

MEDIA SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUPS IN ULAANBAATAR
CHRISTIAN RADIO WIND-FM TO BRING GOSPEL TO NEW SOIL USING RESEARCH

Synopsis

A comprehensive media survey was carried out in the spring of 2002 in Ulaanbaatar. The purpose was to conduct a reliable city-wide survey to determine the media use of Mongolians living in Ulaanbaatar. The media survey was requested by local Mongolian 'family-oriented' radio station WIND-FM, which had been operating in Ulaanbaatar since 2001. WIND-FM wanted to develop their programming according to listeners' needs and recognized that the survey, together with the results of focus groups conducted in ger areas, would help them to learn more about their audience.

Media survey questions covered media ownership and media use and included Internet. A total of one thousand personal interviews were carried out in areas which represented the six most populated districts of the capital.

While TV and radio ownership ran at about the same level, watching television was more frequent than listening to the radio, and radio topped the newspapers in terms of daily use. Every third household had access to the Internet, mostly from study or work places, or Internet cafés.

Eight focus groups, separately organized for listeners and non-listeners of the station, evaluated the current broadcast operations of WIND-FM and dealt with both the positive and negative aspects of the programming. Listener focus groups were asked what they liked and didn't like about Wind-FM, while non-listener focus groups were asked to voice their information needs.

Changes in the Mongolian constitution since 1992 have provided a positive climate for media to grow freely and it can be seen in the number of FM stations and weekly newspapers. Television stations have not increased greatly, however cable subscriptions have become more popular; half of the households surveyed subscribed to a cable service. The most watched are the Inner Mongolian and Russian-language cable channels while the English-language and other foreign channels are watched the least.

WIND-FM, as a Christian value-oriented radio station, has a regular audience of 200,000 Ulaanbaatar inhabitants. The organization uses research in developing radio programming. WIND-FM is a positive example of how media is a viable tool in helping to bring the gospel to a recently 'opened' society.

Main Results of the Media Survey

Media ownership

The most commonly owned medium in Ulaanbaatar was color TV, owned by 82.6% of the households, followed by radio (77%) and cassette player (66.4%). Telephone came fourth, with half of the households having a fixed-line phone, and half having a cell phone. Some households had both fixed line and cell phones while some did not have a fixed line but did have a cell phone. Ownership of other media technology included black and white TVs, VCRs and CD players, car radios; each of these were owned by 20-30% of the households.

One finding of this study strongly indicates TV ownership (colour TV sets specifically) has increased markedly since 1990, when according to Myagmar & Nielsen (2001), 41% of the

households had television with no determination of whether the TV sets were color or black and white.

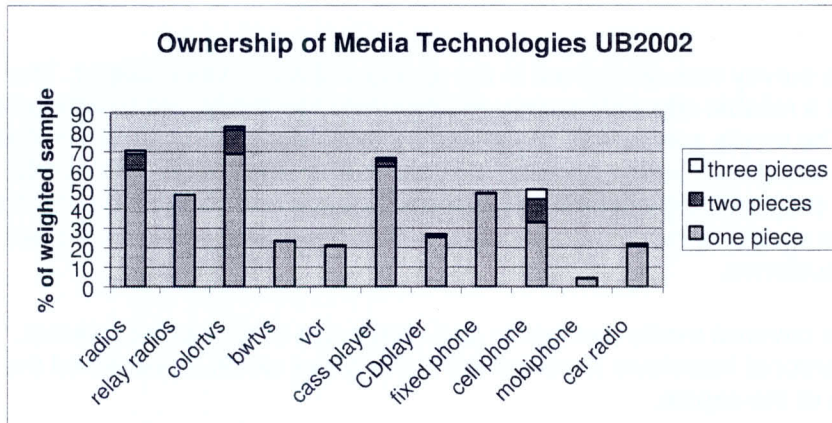


Chart 1. Ownership of media technologies in Ulaanbaatar in 2002

Media use

Two thirds of the households in Ulaanbaatar (65%) listened to the radio 'yesterday', and one-fourth (23.1%) within the previous 7 days. Watching TV was more frequent; almost every household watched TV daily (91.3%) or weekly (7.7%).

Listening to the radio stays at the same level throughout the day, between 10-15% of the households. In the evening radio listening remains fairly steady, falling a little, while TV viewing takes a dramatic leap.

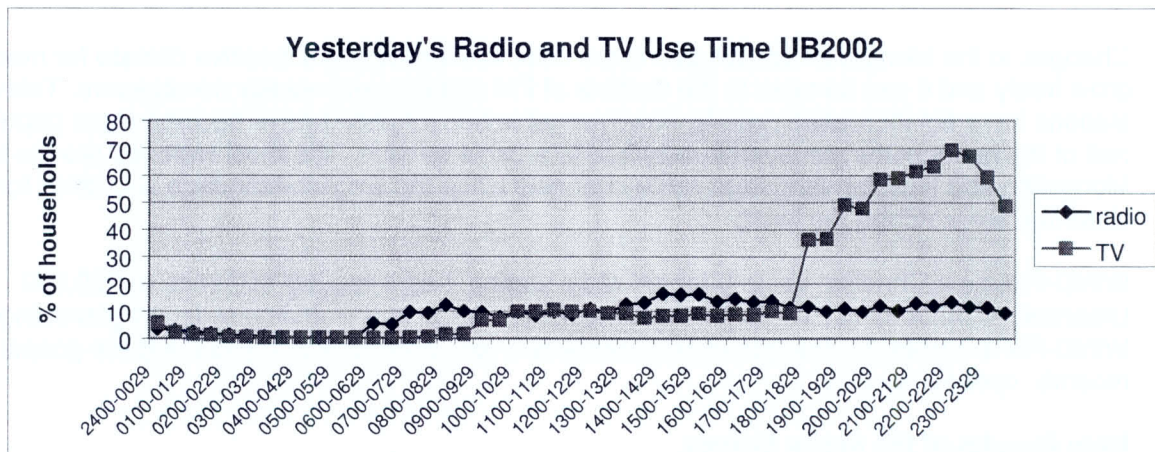


Chart 2. Listening to radio and watching TV in Ulaanbaatar 'yesterday' in Ulaanbaatar 2002

The three most well known stations, FM 102.5, FM 107, and FM 107.5 had regular audiences each about 60% of households. WIND-FM's share (104.5) is about 40% of the households, which totals about 200,000 regular listeners in Ulaanbaatar.

The Ulaanbaatar local stations broadcast mainly in Mongolian, with the exception of FM 103.1 BBC, and FM 106.6 VOA, which broadcast in English.

The most common situation for listening to radio is while traveling on the bus, in a car/taxi, or on a microbus, all three were mentioned by close to one-third of the households. One third (30.8%) of the respondents also listen to radio while being alone; and another one-third (30.6%) listen to radio while doing household chores.

400,000 regular listeners

Listening to radio when getting up in the morning is more common than listening in the evening.

WIND-FM's audience consists of young adults, single and married with children, aged 20-40 years. The most popular time to listen to WIND-FM is in the afternoon at 1400-1730.

Main Results of Focus Groups

The two sets of four focus groups (Ger and WIND-FM) had different purposes. Ger area focus groups were acquired by the ger community leader. These four groups discussed the information needs and problems in their area.

The other set of four focus groups consisted of WIND-FM listeners who evaluated the current programming; what were the good and not-so-good qualities of WIND-FM.

Ger groups (non-listeners)

Ger groups agreed WIND-FM radio could deal with the problems the ger area is facing, by providing information relevant to ger area residents.

Following are a number of illustrations. For example, information delivered to local kiosks and shops could be collected by WIND and broadcast to the community. Radio could promote better behaviour ('greetings and general public behaviour') in the form of radio drama. The elderly members of the groups emphasised the need to reconcile the younger and older generation, and they suggested radio program that would show how other countries respect their elders. In education topics, the groups talked about the lack of public schools and kindergartens. In social issues, unemployment was the most often mentioned problem. Groups talked about city-wide issues and the need for more public services, better maintenance of streets, the need for house and building addresses and public transportation.

Radio can help the ger community by relating to police, NGOs, and youth organisations. Focus group participants agreed to several radio program ideas including the promotion of health care, the rubbish problem, and family health. Women mentioned adding programs for children in general, and specifically for the areas of teaching disadvantaged pre-school children, producing children's literature programs with fairytales, and including music for children.

Radio can fight against unemployment by announcing work opportunities on air, it can develop programming that teaches job seeking skills, and it can also promote active members of the community. To help the society, WIND could 'promote local businesses that are succeeding without government or other financial assistance, and it could promote the work in the Khoros' (Village centers).

WIND could fight against corruption in the public schools through programming. There could be a forum for teachers and students to discuss issues within the public school system. WIND could make district officials aware of community areas that lack public lighting.

WIND-FM could help in setting up activities locally, like building a wellness center for kids, or a children's playground, or helping to organise work for young people at community centers during cultural, sports, arts or other events. Or, 'when the community center wanted to organise events, WIND could help in supplying the equipment such as microphones'.

To sum up, ger groups had many ideas of how WIND can be helping the community, and participants were enthusiastic in considering the idea that listeners could take part in producing the programs, some even volunteered specifically. Most ideas dealt with children and their

education, getting the youth active in the community, building respect and proper behaviour towards elders, and radio's role overall in facilitating community development.

WIND-FM listener groups

To evaluate WIND-FM as a radio station, focus group participants were asked to show a green face (drawn on a cardboard) and then tell what was positive about WIND-FM, show a red face to illustrate the negative, or show a yellow face and share neutral things about WIND-FM. All groups participated in this discussion actively.

Three out of four groups gave green faces to programs like news, public service announcements, music and 'The Literature Hour.'

Remarks from participants: 'The music and the different programs calm me down when I am disappointed'. 'Your radio talks about emotions and feelings', 'your radio has many good ideas and thoughts about the family' (this was mentioned several times in different ways)... 'there are so many family issues. Your radio is helping to reconcile them', 'predictability', 'it feels like you are relating to me on a personal level', 'your radio talks about emotions and feelings', 'we are happy to work together with the station', 'it is like the word wind, it reaches everywhere, it is soft'. 'The broadcasters do not have unnecessary banter'. 'Programs are appropriate for the message of the station'.

Two out of four groups liked classical music and Mongolian music on WIND-FM, however, listeners want more information about the music being played on the radio.

The red 'negative' face was given by three groups to 'Talking Bus' –program: 'it needs more variation', 'it has become naughty', 'the presenter reprimands people if they can not answer correctly', 'it could be made together with the driver and conductor of the bus'.

Two groups criticised broadcasters about language 'not speaking properly', and 'not announcing the foreign words well', and making mistakes. One group mentioned some promos needing change, and a variety of programs need to be increased.

One group criticised WIND-FM for mixing Mongolian and foreign songs together, and 'Words from the Heart' –program for not interviewing people in the ger communities.

A female dominated group talked about elderly people, and how they need to be involved; 'elderly people are lonely. We need to listen their memories and support them'. 'Do talk-back with elderly people.' In general, talk-back programs on meaningful subjects are needed... 'other FM stations talk about needless things. Do talk-back in the near future'.

Participants complained of not having enough children and youth programmes and they suggested programs for families; 'what is the man's role in the family', 'make a program about the potential for the social lives of women'. 'Talk about the life of the single mother', 'make a program for the head of family' 'have a program for 30-40 age group'. Besides family programs, participants suggested WIND-FM 'to choose innovative methods for giving advice' and criticised counselling programs saying 'you need to train the people who can give advice and counselling'.

One group put forward the family issue again when talking about the yellow, neutral things in WIND. 'Increase and improve family advice', 'to provide advice on family issues'.

Participants suggested contents for programs about children's needs: 'many school kids lost their bags at school. Make an awareness of it'. 'Inform the places where schools supplies are

sold cheaper', 'information on where buy clothes and food for children', 'to give advice on young couples on children's nutrition and discipline', 'homeless kids are committing theft'.

Participants in two groups see the role of radio as a bridge between people and the government, by giving information about housing for young couples, or job announcements for the unemployed, to tackle teacher corruption problem at schools, or to combat crime by making a program with the police, or in programs reminding people about the importance of security.

Conclusion and implications

Depending on the composition of the focus group, ger residents had varied approaches to solving problems with the help of community radio WIND-FM. Elderly ger group participants suggested drama, while mixed age participants suggested WIND-FM working together with government groups, NGOs and community centers. Three out of four focus groups mentioned radio programming as part of problem solutions. Women in the groups enthusiastically suggested children's radio programs. Participants were enquiring as to whether or not they could be involved in community radio programs.

The survey together with the focus group findings show community radio in Ulaan Baatar was seen as a bridge between the people and the government. It has a role in helping to solve societal problems in areas of unemployment, education, the environment, health and hygiene. Mongolia needs a media that educates the public about issues on a deeper level.

Applying Research to WIND-FM

Results from the media survey helped WIND-FM to learn the characteristics of their audience. Knowing the audience helps to focus the programming. WIND-FM has a predominantly non-Christian audience, therefore the programming needs to follow their mindset and address their needs, and at the same time bring the gospel in the form of promoting Christian values and relating Bible message to their lives.

Survey results have given WIND-FM confidence about their position in the Ulaanbaatar media scene. Results have been used to raise funds for the construction of a new radio station building which was necessary after a fire which destroyed the radio facility completely in January 2003.

Focus group results have been used by WIND-FM staff to help in programme production. Community development teams at WIND have been formed to interact with residents living in the ger areas.

WIND-FM, as a community radio station, is networking with NGOs. WIND-FM shares the results of the survey with other organizations. In its programs it informs about different organizations working together in the community. WIND-FM is also collecting an audio archive with health features that can be played as needed.

WIND-FM used research to 'listen' to its audience. WIND-FM is using research to develop relationships by reaching out to its non-Christian audience and helping them to deal with serious issues affecting their lives.