An Involvement of Community Radio in Strengthen Local Community:
A Case Study of Hua-Hin and Cha-am Community Radio Stations

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Abstract

This qualitative research aimed at studying: 1) how community radio stations in Hua-Hin and Cha-am manage their business and how have they been involved in strengthening local communities. Tools to collect data were in-depth interviews, observations, and focus group discussion. Population of the study were 7 radio station directors and managers including the president of broadcasting club of Phetchaburi, 42 radio listeners, and 14 participants in a focus group discussion. Total numbers of population involved in this study were 63 persons. Research results revealed that radio stations in Hua-Hin and Cha-am broadcasted in FM Band for more than 10 years, the stations obtained a business license category. It was hard to run a community radio business in the digital world because of less local sponsors; however, they were not struggling very much because the stations had a strong network from inside and outside the community who had sponsored them for quite a long time. Community radio stations involvement in strengthening local community was mainly in community communication, community development, local people well-being, and arts, culture, and environment preservation, and religious belief promotion. Community radio listeners listened to the radio during work hours, at home after work, and when driving. They suggested new radio DJs should use proper language and treated listeners professionally. They also suggested adding guest interviews and Dharma program content if possible.

Keywords: *Community rdio, Local community, Strengthening, Involvement*

1. Introduction

The world of information and the rapid change of advanced technology have changed our way of life and improved our standards of living. The modern communication technology such as the Internet, electronic mails, twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms and applications have become our close friend that extremely influence our day-to-day life. The study revealed that we, in the world of digital era, spend many hours a day surfing the Internet and the number of hours of consuming those social media is surprisingly increasing (Azano, 2017). Modern online media and internet play essential roles in our daily life because they could help us to know and see what happens in the different part of the world even if we are staying at home.

However, mass communication organizations in the modern world still use both regular and traditional media platforms to transmit their message to their audience and to the public. As they know 'old fashioned' media platforms such as TV, radio, newspaper are still in attention and interests of some groups of people; especially for under average income families. These old-fashioned media platforms can entertain people and help them to stay connected to the world, access knowledge and skills, and communicate to each other. Community radio is also one of the old-fashioned media that continues to serve each community globally and it remains essential (Podber, 2012).

Community radio or local radio in Thailand is one of local community media channels managed, publicized, and influenced by local community agencies or local people. It was emerged under the Operation of Radio and Television Broadcasting Business Act BE. 2543 and monitored by the Office of National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission. Most community radio stations in Thailand are broadcasting by using mediumwave radio frequency in frequency modulation (FM) transmission band because the FM technology provides a better sound quality than amplitude modulation (AM) technology. Because it is as a local media channel broadcast within a community, the Office of National Broadcasting

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and Telecommunications Commission has limited the transmission area with no longer than 15 kilometers broadcast. This is to make sure that the objective of setting up a community radio is for each particular area that the radio wave will not disturb other communication wave organized and controlled by other organizations (John, 2018).

Community radio stations are like a voice of each community they serve, which are divided either by geographic locations: radio station located in the North, radio stations within the metropolitan Bangkok area, or communities of interest: radio for business, radio for agriculture, and radio for education. Community radio programmers in each specific area like the northern part or the southern part of Thailand for instance, may frequently speak or use dialect or particular languages with local audiences for better understanding and for creating a sense of belongings.

Active community radio stations can help develop and establish a strong community network; and help improve the quality of local people (Benham & Behrens, 2005). In addition, community radio is like a linkage networking community, private, public and government agencies to work closely together as a good teamwork to improve the society and community that they belong.

Like any other business radio stations worldwide, the community radio stations generate their own income mostly by local and central media advertising campaigns, local commercial activities, and/or local fundraising activities in order to meet with all necessary expenses (Karen, 2018). According to the Office of National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, the office that is responsible for radio licensing and controlling, it announces that presently there are 3,331 licensed community radio stations, in total, legally broadcast all over Thailand (https://broadcast.nbtc.go.th/radio/ community radio stations in Thailand, 2019).

Even though the radio stations' finances depend upon commercial advertising business, they are not allowed to do things in their own way. Community radio stations are required to follow government's radiobroadcasting law, regulation controlled by the Office of National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission. On-air radio programs, and contents of community radio stations, under the BE.2543 Act, are mandatory to promote and support the following areas:

1) Education, religion, and arts;
2) Science, technology, and environment;
3) Agriculture and other career promoting;
4) State stability;
5) Promoting good understanding between government and the people;
6) Promoting good understanding between parliament and the people;
7) Educating people about democracy with the monarchy.

The study of an involvement of community radio in strengthen local community: a case study of Hua-Hin and Cha-am community radio stations will help us understand the following concerns:

1) The current situation of how have community radio stations in this specific area been facing and how have they adjusted themselves to cope with the digital era;
2) To have a clear picture of the way how local community radio stations run their business; and
3) How have those radio stations been involved in strengthening the local communities?

2. Objectives

This research aimed to study:
1. How are community radio stations in Hua-Hin and Cha-am managing their business?
2. How have they been involved in strengthening local communities?

3. Materials and Methods

This qualitative research method used in-depth interviews and focus group discussion as research tools to find out research results. The semi-constructed questionnaires were separately used with each group of respondents in order to get answers. In-depth interviews with radio founders or station administrators

were taken place at each radio station in order to observe current situation of each radio station while conducting interviews. Researchers called to make appointments with selected radio stations and it's time for in-depth interviews, researchers started by introducing themselves, explaining the objectives of the student, and then having general conversation to help create friendly atmosphere before going to specific questions. Radio stations were asked to talk about current radio station situations, the station management structure, the challenges radio stations were facing and how to cope with those challenges, the radio program structure, and the actions of the radio stations involved in strengthen their community.

For in-depth interviews with radio listeners, researchers collected data from asking people who were currently working or living in Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas. Researchers also started with introducing themselves and explaining about research objectives before asking questions related to community radio such as how many hours of listening, why would you like to listen to radio, how radio could help improving community, and suggestion to improve the quality of radio station as a tool to strengthen the local community.

After completing with in-depth interviews, researchers summarized all data and organized a focus group discussion by inviting radio stations and radio listeners to discuss on current situations and how radio station helped improved local people and local community, etc.

Data presented in this research were collected through document research, observations, in-depth interview and focus group discussion as mentioned above. Since the samples population of this study were Thai and international, the researchers constructed interview questionnaires in both English and Thai.
Population of this study are mainly focused on two groups: 1) a group of radio experts, which are radio station founders, managers, radio programmers, and radio DJs and 2) active radio listeners, which were radio fan club or listeners who always listened to community radio stations in Cha-am and Hua-Hin areas. Details of population and samples are stated below:

3.1 Radio Stations: researchers applied convenient random sampling method to select four popular community radio stations from Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas. These community radio stations were mostly mentioned by radio fan club during interviews. The selected community radio stations located in Hua-Hin district, Prachuapkhirikhun Province were Click Radio FM. 88.0 MHz and Live Radio FM96.5 MHz.
Community radio stations located in Cha-am district, Phetchaburi Province were Chumchon Khon Huay Sai FM 91.75 MHz and Doungkamol Chumchon Sampraya FM 106.25MHz. Another expert in radio broadcasting field responded to this study was the president of Phetchaburi broadcasting club.
Samples representing radio stations were founders, managers, radio DJs and programmers from those selected community radio stations including the president of Phetchaburi broadcasting club. The total numbers of samples representing community radio were seven persons.

3.2 Active Radio Listeners: for this part, an accidental random sampling method was applied to choose community radio listeners who always listened to the community radio from stations located in Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas. Researchers selected only radio listeners who were willing to answer interview questions and were pleased to share ideas or suggestions to improve community radio in strengthening the community. The numbers of samples from listener part were 42 persons.

3.3 Focus group discussion: for this part, 7 people representing radio stations or broadcasting sector and another 7 people representing radio listeners in Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas to share experience and exchange ideas of how community radio should be involved in strengthening the community. The total population from this part were 14 persons.

4. Results and Discussion

Data collected from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed by using a content analysis technique. Population of this study were 7 radio station administrators and programmers included the president of a broadcasting club of Phetchaburi, 42 community radio audiences, and 14 key

informants who were involved in focus group discussion. Each objective of conducting this research will be summarized and presented as follows:

4.1 The Management of Hua-Hin and Cha-am Community Radio Stations

This study focused on the management of four community radio stations located in Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas, which they were FM 88.0 MHz, FM 91.5 MHz, FM 96.5 MHz, and FM 106.25 MHz. Keys informants from radio stations were directors, managers, and programmers from those four stations. Research results showed that the stations operated their services via Frequency Modulation (FM) band with each specific frequency range. The stations had more than 10 years of operations.

It was very interesting to see that even the radio stations were monitored and controlled by the Office of National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission and their broadcast ranges or listening areas were almost at the same area: Hua-Hin and Cha-am, the height of antennas was different. Antennas of community radio stations in Hua-Hin was only 24 meter high or lower but antennas of radio stations in Cha-am area, were between 40-60 meters high. All community radio stations in Hua-Hin and Cha-am obtained a broadcasting license in a commercial category.

There were two main sponsors supporting the community radio stations: 1) local business sectors such as hotels, restaurants, lodges, resorts, car dealers, gold shops, and local government in Phetchaburi and Prachuap Khiri Khan Provinces and 2) big business companies located in Bangkok or other provinces such as agricultural chemical products, beauty and supplement products, and herbal medicines and products.

Directors of community radio stations had 8-25 years of broadcasting experience. They were also radio programmers and reporters. The station directors checked the ratings of stations and programs from many different sources such as via call-in during live programs, from social media channel such as Facebook, Page, and Line, from traditional media such as station telephone, and from other channels such as from daily lives and from attending local events.

Details of the Management of Hua-Hin and Cha-am Community Radio Stations will be summarized and presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Summary of the management of community radio station in Hua-Hin and Cha-am

Station / Location	Band/ Frequency	Antenna Height	License Category	Sample of Local Sponsor	Sample of other Sponsor	Rating Check
Click Radio Hua-Hin	FM 88.0 MHz	24 meter		- Hotels	- Agricultural chemicals	- Call in
Life Radio Hua-Hin	FM 96.5 MHz	24 meter		- Restaurants	- Fertilizers	- Facebook
Duong Kamol Cha-am	FM 91.75 MHz	40-60 meter	Commercial broadcasting	- Resorts - Lodges - Car dealers - Gold shops	- Beauty and supplement products,	- Page - Line - Phone - Events
Khon Huay Sai Cha-am	FM 106.25 MHz	40-60 meter		- Local Government	- Herbal products	- Daily lives

4.2 Challenges for Community Radio Broadcasting in Digital Era

From in-depth interviews, observations, and focus-group discussion, it was found that community radio was facing with many big challenges due to the advancement of modern technology. Station directors and administrators had to learn to adjust themselves to cope with the digital world, where social media played vital roles to people's way of live that affected to traditional media providers (Tacci J, 2000).

Community radio in Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas were facing with many interesting challenges that affected their business, which were divided into six categories: law enforcement under the National Council for Peach and Order Government, transmitting power limit, economic down turn, technology change, severe weather condition, and consumer behavior change. These challenges affected community radio in many different ways. Details of challenges and results and effects affected from those challenges will be summarized and shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Challenges for community radio broadcasting in digital era

Challenges Facing	Results and Effects
Law Enforcement under the National Council for Peace and Order Government	Pirate radio stations or non-license stations stopped broadcasting Consume time, effort, and expenses for equipment check before applying for a broadcast license Stations were required to broadcast programs from NCPO and the government at the specific time.
Transmitting Power Limit	Broadcasting quality, signal was sometime disturbed by other media devices Limited area of broadcasting range
Economic Down Turn	Fewer local sponsors to support radio programs produced by the stations Big companies produced their own program sent to each station, which it was hard to control the quality of program contents and products selling during airtime.
Technology Change	Major sponsors created internet-based radio programs sent to the stations Needed to adjust themselves to cope with digital era Turned to be internet radio Higher cost of operation and advanced skills learned
Severe Weather Condition	Transmission equipment damage from lightning strike and thunderstorms Stop broadcasting due to severe weather condition Hard to rearrange program schedule substitution
Consumer Behavior Change in the Digital Era World	Declining on radio listening Various platforms for free entertainment Teenagers showed no interest in traditional media platform Main listeners were middle age groups or housekeeper

4.3 Suggestions to Sustain Community Radio Business Growth in Digital Era

From in-depth interviews with radio station founders, the president of Phetchaburi Broadcasting Club, and from 42 active listeners together with focus group discussion, there were numbers of constructive suggestions for community radio stations included staff personnel working for radio stations such as radio programmers, announcers, DJs, etc. to adjust themselves in order to sustain their business growth in digital era. Suggestion for each party will be described in Table 3, which is shown below.

Table 3 Suggestions to sustain community radio business growth in digital era

Concerned Party	Suggestions
Station	Build network among community radio stations Be united as one strong network Adjust program, style and content suit to group of listeners Increase broadcasting quality and Create community radio reliability as a trusted media channel
Radio Staff Personnel	Accept change and learn to adjust themselves Use proper, correct, and polite language Do fact checking from reliable sources before sharing Always update with knowledge and skills Less experience programmer should not have call-in in live program Provide facts from various sources and let audience make decision themselves

4.4 An Involvement of Community Radio in Strengthening Local Communities

Research results revealed that community radio stations in Hua-Hin and Cha-am had strong network with community, local government and local business sectors. Radio stations involvement in strengthening local community was mainly in community communication and development, local people well-being, and arts, culture and religion preservation and promotion. Community radio stations were involving in strengthening Hua-Hin and Cha-am communities in the following areas:

4.4.1 Community Development:

Community radio stations always provided new knowledge and necessary skills for local people to improve themselves to cope with the digital era. They also used social media platforms such as Line, Facebook, and Page to share useful information to help develop people and the communities. In case communities needed some help or support, these community radio stations was a good channel for getting collaboration from community to help with community development. In addition, these stations also offered special deals for local business to advertise with them.

4.4.2 Community Communication:

Even broadcasting range of each radio station was limited to broadcast only within a certain area; community radio was like an effective communication channel for community members to participate in community development activities. They knew what was going on in the community. Community radio was also a channel for listeners to interact with the station and other listeners. Additionally, local people who could not reach to friends or someone they needed to contact. From observation by listening to radio programs and from discussion, it was shown that these community radio stations played important role in helping people communicate to each other.

4.4.3 Local People Well-being

Each station knew their role in helping local people to have good life and good health. They searched useful news and information related to local people, local government and local business such as employment news, training news, promotion from local business, and useful news updated from local business to share in the radio program. Some radio station provided Dharma content to help sooth listeners, some stations shared news of how to stay in good health, and some stations was an expert on new theories of agriculture where no chemicals were utilized.

4.4.4 Art, Culture, and Environment Preservation

Local community radio, as a local media channel, shared news and knowledge of how to preserve and to promote art and culture. There were numbers of events and activities organized by local governments in Phetchaburi that required local people to wear traditional Thai dress, which these stations were like a spokesperson to promote those events. For teenagers to attend Buddhist activities held at local temples, the stations also encouraged them to wear proper dress and paid respect to religious places.

These community radio stations also helped promote some famous Phetchaburi and Prachuap Khiri Khan traditional ways of life such as local cow run contesting or local cow racing.

4.4.5 Religious Beliefs Promotion

From in-depth interviews and observations, community radio stations explained that they provided free of charge spot producing and advertising for Buddhist temples in nearby areas to promote religious ceremony or activities that aimed at encouraging local people to do good things or to be good. Administrators of four community radio stations had a good relationship with Buddhist temple abbots. They occasionally visited Buddhist temples and talked to the abbots in case the temples needed some help from the community as well.

Each community radio station in Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas had some outstanding activities and manners to help strengthening its local community. Details and explanations of each station were summarized and explained below.

Table 4 Outstanding activities of community radio stations in strengthening local communities

Station / Location	Frequency/ Band	Outstanding Activities to Help Strengthening Local Communities
Click Radio Hua-Hin	FM 88.0 MHz	Good at Networking with local business sectors. Did not rely on sponsoring from big companies from outside the community. Did not accept sponsors who sold products on some categories that might be risky such as medicine, herbs, chemicals, etc.
Life Radio Hua-Hin	FM 96.5 MHz	Good with agriculture promotion and environment preservation. Produced bio-fermented water and microbial fertilizer for farm use at the station. Used dialect or local language when doing live programs.
Duong Kamol Cha-am	FM 91.75 MHz	24 hours of service Provided 2-3 hours of Dharma content and program every night to sooth people Allowed call-in during live program to answer questions about health issues and other interesting news stories
Khon Huay Sai Cha-am	FM 106.25 MHz	No call-in during live program as it was hard to control the topic of discussion and listeners' emotion. Always updated useful news and information about health and healthcare Allowed internship students from local universities to have broadcasting experience

4.5 Community Radio Listeners and Their Listening Habits

It was revealed that most community radio listeners in Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas listened to radio stations at least two hours a day at work or when driving. They did not listen to all programs broadcasted by radio stations, instead, they tuned to another station to listen to programs that they like, which mostly were songs programs. Some listeners mentioned that they did not like radio programmers who were talkative or spent more time on talking rather than playing songs requested by listeners. Thanachai Amchan, a gardener and politician, mentioned that he liked radio programmers who could balance talking, answering call-in phones, and playing songs at the same time. Opas Maitreesophon, an owner of a semi-trailer business, allowed his worker to listen to radio while working and he, sometimes, listened to radio together with his men. He suggested radio programmers to use proper language, treated, and honored listeners properly. He also suggested radio stations to double-check quality of sponsoring products. Vatid Jeansuwan, a general manager of a company who also allowed his subordinates to listen to radio during work hours. He said, radio could help making a good work atmosphere and creating a good relationship among his team members.

4.6 Feedback and Suggestions from Listeners to Improve Community Radio

From in-depth interviews with 42 radio listeners, it could be summarized that most of them were between 32-61 years who got a full-time job or were self-employed and had monthly income between 8,000 – 40,000 Baht. They listened to radio during work hours and at home for more than two hours a day. Some listened to radio only when driving or at home, because they needed to concentrate on their work. They thought Community radio was a good channel for local people in strengthening community.

When asking about suggestions to improve community radio, they suggested adding more on local news, weather forecast news, and other interesting issues that affected local people and community. Details of suggestions from listeners were presented as follow:

Table 5 Suggestions from radio listeners to improve community radio

Concerned Party	Suggestions
For Radio Station	Add news about agriculture or main occupation of local people, employment news, weather report news, and current situations occurring in the community
	Have some interview program, invite some outstanding people in community or from outside to share idea and experience
	Don't advertise or promote products beyond reality
	Check content and product quality from sponsors before broadcasting
	Add Dharma talks or contents to help reducing crime
For Radio DJs	Use proper language
	Do not talk too much
	Should limit numbers of call-ins

From research results, it could be concluded that community radio in Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas broadcasted their services with a business-type license, which meant the stations' expenses depended upon their commercial advertising; however, as one of local media channels, they knew their role of being a part to help strengthening the community. They also followed a government's radiobroadcasting law and regulation controlled by the Office of National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission to promote knowledge, news, contents in areas required by the government. Since we all are living in the digital world where people spent many hours a day connecting to the Internet and social media (Evan Azano, 2017) and they have much more impacts on our daily lives; however, traditional media or old-fashioned media such as TV, newspaper, or radio remain important to community globally (Podber, 2012).

5. Conclusion

Research results found that an involvement of community radio in Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas in strengthening local communities were mainly in community communication, community development, local people well-being, and arts, culture, and environment preservation, and religious belief promotion. Community radio listeners listened to radio broadcasting during work hours, at home or after work, and when driving. They suggested new radio DJs to use proper language and treated listeners professionally. The listeners also suggested radio stations to add guest interviews and Dharma program content if possible. Community radio needed to adjust ways how to do business to cope with digital era that there were many internet platforms and choices for consumers to choose to consume news and entertainment programs. It would be better to broadcast by using both channels: 1) via regular channel that used transmitting and receiving equipment and 2) turned to be internet radio.

Community radio stations were suggested to build a strong network with local business in order to get more support and sponsoring. Program contents, style, and airtime should be adjusted to suit with listener behaviors and lifestyle. Because of time and budget constraint, this research was limited to study only community radio station in Hua-Hin and Cha-am areas. For future research, it was recommended to study the management of community radio in the other areas to see how they could survive in the digital world and how they get involved in community strengthening.

We all are living in the world of a digital era in that social media and the Internet play an essential role influencing on our daily life both at home and at work. However, old-fashioned media channels like newspapers, TV, and radio are continuously serving people all around the world, especially in remote areas where internet access is not available remain important to our lives (Podber (2012). From research results, it found that community radio is like a kind of a special entertainment that could provide listeners with both knowledge and entertainment through its programs.

6. Acknowledgements

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