this phenomena is not common in the early years of the last decade. The broadcasting practitioners has slowly develop their professional skills in accordance to their comprehension of what the future broadcast media need. They have to be fit to survive.

This includes detail comprehension upon the changing definition of new societal values for designing development programs. The future broadcasting must design a development program which incorporate all significant groups, without any basis. The nationality, identity, religion or the skin color, will become less important. Perhaps, broadcasters should no longer bother to include such characteristics in their report.

The new trend

What the future holds for broadcasting may be the growing popularity of a new trend of Internet broadcasting triggered by Washington Post's Woodward and Bernstein. Both Woodward and Bernstein tangling Watergate story in 1972 has undoubtedly created a great impact upon the broadcasting styles (Washington Post, 2000). Today, more and more broadcasters were attached to the techniques of social science research and polling - known as "precision journalism". This form of

broadcasters became more common as they become adept at using the resources of the Internet and other commercial databases. Perhaps, the biggest news of the mid-1990s concerned the move of newspapers and magazines onto the information superhighway.

CONCLUSION

Many lesson learned from the evolution of "Development Broadcasting" in both countries can significantly proved that broadcasting has played its significant role in many aspects of country development. Especially in this new era of broadcasting, broadcasters must first be cleared about the basic definitions, objectives, needs, requirements of broadcasting. Only those who really comprehend the field of broadcasting will never get confused in the future. The future broadcasting programs for development consists of so many aspects of the society which may easily confuse those unprepared broadcasters. For instance, the interest of the majority today, does not mean it must be having any significance for the humanitarian aspects of development. In years to come, we may witness the profession of broadcasting crossing not just geographic borders but also conceptual.

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