

## **The Development of a Cultural Radio for Youths Model through the Community Radio in Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Northeast Thailand**

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### **Abstract**

The objectives of this research are to examine the historical background of the media, community radio programming, the current circumstances, problems and suggestions of cultural models for young listeners through community radio, and the development of related models through community radio in Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Northeast Thailand. A study to this effect was carried out in four of the province's 32 districts: Muang Nakhon Ratchasima, Pakthongchai, Chokchai and Phimai.

The 130 samples were purposively<sup>1</sup> selected. The key sources of information were academics, professional radio broadcasters, public relations experts, local wisdom,<sup>2</sup> traders and school administrators. The casual participants were moderators or disc jockeys (DJs), while youths (14-18 year olds) acted in a general capacity. The data collected consisted of documentaries, observations, interviews, focus-group discussions and workshops. Data-evaluation was tested through the tool of triangulation and the results were presented descriptively. The data were collected in March-September 2014.

The exercise established that the appropriate radio program for youths requires suitable programming formats. The DJs need to be familiar with the local culture and should ideally communicate in its dialect. The program should present the

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<sup>1</sup> As discussed elsewhere in this volume, purposive sampling focuses on individuals in a population sample, whose particular features constitute ideal material for the research project in hand.

<sup>2</sup> Local wisdom broadly means the accumulation of knowledge and life experiences, passed on and shared with the wider community.

cultural identity of Nakhon Ratchasima Province, including traditional Thai folk songs. The study revealed that the most suitable slots are 11 am to 12.00 noon on Sundays, and 7-8 am Monday-Friday. The cultural program presentation should include the following segments: debates, features and magazine content. This article argues that developing a cultural radio model aimed at young listeners, through the community radio, can facilitate communications for all stakeholders concerned.

**Keywords:** Cultural radio, community radio

## Introduction

Radio broadcasting as a communication channel has played an important role in Thai society for some considerable time, because the nature of radio broadcasting bears parallels with community lifestyle. Radio broadcasting was often twined with cultural diffusion such as folklore media. Radio broadcasting is used for public benefit, to diffuse information about people in the community and to strengthen ties within it. The community radio broadcast is not only its owner but also its operator. It is independent so as to preserve the integrity of the information broadcast about people in the community. The community radio broadcast can respond to the needs of the community because of its involvement with local people and the local knowledge they bring. This results in the community radio broadcast producing the type of media to suit the needs of the community, in order to develop and strengthen the community's characteristics.

Youth is an important human resource. It can be useful in publicizing messages about values and attitudes, to encourage people to behave like good citizens and to be aware of their responsibilities as members of a community. Furthermore, they need to discharge their contribution to society in a suitable manner, together with public consciousness. The rapid development of technological innovations, coupled with our modern industrial society, have brought many changes to society and the families within it. In turn, these are having profound consequences for lifestyle and perceptions.

Statistical data from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security show that the youth problem was more serious than other concerns in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security 2012). Influences from foreign media are part of the problem, apparently, due to young people's innate ability to absorb concepts and external trends, which can at times be a barrier to a wholesome way of life.

Research on the development of a model for cultural radio aimed at youths, through the community radio in Nakhon Ratchasima, can assist in developing society, connecting the various media and the youth to disseminate and preserve cultural topics. Starting in 2015, closer integration among the ten ASEAN member states could potentially result in increased external cultural influences on the Thai youth. Disseminating cultural information could help Thai youths to strike a balance between traditional society and multi-cultural society.

The conservation and dissemination of culture through appropriate programs involves media organizations, community leaders, moderators and disc jockeys (DJs), as well as audiences, who can all participate in creating a model for a cultural program. Continued communication in developing a process will be beneficial in the long- and short-term, towards a clear communication model. This communication model can then be promoted as a national identity and cherished heritage, for the Thai youth to appreciate the value of cultural conservation and dissemination. They will be proud of their culture and better equipped to deal with the effects of closer integration among the ASEAN member states.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To study the historical background and rationale of the media and community radio programming in Nakhon Ratchasima Province.
2. To study the current circumstances and problems in the model for a cultural radio for the youth, through the community radio in Nakhon Ratchasima Province.
3. To develop a model of cultural radio for the young population, through the community radio in Nakhon Ratchasima Province.

## **Literature Review**

A recent study by Yanothai Boonlert (2009), surveyed a population sample of 400 residents from the Chak Luk Ya community, Huai Pong sub-district, Muang District, Rayong Province. The program content, such as education and news, were mostly listened to and followed by suitable program content for community and environmental quality promotion. They mostly listened to live programs, followed by music programs, debates and talk shows. Presentation techniques such as engaging speaking style were the most popular.

Another study by Yingsak Phaengchansi (2009), reported that the community radio in this study was modelled on relationships in the civil network in the Changwa (Province) Yasothon area. Life experiences were shared with the objective of self-reliance. Communications and information were exchanged freely and without hindrance or official interference. The community radio functioned as a medium for knowledge-building and mutual understanding.

The community radio was the medium emphasizing encouragement, to generate public participation, ostensibly to reflect local identity and characteristics. This would lead to administration and management of the system of horizontal information circulation within the local communities. The community radio was the medium connecting receivers of information with senders of information, involving public activities and improving the links within the activity network, propagating ideas among the public sector agencies themselves.

After the operations of the Wat Pa Suan Tham Ruamchai Community Radio detailed in Yingsak Phaengchansi's study, the community experienced some positive changes to their lifestyle and these changes were accepted by the villages. The community developed sentiments of brotherhood, closeness and tolerance. Life-experiences were more readily shared to foster self-reliance, outcomes were publicized more readily and communications became more effective.

A study by Sudarat Srichan, Supat Suradanai and Sompon Ninkampee (2011) on participation in Udon Thani Province, involved 150 community DJs. The results showed that significant efforts were made to publicize cultural events and to encourage awareness and the importance of culture in one's own community. Regarding the participation of DJs on content and program duration, it was found that the radio programs were broadcast daily, for the most part during the 9.00 am to 12.00 noon slot. Regarding the participation of community and people, it was found that, though the listeners had ample opportunity to offer their opinions and share their life experience, they appeared reluctant to discuss or appraise situations. Regarding the need for support, the DJs reported a preference for a continuous stream of news and information from the Provincial Cultural Office.

A study on participatory development in Lampang Province, by Thanakorn Noithonglek (2011), reported that the local radio operation presented programs which did not meet the needs of people in the community in terms of community program or development, as well as positive social change. This arose as a result of the relevant radio programs making few allowances for participation in community development. The study also found that factors connected to politics and tradition partially explained the low level of local knowledge about the community radio's operation,

as expressed during radio operation participation. Factors on form and content to be delivered to audiences were related to the community radio operation.

The writers reported that differences in the delivery of messages, can have a significant impact on radio operations. The development of participatory community radio must have mutual evaluation at all levels, especially the evaluation of audiences. Results of the evaluation on the development of participatory radio operation showed that it conformed to the principle of the community radio operation. That is, message receivers, producers and policies can result in increased participation in community radio operation.

In his *The Growing Pains of Community Radio in Africa*, Peter da Costa (2012) found that community radio is considered as an intervention strategy of choice for deepening participation and community ownership. Donors have funded a proliferation of community radio projects in the Global South,<sup>3</sup> prompted by stories attesting to the power of radio as a tool for social change. The evidence suggests that, beyond empowering communities, community radio can be a catalyst for behavior change and can impact positively on wider development outcomes. In practice, the record has been mixed, with sustainability posing a real challenge. A recent evaluation found that radio stations created through top-down initiatives tend not to survive when external funding dries up. Where such stations do survive, however, their purpose often becomes different from the original intention. Only in a handful of cases have previously aid-dependent radio stations become sustainable.

*Community Radio in Western Australia: Notions of value*, by Simon Order (2013), found that community radio in Australia is well established and constitutes an important part of the radio sector. Yet, in today's economically driven world, it sits at the bottom of the media money pile. In order to argue for community radio's continuing existence and funding in a competitive media landscape, a way of capturing its value is essential. This paper summarizes the development of a theoretical framework of value for community radio from the existing literature and the testing of that framework at three community radio stations in Perth, Western Australia. Volunteer participation by the wider community in the operation of community radio has been a normative value for the sector. In particular, this paper discusses the importance of one key finding around that value of participation in this research. Study participants at all stations frankly asserted that often, their motivation to participate in community radio sprung from a purely selfish motivation. If participants in this study perceive the value of community radio from a purely

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<sup>3</sup> Broadly speaking, the Global South encompasses countries located in the Southern Hemisphere.

selfish motivational standpoint, the wider community benefits could potentially be considered as pure side-effects. Subsequently, any attempt to argue for the wider community benefits of community radio, and thus support and funding, could become much harder to substantiate.

## **Research Methodology**

The research on the development of cultural radio for youth model through the community radio in Nakhon Ratchasima is a qualitative study, compiled by the researcher with data collected as part of fieldwork through documents analysis, surveys, participatory observation, non-participatory observation, unstructured interviews, structured interviews with focus-group discussions and workshop seminars. The researcher used triangulation<sup>4</sup> to verify the data and also to rectify gaps in the data. Data were then analyzed by using documentaries and related research through the descriptive analysis.

## **Research Instruments**

The research instruments consisted of survey forms, observation forms for both participatory and non-participatory observation, interviews, focus-group discussions and workshop guideline. The research instruments were validated by the advisor and five experts.

1. The survey form is divided into three parts: a) background information; b) programming formats information and c) cultural program information. The form is used to collect background information of the media and community radio programming in Nakhon Ratchasima Province, the structure of radio broadcasts, program schedule and content. The samples were the moderators or the DJs in the community radio stations.

2. The observation forms were divided into two types: one version for participatory observation and one form for non-participatory observation. The scope

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<sup>4</sup> Triangulation is performed by social scientists to indicate that two or more methods have been employed to check and verify the results of a particular study.

of this segment was to observe the radio production procedure and problems that can occur as part of the process.

#### 2.1 Participatory Observation form

The researcher participates in the community radio production process with the moderator or DJ, to observe and record the information in the observation form.

#### 2.2 Non-participatory Observation form

The researcher simply observes the moderator or DJ in the community radio production process and records the information in the observation form.

### 3. Interview Guide: Form divided into two parts.

3.1 Unstructured interviews are more flexible and ask questions dealing with rationale, historical media and community radio broadcasts in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Participants are selected from the 25 experts who are in charge of cultural offices, local philosophers and academics.

3.2 Structured interviews consisted of the formal interviews with closed-ended questions, posed to the 33 moderators or DJs in the community radio stations in Nakhon Ratchasima Province.

### 4. Focus group discussion.

4.1 The focus group discussions were divided into eight groups, with each group consisting of six-ten members, between 14 and 18 years of age. The purpose of the focus group discussion was to acquire the information for determining the cultural radio for youth model through the community radio in Nakhon Ratchasima Province.

### 5. Workshop guideline.

5.1 After collecting the data from the interviews and focus group discussion, the researcher drafted the cultural radio model and presented it to 15 representatives to seek their approval.

## Research Result

The qualitative research on the development of a model was developed through the use of samples combined with purposive sampling techniques. The samples were taken from four districts in Nakhon Ratchasima Province: Muang Nakhon Ratchasima (center of the province), Pakthongchai (southwest of Muang Nakhon Ratchasima), Chokchai (south of Muang Nakhon Ratchasima) and Phimai (northeast of the province). The samples were consistent with the distinctive culture of the prov-

ince through the slogan “Land of brave women, Fine silk materials, Korat rice noodle, Phimai Historical park, and Dan Kwian ceramics”. The results were as follows:

1. The community radio in Nakhon Ratchasima was established by government policy and operated by the Government Public Relations Department. According to the framework of National Broadcasting Services of Thailand (NBT), Nakhon Ratchasima is one of 19 stations operated by community radio since 1st October 2001, while Korat-community radio began broadcasting in October 2001. The scope of the Korat-community radio was extended to include the local production network for community voice radio programs. In 2004, community radio issued broadcasts for Korat-community radio program, together with community radio tours, at 11-12 am, 1-2 pm and 3-4 pm.

2. The current problems for a model of cultural radio for youths in Nakhon Ratchasima are connected to the relatively small number of radio stations that cater to young listeners, a problem compounded by the erratic broadcasting schedule and limited staff. The limited staff, in particular, often amount to people working on a volunteer basis for the community radio. Cooperation from people in the community was active when the program was first established but their role, in any event, amounted to help with the planning. The operation of community radio was managed by the co-coordinators and administrators. The more involved levels of cooperation from the community were as moderator or DJ. The content of community radio programs included news, public information and edutainment, rather than cultural community news program. The content often was limited to news and activities of the people in the community. The overall information did not involve the lifestyle and culture of the community, so it failed to meet the needs of its young people. Moreover, the moderator or DJ spoke the national language rather than the local dialect, which would have better suited the needs of the audience. The style of the moderator or DJ was formal and therefore not entirely suitable for the community. As a result, the production of cultural programs only partially met the needs of the audience and the moderator or DJ could not establish the topics suitable for the youth in the community. Also, the program evaluation was not used to evaluate the moderator or DJ for future improvements.

3. The cultural radio for youth model through the community radio in Nakhon Ratchasima consisted of seven elements; 1) the administrative structure of the community radio as a tool of cooperation with the community; 2) the moderator or DJ should be familiar with both the Thai culture and the local Korat culture; 3) the



contents should feature Thao Suranari, as well as local costume with Korat fabric, Korat rice noodle, Phimai historical park, Dan Kwian pottery village, Korat language and Pleng Korat, or Korat folklore music; 4) the cultural music radio program for young listeners should be part of the community radio; 5) the suitable length for youth cultural radio program is around 30-45 minutes; 6) the suitable on-air slots are 11 am-12 noon on Sundays and 7-8 am Monday to Friday; 7) the format of radio programs for the youth should be an informal talk program, with features and magazine content.

Conclusions and Discussion

The researcher found the cultural radio for youth model through the community radio in Nakhon Ratchasima consisting of seven elements, as follows:

- 1. Composition I: Community radio entails broadcasting media with:
  - 1.1 Community radio structure

The community radio structure consists of members of the community operating in accordance with the principle that community radio belongs to the community, and that it is made by the community for the community. The community should cooperate from the early stages of the process with clear participation, action and function. The policy on the production process should be presented with cultural elements of Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The objectives should conform to the policy for clear cultural program production. An illustration of the community radio structure is shown in Figure 1:

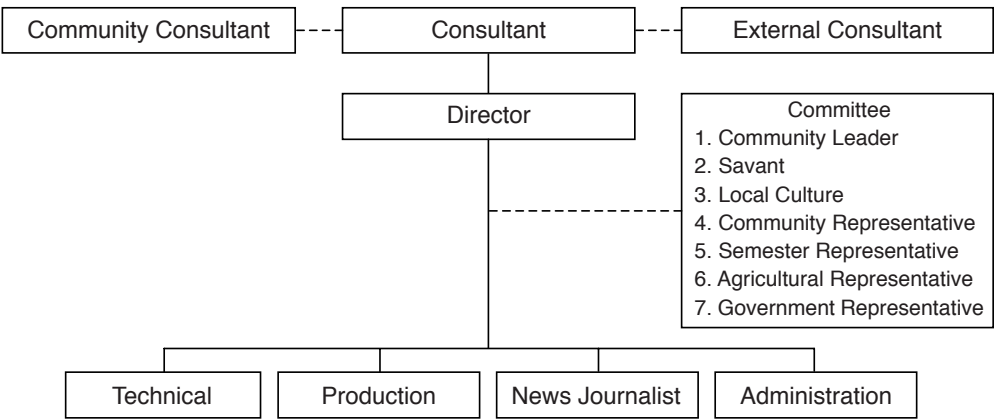


Figure 1 Community radio station structure

1.1.1 The Director is responsible for controlling broadcasting and programming. Furthermore, the radio moderator or DJ is responsible for ensuring that the language used in the radio program is correct, clear and polite.

1.1.2 The Consultant is responsible for giving advice on community radio matters such as policy, operation and evaluation. In addition, there is development of radio program and radio station to the real community radio. Community radio station should have consultants with expertise in cultural, public health and economic topics.

1.1.3 The Committee is responsible for setting up policy, scheduling radio programs, management and production. Committee members are drawn from the local community and this ensures local participation.

1.1.4 The Technician is responsible for controlling, setting up and maintaining radio production equipment, broadcasting room, radio transmitter, radio antenna, air conditioning, electric power system and light.

1.1.5 The Production is responsible for controlling pre-production, production and post-production. The Director and Committee are responsible for the radio production guide.

1.1.6 The News Journalist is responsible for communicating news from the community to the audience. There is data connection in the community and participation in radio programs.

1.1.7 The Administration is responsible for controlling office files, communicating to internal and external organizations, as well as managing personnel administration and budget.

## 1.2 Radio Schedule

Scheduling is an important aspect of radio station management and is used for designing the framework of cultural radio production, aligned with the policy principles set by the Committee. The radio schedule was created by the Committee, who is familiar with the lifestyle of the people in the community and the needs of the youth. The Committee must therefore participate in meetings and be involved in the planning of the radio schedule.

## 1.3 Radio Program Evaluation

Evaluations are conducted twice a year, for developing and improving programs, to better suit the needs of the audiences and to meet the objectives of the community radio. The program should be evaluated in multi-dimensions, such as radio station management evaluation. The evaluation can be divided into two types; informal and formal.

2. Composition II; moderator or DJ is the person who transmits news and information, together with speech, style and format. Features of cultural radio should consist of:

2.1 Knowledge of both Thai culture and local (Korat) culture

Definition of culture, its elements, type of culture, relevant development, folk wisdom (tradition, belief, language, archaeology, music, art, lifestyle, etc.)

2.2 Reading and speaking Thai, clearly and correctly

To read and speak with ease, to understand formal expression, avoiding ambiguous words, innuendos or salacious language, to pronounce vowels and consonants with the appropriate tone and consonant clusters correctly, in accordance with Thai formal pronunciation.

2.3 Speaking dialect or local language

This includes the Korat and Isan dialects. Nakhon Ratchasima Province includes numerous ethnic groups, where culture has undergone a process of integration, including language, as conserved by the various communities. Dialect or native language means local language, different from formal language also on account of pronunciation.

2.4 Broadcasting content with melodious voice

Should be performed with a lively voice, understandable by the audience, admix with the art of communication. The moderator's voice should broadcast the meaning of cultural information, invite the listener to visualize cultural expressions and speak in a friendly tone as a way of ensuring that young listeners remember the radio program.

2.5 Gathering of information

Knowledge, news, current world affairs, local news from the town and the community, conveyed by the moderator or DJ to the listeners.

2.6 Resolving problems

Radio broadcasting technique and answering questions should be defined, and likely issues resolved, before the start of program.

2.7 Ethics and professional responsibility

Moderator or DJ must be honest and sincere, rooted in morality, well-intentioned and conscious on matters of national unity.

## 2.8 Being neutral and public awareness

Content presented with a neutral approach, without bias and independently of any group interests. The moderator or DJ, a volunteer, presented useful information on quality radio programming and was willing to participate in the community development.

## 2.9 Developing a positive attitude in radio broadcasting

A good moderator or DJ is balanced, acts with fairness and applies a controlled tone.

3. Composition III; content means information, knowledge, objective reporting or situation, that are used for preparing cultural radio scripts for presentation to the audience.

### 3.1 Cultural belief amongst the followers of Thao Suranari

Biography, courage, nationalism, love of the motherland, sacrifice and raised to be a Thai heroine.

### 3.2 Cultural costume amongst Korat Thai fabric

Silk weaving in keeping with the tradition of Nakhon Ratchasima Province, dressmaking process from start to finish, special quality of fabric, refinement, fabric care, creative costume, place of production and Korat Thai fabric shop

### 3.3 Cultural food, including Korat rice noodle

Korat food, history, place of production, cooking, development, etc.

3.4 Cultural tourist attraction around Phimai historical park and ceramics of Dan Kwian

1) Phimai historical park; importance, art and architecture, comprehensive history, conservation, cultural tourism and promotion.

2) Dan Kwian ceramics; history of Dan Kwian village, lifestyle of local community, potters, history of development to the present, souvenirs.

3.5 Korat dialect, history, principles of language, meaning, pronunciation, importance within the context of national cultural heritage.

### 3.6 Cultural aesthetics music amongst Pleng-Korat (Korat folk song)

History, poems, vocalists, costumes, posture meaning, performances for special occasions.

## 4. Composition IV; interesting and inspiring songs.

### 4.1 Opening song

At the start of the radio program. This song was composed especially for the cultural radio program, with lyrics from the Korat dialect set to a lively and enjoyable rhythm. The length of the opening song was 30–45 seconds (under one minute long).

### 4.2 Interstitial music

Music only (no lyrics), with the same melody as the opening song. This interstitial tune was 10 seconds long and was played between program segments.

### 4.3 Closing song

The same as the opening song, played after the content was already presented and the moderator or DJ had already thanked the audience for their attention. The rhythm of this song was enjoyable and lively.

5. Composition V; period of time means the length of radio program broadcasting. Radio producer had to ensure that the period of time was appropriate to the radio format or programming format and with the young audience. Length of time: 30-48 minutes.

6. Composition VI; time is as specified by the radio station and appropriate to the audience type. The audience – youths between 14 and 18 years of age – are normally in school weekdays and listen to the radio between 7.00–8.00 am. On Saturdays, youths attend other classes for additional tuition. On Sundays, they rest with their family members and are likely to listen to the radio around 11.00 am-12.00 noon.

7. Composition VII; radio formats or programming formats means method technique and style of cultural content presentation.

### 7.1 Talk program

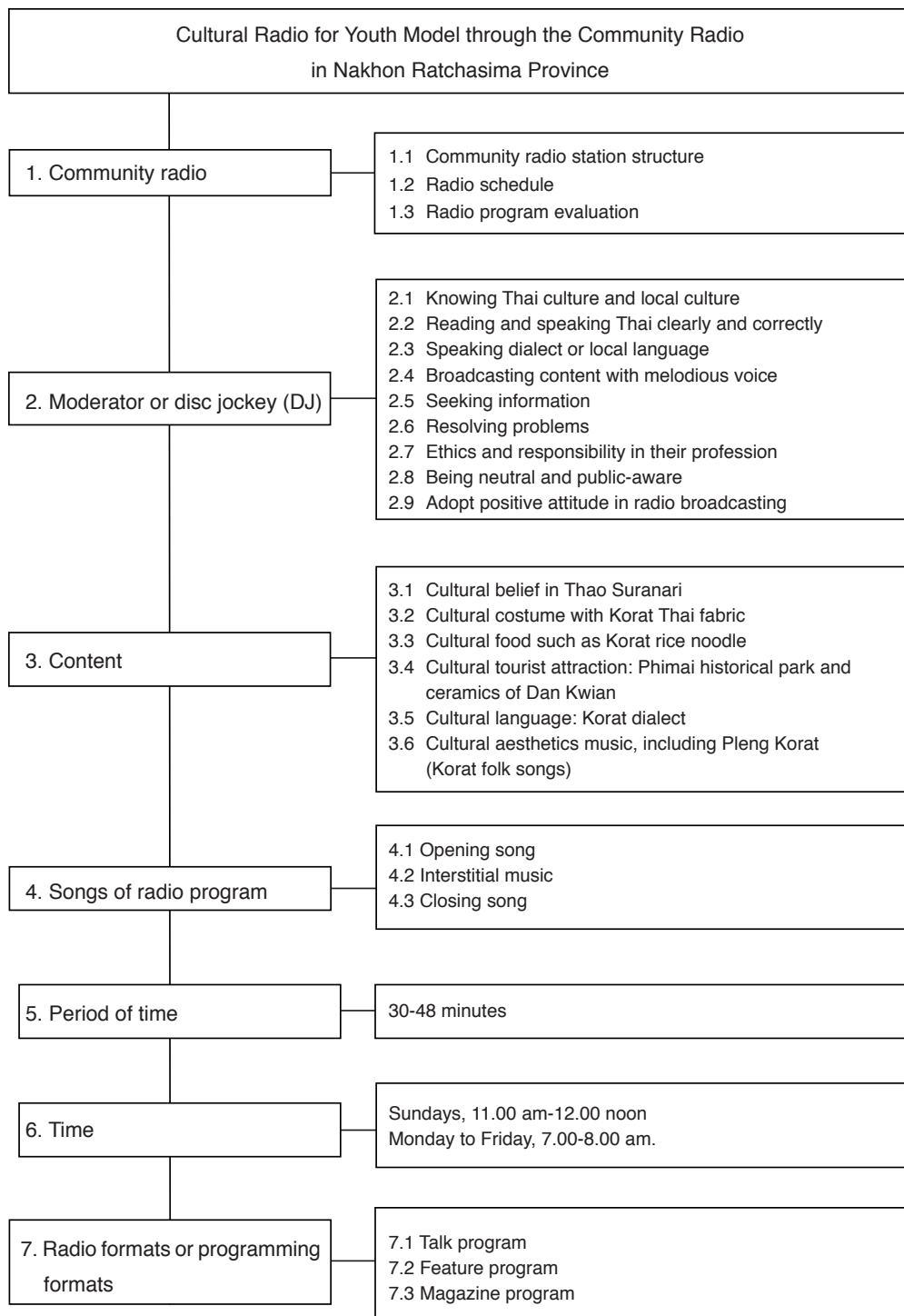
Presentation of cultural content of Nakhon Ratchasima Province to young listeners. The moderator or DJ interviewed guests who were experts in cultural matters, such as academics, savants, community leaders, etc.

## 7.2 Feature program

Presented only real and genuine cultural content of Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Content too long to broadcast would be segmented. The moderator or DJ should present with special style, tone or music. For example, the feature program on Phimai historical park discussed its unique features, location, history, geography, attractions for tourist visits, how to get there, likely cost of a visit, etc.

## 7.3 Magazine program

Presented various methods and culture content exclusively for Nakhon Ratchasima Province to meet the needs of the province's young listeners. The moderator or DJ related and separated the content for the benefit of the audience. A diagram of findings is illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2** Diagram of findings

This research in the development of a model for cultural radio aimed at young listeners within the community radio of Nakhon Ratchasima Province, found seven compositions. Radio broadcasting organization and the Thai association of professional broadcasters may use these cultural radio findings to develop a model for community radio. Furthermore, the young listeners can listen to messages on how to propagate culture and how to preserve it. Professionals in the field of mass communication could use curriculum development in conformity with the current situation of community radio. Youths could participate in cultural radio programming with suitable composition to a medium of culture development. Community radio stations, the office of culture, the public relations department and radio stations in Thailand could employ these findings to develop cultural communication through community radio programs that benefit the local culture conservation and promotion.

### **Advice to future research**

The purpose of this research was to develop a model for cultural radio aimed at young listeners through the community radio in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Among the limitations of this research was the time constraints imposed on the researcher, who spent only seven months collecting the data. Consequently, some aspects of community radio service and culture may have been overlooked. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Study of the development of youth participation model in community radio production. Young listeners are important for social development. Communication is important to community development.
2. Study the standard of local cultural community radio for the most appropriate composition. Community radio is known to be an efficient and cost-effective medium for the propagation of culture.
3. Study the development of community radio production that disseminates local culture. Community radio is a medium for conserving and promoting local culture, as well as being an instrument for the conservation of local culture.



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