

A Comparative Study on Public Perception towards Sinhala Medium

“Investigative reporting” Programmes

Broadcasted by Private FM Radio Channels in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This research report studies on Public Perception towards Sinhala Medium, “**Investigative reporting**” Programmes, Broadcasted by Private FM Radio Channels in Sri Lanka. The key objective is to understand the factors affecting day time programmes on other channels vs NethFM Investigative Reporting Programme ‘**Balungala**’ towards Public Perception. To get a positive result from the research, Primary & Secondary research methods used to identify the problem. Secondary Research methods such as ACNielsen, LMRB quarterly ratings refereed, Also Primary data acquired to gain the objectives. Primary Research relevant data collected through interviews with a sample of 500 (Listeners and the NethFM Management Level Officials) the results were found as there is a need in improving programme formats during Day time programmes compared to Balungala. The results of the research gives marketer an idea about the way some ground breaking steps need to be done to capture the market if need to gain rating on other day time programmes on NethFM which will help to upgrade the Programmes and Channel rating and increase the market share. If there is any possibility to change the current process as per the recommendation along with the **Balungala** the top programme in its nature, wich has the highest ratings, it would be a plus point to the Company reaching towards profitability and a plus point to the Advertising & Media sector of Sri Lanka as NethFM is a people’s Radio Channel who works to serve the nation with dedication & care.

Background

For years, making profits out of mass communication media has become one of the most common trends in Sri Lanka. This trend has become one of the most popular mechanisms to promote different types of information and rapidly reach the Sri Lankan information community while they are mostly satisfied with the mass FM Radio Stations based Radio Broadcastings on air. As a developing country, today, there are 34 registered Sinhala Medium FM Radio Stations present in Sri Lanka. Among them 02 Stations are owned by the government. Most of the Radio channels have also established their own corresponding Television Channel as well. Fortunately, Sri Lankan listeners do not have any subscription fees or policies to tune FM Radio Channels yet. Therefore, information dissemination through private FM Radio Channels has become popular and inexpensive to obtain information. By using such opportunities, the private FM Radio Channels are producing investigative reporting programmes to attract the public attention on the format of reporting style which involves research and interviewing often climaxes in an

exposure of wrong doing by Officials of Government Organizations, Private Organizations or by the Public (in the form of Individually or as a group) on vulnerable sensitive unethical issues in the society. Hence, such growing radio based content dissemination must be guided through ethical considerations mostly but not focusing the FM radio station branding.

Problem of the Study

Based on the above situation, this study was focused on understanding what is the **Public Perception towards Sinhala Medium “Investigative reporting” Programmes Broadcasted by Private FM Radio Channels in Sri Lanka** during day time (07:00 to 18:00 hrs)

Objectives of the Study

In order to investigate the above problem, study objectives were designed to identify the background of Sinhala Medium realistic Investigative Reporting programmes broadcasted via FM radio channels in Sri Lanka during day time (07:00 to 18:00 hrs) and to conduct a comparative study on the underlying factors affecting towards public perception for such programmes in Sri Lanka in order to recommend strategies to improvise investigations based information dissemination through effective ethical guidelines.

Methodology

Literature shows that good Radio programmes needs to be innovative by eliminating duplicated programmes with a significant content to retain loyal audiences despite airing in a wide variety of smaller local stations and having a segmented audience. In developing countries, education, entertainment, current affairs and health issues are highly attracted by the public over business, spiritual while sports with least interest. Also awareness of the programme, language policy used, timing of air and number of commercial breaks involved helped in understanding the choice of a Radio programme one listens . (Kwakwa, 2012).

Using those key variables, a qualitative desk study was performed during 2014-2015 to understand the market position and popularity of different Sinhala private FM Radio channels in Sri Lanka. Later, empirical data were gathered using a written questionnaire from a random sample of 500 private Sinhala medium FM radio listeners in Sri Lanka to identify the factors affecting day time Sinhala medium programmes on those selected key private radio channels such as SirasaFM, HiruFM, NethFM, YFM, DeranaFM, ShaaFM, SriFM towards their public perception based on Sinhala medium investigative Reporting programmes on air during day time (07:00 to 18:00 hrs)

Key Findings

Interestingly, out of those 500 respondents 47% have stated that they frequently listens to NethFM 'Belumgala' programme since they have an image among the audience as it's a responsible Investigative reporting" Programmes providing truth to the public as a private Sinhala Medium Radio Channel.

| Station | Number of Listeners | | Avg.Hours | |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| | May | June | May | June |
| Any Station | 5397.5 | 5333.5 | 2.15 | 2.26 |
| Sirasa FM | 1511.5 | 1471.6 | 1.89 | 2.04 |
| Neth FM | 978.4 | 1032.6 | 2.25 | 2.36 |
| Hiru FM | 1078.7 | 1146.1 | 1.63 | 1.55 |
| FM Derana | 846.4 | 763.5 | 1.52 | 1.54 |
| Shree FM | 595.9 | 554.0 | 1.34 | 1.54 |

Figure 1 – FM Radio Broadcasting Channels in Sri Lanka (LMRB Rating Summery June 2015)

Survey reveals that 46% respondents disagree on the fact that they can listen to all good investigative programmes day time which emphasizes that most of the radio stations focus night radio listeners with good quality information through investigation based documentaries. Hence, 50% of the sample are "neither agreeing nor disagreeing "as it is the free time for them to listen to the Radio during that time. Significantly, 64% respondents are overall enjoying the radio programme while they are engaged on work. 72% of the respondents agree that the presenters need to improve the language standards when documentaries are conducted and 41% states that presenters do not provide ethical trustworthy information. Overall the public needs content which enhances confidence rather than chaos.

Conclusion

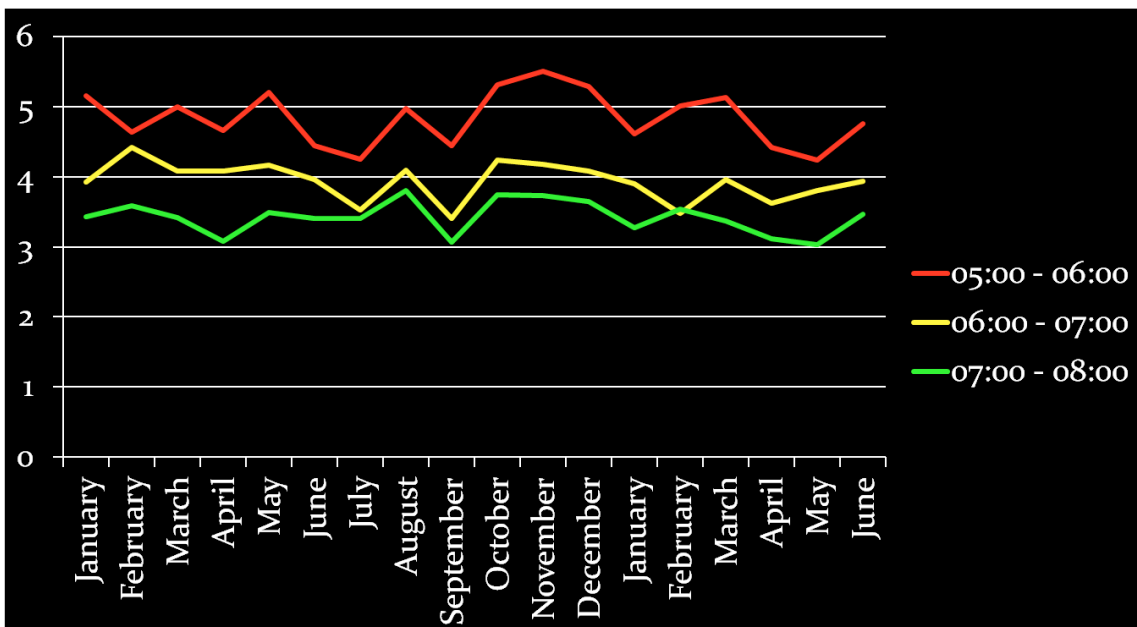
Based on the low profile of the findings on information quality, language standards of the presenters, content of the day time investigative, the study clearly shows that the FM Radio Stations have to develop quality information dissemination attempts by developing good programmes to satisfy the taste of the listeners against the norms in the media world especially for day time Radio listeners. (Refer Figure 1) Clearly explain, though the number of listens on SirasaFM comparatively higher than NethFM, during the month of May the Average Listership is lower than NethFM, this shows the Public Perception toward the Programme Balumgala on NethFM. Therefore, it is essential that the radio broadcasting Media companies understand their role in information dissemination to the public with more confidence building contents over chaos. The public perception would vary on the way how these Media organizations maintain the legalities on freedom of expression, providing diverse and objective information to the citizens and so on. The results of this study allow the Rradio programme directors and presenters to think positively in their position in the Sri Lankan day time investigative reporting programmes market, whilst to develop an idea on strategizing methods to grab the attention of the audience by presenting quality ethical information and embedding creativity to upgrade the programme and to brand the radio channel.

Key words: Public Perception, Sinhala FM Radio Channels, Day time Investigative Reporting Programmes, Sri Lanka

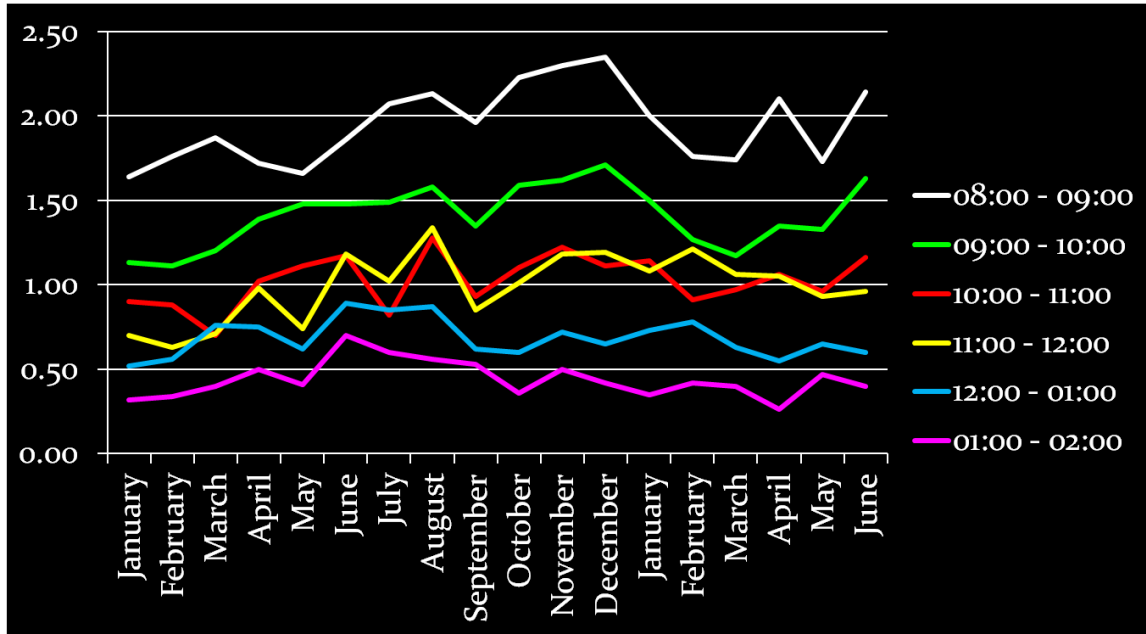
References

(1) Kwakwa, P.A. (2012) 'Individual Preference for Radio Stations in the Eastern Region of Ghana', *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, Vol.2:4 [pp 65-76] Also available online : <http://www.ojcm.net/articles/24/244.pdf>

(2) 05:00am -08:00am Day time Belt on NethFM -LMRB Rating Summery June 2015



(3) 08:00am-02:00pm -Day time Belt on NethFM -LMRB Rating Summery June 2015



(3) 02:00pm-06:00pm -Day time Belt on NethFM -LMRB Rating Summery June 2015

