

TECH2503-18 Community Media Production
Workshop Fifteen – Community Media Stories

1 Discussion – The Value of Stories

- How can we evaluate the effectiveness of a community media project?
- How important is it that we gather evaluative information about a project?
- If we use traditional methods of data collection, such as surveys and statistical analysis, what do we gain or lose in such approaches?
- Is there an alternative form of data collection that we can use that is not based on numerical or category forms of data?
- Read through the following links and articles and note any significant issues that are related to the way stories are told and used.

1.1 Impact Analysis

“Several studies observe community radio engages community participation (Girard, 1992; Gumucio Dagnon, 2001; Rodriguez, 2001; Sussman & Estes, 2005), yet only a handful examine the impact of these practices within community radio stations (Fairchild, 2001; Khan, 2010; Anderson, 2012). Where recent shifts in audience studies have move beyond the reception of media (Nightingale, 2007), only a few researchers have turned to community media audiences to allow the “community” to assess how effectively they are being served by their community radio stations (Meadows et al., 2007; Orozco, 2011). Indeed, alternative media scholar Downing (2003) and community radio researchers like Meadows et al. (2007, 2006, 2005) note that the audiences of community media have largely gone unnoticed” (King, 2015, p. 125).

1.2 Seduced by Community Media?

“Perhaps many of us who started on this path have been seduced by community media (!) The field offers a more defined set of practices and frameworks than alternative media as concept, it is perhaps where many of us have and do participate in as volunteers, and moreover, it offers explicit avenues for policy intervention. Thus, for engagement with both theory and policymaking, it offers the best of both worlds, so to speak. My point here is to raise the issue that we need also be mindful of the role and value of critical theory and inquiry”

<http://essays.ssrc.org/mcrm/2008/12/03/community-media-scholarship-policy-advocacy-and-power-tools/>

1.3 Quantitative vs Qualitative

“Gordon concludes that quantitative and qualitative approaches deployed in combination can enrich audience data collected for community radio stations. She argues that quantitative data can give credibility to a station by enumerating audience size and qualitative data can document audience motivations or impact. By contrast, ethnographic action researchers investigating the impact of community radio deploy qualitative methods in the field to document a community’s use and interaction with technology within the larger social and cultural structures, referred to as “communicative ecologies” (Tacchi et al., 2003, p. 2). Drawing on engaged, participatory, and action-oriented qualitative research, a new wave of scholarship offers innovative techniques to studying the impact of community radio on listeners” (King, 2015, p. 125).

2 Activity - The Centrality of Audience Engagement to Impact Assessment

- How do we know if a community media project is effective or not?
- What kind of data can we collect and utilise that will help us to understand if our projects are working and making a difference?
- If we are going to collect information about a project, what is the least disruptive way we can work, so that participants and volunteers aren't deflected by the evaluation process itself?
- What constitutes meaningful data in a community media project or event setting?
- What can you collect and how can you collect it without causing disruption?

2.1 Hearing Community Radio Listeners

"Community radio stations worldwide are mandated to empower their audiences and facilitate community participation in political life. Thus, the perspectives of listeners are vital to ascertain how effective community radio stations are in contributing to political education and civic awareness that motivates listener engagement in the station and in the community. This article draws on the first extensive study of community radio audiences in the Middle East to contribute new insights about documenting the impacts of community radio, and the evaluative mechanisms that should be in place for non-profit, community media to better fulfil their mission to serve the community. Building on critical ethnographic audience research, I argue for a storytelling approach that facilitates personal narratives and cooperative focus groups among community radio audiences" (King, 2015, p. 121). <http://www.participations.org/Volume%2012/Issue%202/7.pdf>

2.2 Community Engagement

"Where community radio stations have few resources to evaluate station practices, community radio researchers have developed new applied approaches drawing on the communication for development tradition" (King, 2015, p. 125).

"The concept of engagement often serves as a central mechanism via which media impact is assessed and can be utilized to serve in a variety of capacities in relation to the broader notion of media impact; for instance, as an intervening variable, as a proxy for impact, or as a form of impact in its own right. One approach to engagement measurement that seems to have taken hold involves deriving ratios of audiences exposed to media content to those who engaged in some form of measurable action during or after exposure" <https://learcenter.org/pdf/measuringmedia.pdf>

3 Investigation - Barefoot Impact Analysis

- What are we looking for when we undertake an evaluation of a project?
- Who are the people that we need to speak with, listen to and observe?
- How can we record these discussion and observations?
- If we don't know what they are likely to reveal, we can focus on how issues might be relayed and discussed – what should we try to anticipate about how people will share their experience with us?

"Jallof's 'bare foot' impact assessment (2005) offers an approach to community radio audience research that combines ethnographic action research with monitoring and evaluation techniques from communication and development studies. The 'bare foot' impact assessment considers three levels of analysis that include:

1. the internal functioning of the [community media project] from the point of view of staff and volunteers,
2. the [community media project's] programming, content and engagement activities through regularly listening to the listeners[/users], and

3. the impact or change achieved through interviews or focus groups in the community (Jallov, 2005, p. 3).

This research model is aimed at increasing the capacity of community radio station to collect data and conduct assessments without requiring an external researcher. Data collected through this methodology can ensure community radio is achieving station goals as well as be accountable to local partners and funders” (King, 2015, p. 125).

4 Media Engagement and Impact

- We want to understand if our community media project makes a difference. How would we make an assessment about the changes that take place in a community setting?
- Change can occur in many forms and go in many directions. Who sets the terms of how that change is understood and noted?
- Is there a danger in the researcher/evaluator setting the terms of change and impact measurement?
- Are we geared-up to hear negative as well a positive change stories?
- Could we be making things worse? If we are, how do we account for negative impact?
- What are the indicators of positive impact?

4.1 Stakeholder Defined Impact

“Media impact also extends a bit beyond the traditional notion of media effects through its emergent focus on the concept of engagement. That is, when assessing media impact – particularly as it relates to public interest media initiatives – the stakeholders involved do not always necessarily focus on measurable effects on the attitudes, beliefs, cognitions, or subsequent behaviours of the audience. From a media impact perspective, the very nature of the interaction between audience and media represents important criteria for assessment”

<https://learcenter.org/pdf/measuringmedia.pdf>

4.2 Outcomes vs. Impact

“In effectively establishing what media impact is – and what it isn’t – it is important to distinguish between outcomes and impacts. From an assessment standpoint, outcomes are typically defined in terms of the shorter-term effects that a public interest media project can have (such as reaching, informing, engaging, and mobilizing target audiences), whereas impacts can be seen as the longer-term, more far-reaching changes (such as changes in individuals’ behaviours, or changes in public policy)” <https://learcenter.org/pdf/measuringmedia.pdf>

4.3 The impact assessment focussed on three sets of questions

- Is the community media project working effectively internally and do the volunteers have contracts, rights and clearly defined duties?
- Does the content that is produced respond to the interests of the public? Is it well researched, using culturally relevant formats such as storytelling, songs, proverbs and music? Are they considered good and effective by listeners and users?
- Does the community media project create desired development and social change (determined by the original baseline research) within the community?

5 Community Media Impact Evaluation

- Can you account for your project activities by finding evidence that fits within these criteria?

Criteria	Weakness of Arrangements	Strength of Arrangements	Work-Around
Defined Activities			
Defined Duties			
Defined Roles			
Public Interest			
Aligned with Storytelling Modes			
Effective Storytelling			
Development Objectives			
Social Change Objectives			

6 References

King, G. (2015). Hearing Community Radio Listeners - A Storytelling Approach for Community Media Audience Research. *Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 12(2), 121- 145.