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<th>The use of survey in electronics media: the Philippine experience</th>
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The Use Of Survey In Electronics Media:
The Philippine Experience

By

Bridgit R Zubiri
The Use of Survey In Electronics Media:  
The Philippine Experience  
by: Bridgit R. Zubiri

One of the most common method of research utilized in the Philippines is the survey. It has been defined as a "branch of social scientific investigation that studies large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables."(1)

From this description alone, we can gather that the survey covers a very wide scope. It is used to create a general picture of a phenomena and it uses general samples of the population as its subject of study. Although survey settings are slightly artificial and is slightly controlled, the depth is quite extensive. Compared to other research methods, the survey is generally shorter; the design is moderate; and the research instrument commonly used for gathering data is the questionnaire or the interview schedule.

The advantages of using the survey research method are:

1. It covers a wide scope and a great deal of information is gathered from a large population.
2. It is accurate within sampling error.
3. The survey cost is minimized by using probability sampling schemes.
4. The analysis of voluminous responses maybe reduced to meaningful statistics.

5. By asking questions systematically, accurate information is elicited.

However, like all endeavors, the survey has also limitations. These are:

1. The information gathered from surveys do not penetrate deeply below the surface.

2. It is demanding of time and money.

3. It is subject to sampling error.

4. It temporarily lifts the respondent out of his own social context.

5. A great deal of research knowledge and sophistication is needed to conduct a survey.

The survey is used to obtain basic audience information. For example, in March of last year (1989), this researcher together with another professor of the UP College of Mass Communication (UPCMC), conducted an audience preference survey for the University radio station (DZUP)\(^2\). In this case, the researchers tried to gauge the pulse of the UP community relative to DZUP which had been on test broadcast for a year, going on air Mondays to Fridays, 5 to 6 p.m. at 1566 on the AM band.

Specifically, the survey focused on the randomly selected respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, their radio program types, their preferred listening time and their exposure
to DZUP. More significantly, this investigation presented a research based picture of the respondents' radio program preferences and listening habits. Accordingly, the study identified the type of music the respondents listened to; the topics or subjects they desired to hear in talk shows, interviews or educational programs; and the ideal time for them to listen to the radio.

The results of the study served as guidelines in initiating and conceptualizing strategies for the radio station's programming. It also served as data bank for the formulation and implementation of a community-based information campaign for the radio station.

The study utilized the one group after only design otherwise known as the "one-shot" case study design of the ex-post facto survey. This design is used when the area of study has been exposed to the phenomenon and data is gathered only at one time. In this case, the phenomenon is the respondents' exposure to the radio in general, and DZUP in particular, and their preferences for a radio program.

The main variables that were nominally measured were the socio-demographic data of the respondents, their radio program types and topics, and their listening time preferences.
The stratified random scheme of probability sampling was used to select the 250 respondents composed of 122 students, 37 faculty and 91 non-teaching staff.

The study took 11 days to complete, five days for actual field interviews and six days for coding, tabulation, analysis, interpretation of data and preparation of the final report.

The two faculty members were assisted by six interviewers, two coders and two clerk-typists.

Results of the study showed that 9 out of 10 respondents lived within the U.P. campus. Nearly half of the 250 respondents were students, while the rest consisted of the faculty and non-teaching staff.

The respondents' ages ranged from 16 to 55, with the biggest number coming from the 16 to 20 age group. A big majority were females.

Musical shows were the most preferred shows of the respondents, followed by news programs and educational shows. When asked to rank the various types of programs, news programs were ranked first by the largest number of respondents. Musical programs were ranked 2nd and educational shows, third.

Among the various types of music respondents wanted to hear on DZUP, jazz was the most preferred, followed by classical and pop/disco music.
For talk shows and commentaries, respondents wanted current issues/events. Campus/community issues came second, while political issues came third.

For interviews and educational shows, on the other hand, UP issues were the most preferred, followed by issues on the educational system, and science and technology.

On the respondents' preferred broadcast time, majority chose the 4-8 p.m. time slot. The second choice was the 8-12 a.m. slot, although it rated far behind at 12%.

Only three out of ten respondents listened to DZUP and out of this number only 16% listened regularly.

The respondents came up with various suggestions on DZUP and its programming. Foremost of these concerned the need to generate more publicity to inform the public of the revival of DZUP. Others suggested that the power be increased, and broadcast time be changed, or better yet, lengthened.

Although this audience preference survey was conducted for radio, the methodology employed may also apply to television.

In another study done by Ma. Agnes L. Hedriana, viewership preferences of La Salle Mass Communication students in Bacolod City were gathered.
According to Hedriana, in Oct. 30, 1971, the second television station in Bacolod was put up by Kanlaon Broadcasting System under the auspices of then Ambassador Roberto S. Benedicto and Mr. Buddy Tan of KBS Manila. RPN channel 8 started broadcasting at a time when the established ABS-CBN Channel 4 had already a strong following in the province of Negros Occidental. After Martial Law was declared, resulting in the shutting down of the Lopez' owned ABS-CBN, Channel 8 was left alone to service the same audience following the earlier station left behind. Channel 8 however, introduced the then novel "color television" to the predominant black and white television viewing of the seventies.

She further states that eleven years after the birth of the "color television" stations, Bacolod found itself the residence of two or more television stations, namely GMA Channel 10 which is privately owned by the Recolect Brothers and GTV Channel 4, which is semi-government. Early 1981, Iloilo City became the site of the first T.V. station, IBC Channel 12, whose programs were also seen in Bacolod.

The study aimed to show the viewership preferences of Mass Communication students of La Salle College in Bacolod.

Data gathering was done in two parts. Part 1 dealt with the programming format of each station and their allotment of shows according to its entertainment, educational and informational function. Interviews with three of these station managers as well
as with three of the administrative and faculty staff of La Salle were conducted to give an all-around picture of the television industry. Part 11 dealt with the viewing preferences of the respondents.

According to Hedriana, the results revealed the programming format of GMA 10 which allocates a bigger share for foreign canned shows on prime time hours from 6 to 10 p.m. GMA 10 made it to the highest rating television station among the four because the respondents showed a strong preference for foreign shows.

She further stressed that the implications of the study were that GMA 10 reaches a bigger share of the ABC economic bracket considering that most of the respondents belonged to this upper income bracket and chose GMA 10 as their preferred station to watch. A second look however, pointed RPN 8 to be a close second in audience ratings. Thus, she concludes, the good ratings are basically divided between these two stations.

Another use of survey in media research is to measure sets in use and share of audience.

Sets in use refers to the percentage of homes in the sample with a television set turned on.

Share of audience, meanwhile, is the percentage of sets in use tuned to a given program. This is further explained by the following equation:
Program rating = Share of audience
Sets in Use

Another very important use of the survey in media research is to predict program ratings. Which program is being watched by most of the people? In other words, rating is the "percentage of people or households in a population with television or radio, turned to a specific station or network". (4) It deals with program popularity.

There are several approaches or types of data collection used for this method of study. One is the use of the mechanical recorder. This is a device attached to a television or radio set. Everytime the set is on, the mechanical recorder will record the channel or program the set is tuned to. This device measures tuning rather than viewing or listening.

The limitations of this kind of approach is that the program rating it yields is more costly than the tabulated form. Also, it does not provide audience composition data and does not report portable out of home set usage. The information received from mechanical recorders take longer, about several weeks to tabulate, analyze and report. As mentioned earlier, the reports are based on tuning and not on viewing or listening.

The second type is the telephone survey. In this approach, homes are called at certain viewing hours and are asked what station or channel they are tuned to and what program they are
listening to or watching. Here, coincidental data on viewing and
listening are gathered at the time calls are made. Respondents
are chosen at random from the telephone listings.

Although this approach is rapid and inexpensive, it has
several disadvantages. For one thing, those people with no
telephones and mostly people from the rural areas are not
sampled. Also, telephone calls can not be used to measure early
morning or late evening viewing or listening. There is also the
possibility of non-response, uncooperativeness, or reluctance to
answer more than simple, superficial questions. Thus the
principal defect of this type is its inability to obtain detailed
interviews.

Lastly, telephone interviews are made on a shifting random
sample basis. In the Philippines where the telephone system can
not be relied on because the lines are most often dead or it is
difficult to contact the other party, samples will always have to
be substituted.

The third type is the diary method. Here, a diary or a
viewing or listening logbook is placed next to the set. Everytime
a household member opens the radio or television set, he/she has
to log in the time, channel, program watched and with whom he/she
is watching the program. This approach is fast and economical.
However, a family can get conscious of broadcast usage activity
and may not watch the programs that they ordinarily watch.
Or, their viewing or listening may become artificial and excessive. Families who don't normally watch English programs may feel that they have to watch one for status symbol as well as to please the researcher. Now they can record that they also watch foreign programs. Another limitation is that the respondents may also fail to record the programs they are watching.

The fourth type is the personal or face to face interview divided into the Roster Recall Method or the Coincidental Personal Interview. The Roster Recall Method asks the respondent to recall within 24 hours what programs the respondents listened to or watched. The greatest disadvantage of this method is memory lapse. The respondent may not remember what programs he has seen or heard the past 24 hours.

Meanwhile, in the Coincidental Personal Interview, interviewers talk to viewers at home at the time the program is on air. The greatest disadvantage here is that it is too costly in time and effort. Early morning and late evening shows cannot also be measured in this manner.

The fifth and the last type is the mailed questionnaire. Here, questionnaires are sent by mail to the respondents. The greatest limitation of this method is the lack of response. In the Philippines, mail questionnaires have a 35-40 percent rate of return. Thus, the only way to get substantial data with this approach is to send out 200 percent more questionnaires.
Another limitation of this approach is the inability to check the responses given. One can never be sure if the person who answered the questionnaire is the actual respondent. Also, in the Philippines where the postal service is very slow and unreliable, chances are the questionnaires will take a long time to reach their destination. There is also the possibility that the questionnaires will get lost thus, they will never reach their destination.

In the Philippines, the most common method used to gauge program rating is the Coincidental Personal Interview. At times, this is complemented with either Roster Recall Method or the Telephone Interview.

One research company makes use of the Mechanical Recorder. About 250 households from the A-B-C-D-E income bracket have devices installed to their sets for the past 10 years. Every week, the paper tapes are retrieved and fed to the computers for processing. These devices are quite obsolete. Aside from metal fatigue, there is the respondents' fatigue to contend with.

Latest ratings have shown that Channel 2 is number one in prime time showing (7-10 p.m.). The top program is "Okay Ka, Fairy Ko," a fantasy sitcom, which is followed by Filipino movies like "FRJ sa GMA," "RVQ Presents," and other sitcoms and drama programs such as "Going Bananas," "Maricel Soriano Special,"

Survey research is also best adapted to obtaining personal and social facts, beliefs and attitudes. For example, Ms. Minerva Belen in her PhD. dissertation in Communication, conducted a study in 1989 on television and urban adolescent conventionality where she sought to determine the association between television and conventionality among urban in-school adolescents, and whether the home and peer group played a role in this association.

Specifically, she tried to determine the trends/patterns of adolescent television involvement, their home life and peer group relationship especially with regards to media. She also sought to ascertain conventionality of these adolescents on areas of personal values, deviances, social/moral and political issues, while also determining whether certain select socio-economic characteristics were associated with conventionality.

Using the cluster sampling scheme, her sample consisted of 564 urban in-school adolescents representing 31 private and public schools of Metro Manila, 240 of whom were males and 324 females. Their mean age was 16.36.

She used the questionnaire and the interview schedule as her research instruments, the former an adaptation from a western instrument used to study American adolescents behaviour patterns.
Results of the study showed that majority of adolescents who perceived television as important spent at least 3-6 hours a week for each of the following program types: local information, local entertainment, foreign information and foreign entertainment. Belen further explains that only the first programming type was found to be associated with adolescent conventionality but the link was weak. Home, especially the factor of discipline or control, was found to reinforce the association; the peer group was likely to dilute it.

According to Belen, findings on television viewing of adolescents in relation to homelife and peer group also reveal that home control/discipline was perceived to be democratic, but parental control over adolescent television viewing especially on program preference was unlikely. The peer groups, perceived to be wholesome as case studies reveal was influential on adolescent program selection.

In another study, Ma. Giselle N. Dizon described how the cultural level of the filipino audience relates to television programming in the Broadcast Industry (6). Using the one group after only design of the ex-post facto survey, Dizon had 150 respondents belonging to the upper, middle and lower class stratification. These respondents were chosen through cluster sampling. She sought to measure their cultural level by linking it with their cultural exposure, sources and preferences of
information. This in turn reflected the television programming preferences of the respondents which was tallied with the actual trends in the Broadcast Industry.

The results of the study proved that there is a relationship between the cultural level of the Filipino audience and the television programming in the country's broadcasting industry.

The latest development in electronics media research is the development of the people meters. "People meters attempt to simplify data collection task by requiring each person in the household, as well as visitors, to push a specific button on a mechanical unit that records the viewing"(7). This method veers away from the traditional television meters that record sets in use but not audience composition. It has a button for each person in the house and can instantaneously record the identity and the number of viewers. Data is collected via computer and "information is valuable for advertisers and their agencies, who now can more accurately target their advertising messages"(8).

Because people meters are awfully expensive, costing more than millions of pesos for agencies who wish to own and utilize them, acceptance as well as use of these would be very limited.

In the Philippines, only one company has people meters and these are used on a very limited area. Only 50 households are covered with these so results may not be representative of the population.
NOTES


7. Ibid, Wimmer and Dominick, p. 337

8. Ibid, p. 337