

NOTES ON
TRENDS AND CHANGING PATTERNS
OF
RADIO LISTENING HABITS
IN
JAMAICA. W.I.

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C O N T E N T S

	Page
INTRODUCTION: A note on the history of Radio listening Sur- veys in Jamaica.	1
A NEW CONCENT OF BROADCASTING IN JAMAICA	4
RANDOM SAMPLING	6
RESULTS OF RECENT RANDOM SAMPLING	8
FUTURE SURVEYS	11
CONCLUSION	12

INTRODUCTION

A note on the history of Radio
listening surveys in Jamaica.

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The history of surveys of listening habits in Jamaica is not a long one. The history of radio listening in Jamaica itself is not long. The first commercial radio station in Jamaica began operation less than 11 years ago, in July 1950. As there was only one radio station there seemed little point at first in doing any research on radio listening. Theoretically at least, everyone who listened to the radio, listened to the one local station.

However as interest in radio listening grew steadily and as advertisers wanted to know which programmes and what type of programmes were most heavily listened to, the one radio station itself decided to conduct simple surveys of listening habits and preferences and compile the results for the interest of those who were using this medium of mass communication.

As year succeeded year the annual radio research reports issued by Radio Jamaica became more and more ambitious and although far from being exhaustive became very helpful guides to those using this medium.

One of the chief drawbacks to the conduct of radio research by the station itself was that such research was open to the suspicion of bias. However it was demonstrated in December of 1959 when the Pulse survey was taken only a couple of months after the last Radio Jamaica

survey was published, that the Radio Jamaica surveys had presented a reasonably faithful picture of listening habits in Jamaica, for the Pulse survey corroborated the findings of the last Radio Jamaica survey to quite a remarkable degree.

When Jamaica's second radio station began broadcasting in June 1959, there was great interest as to the proportion of listenership to each of the two stations. This was measured immediately after the JBC went on the air and reports published at that time indicated that RJR was sharing its previously exclusive listening audience with the new station in the proportion of approximately:

RJR	82%
JBC	18%

When the JBC was only 5 months old, the Advertisers Association of Jamaica in collaboration with both radio stations engaged the services of the Pulse Inc. to take a survey in Kingston and certain other main towns of Jamaica by the Aided Recall Method. The main findings of this survey indicated that the overall listenership of the two stations was in the proportion:

RJR	77.7%
JBC	22.3%

It seemed clear that all interested parties were in favour of radio research being conducted by an independent organization now that two stations were involved, but it was not until December

of 1960 that any further such surveys were undertaken. In that month the Caribbean Research Ltd. conducted a survey in the Kingston area only and by the telephone coincidental method and presented the results in some detail. The joint findings of this survey were that the proportion of listenership to each of the two stations were approximately:

RJR 76.9%
 JBC 23.1%

However a significant fact emerged from this survey and that is that listenership was dividing itself not by station but by programmes. In short, listeners after 18 months of having the opportunity of listening to two stations instead of one, were beginning to choose their programmes according to their taste and not according to stations.

This is the pattern which has evolved in multi-station markets all over the world, is perfectly normal, and is bound to continue to develop in Jamaica. Listeners listen to programmes not to station identification. For example, in the Caribbean Research Report of December 1960, it was shown that at

6.15p.m. Fridays

JBC Country Journal 14.3 = 26.7% of audience

RJR News Commentary
 (Peter Abrahams) 39.3 = 79.3% "

while at:

8.15p.m. Fridays

JBC Carrier Invitation Quiz 37.5 = 75% "

RJR News, Goodyear
 Caravan 12.5 = 25% "

A NEW CONCEPT OF BROADCASTING
IN JAMAICA.

In June 1959 when the JBC began broadcasting everyone who listened was struck by the fact that, like it or not, this was a new type of broadcasting in Jamaica: essentially Jamaican in character and clearly dedicated to high standards of quality rather than to an attempt to appeal to the lowest common tastes in order to win easy popularity.

There were a great many faults in the JBC's programming and these combined with the fact that the entire concept was new, produced protest from many listeners. But those who had been engaged in broadcasting in Jamaica for years recognized that the JBC were attempting to make broadcasting in Jamaica something really worthwhile and they recognized too that eventually with experience and proper organization the JBC would undoubtedly win itself a high place with listeners of all types in Jamaica.

Now nearly 2 years after the JBC first began transmission the policy of keeping standards high, using the best talent and particularly Jamaican talent wherever possible has continued. Experience has been gained, the professional touch is being acquired. The entire establishment is being more efficiently organized and administered. The proportion of programmes which listeners prefer to listen to by reason of intrinsic worth is growing. Broadcasting personalities of the highest calibre in Jamaica are joining the JBC from choice because they feel that this new

concept of broadcasting in Jamaica is the right one and the one with which they wish to be associated and to promote.

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RANDOM SAMPLING

There is a very simple way of finding out what one wants to know. It is to ask questions. Basically this is the method employed by every research organization conducting surveys of listening habits and tastes. So far in Jamaica there has been no measurement of listening habits and tastes among people outside of the main urban areas nor has any serious survey been taken in areas not normally served by the telephone. It has been clearly established that it is not the function of individual radio stations or publications to conduct surveys for audience or readership measurements but as in the days when there was only one radio station if the need exists then someone is going to supply it: later this will inspire the proper organizations to do the proper job.

One of the methods by which a guide to public habits of preference may be gauged is random sampling. This can be carried out by highly specialized organizations and remarkably accurate results obtained. However reliable guides may be obtained by the honest application of the simple method of question and answer conducted with absolute impartiality. Even though such enquiry may be on a modest scale it is indeed remarkable how little even small samplings will differ from the whole.

As a check on random sampling two or three samples from exactly the same area but from different districts with similar composition can be taken so that the sampler may feel confident that the broad results of his enquiry are being corroborated. If they are not, then he knows something is wrong and he can check again. It is of course wellknown that random sampling, straw polls and indeed the entire gamut of public opinion surveys are subject to error and indeed can be quite misleading. It is with this firmly in mind that these entire notes are being written and as the conclusion on Page 12 will show the desirable end is that a careful and scientific survey be taken of audience habits and preferences throughout the length and breadth of Jamaica.

RESULTS OF RECENT RANDOM
SAMPLING

During the month of March 1961 the JBC conducted a series of random samplings of radio listening habits and preferences across the country. It is obvious that only a handful of areas could be sampled in various parishes but care was taken to see that completely separate groups handled different samples in each area, that the entire sampling was carried out with absolute impartiality and that wherever possible cross checks were taken to corroborate the findings. Full results are not yet in from all parts of the island where the samples are being taken nor have all the results been completely tabulated as to the more detailed questions of choice of specific programmes and preference in individual radio personalities. This is a longer job and may be undertaken later and the results eventually made public if necessary but the results already received show so clearly the trends and pattern of change that it is considered proper that these preliminary notes should be made public as a stimulus to all interested parties to endeavour to find the means of surveying the entire island instead of confining surveys to urban areas, for of course more than a million and a quarter Jamaicans live outside of the Corporate area which surrounds and includes Kingston.

It is also felt that such an island wide survey should attempt to assess the number of people who are reached by daily newspapers in relation to those reached by radio, for the circulation figures of the daily publications and their distribution outside of the Corporate area when compared to the number of radio sets, indicate that while the number of people reached by radio in the Corporate area is considerably more than all those reached by any form of press publication, the proportions outside of the Corporate area are so overwhelmingly in favour of radio that the results of an accurate survey on this point alone should be of vital interest to those concerned in getting a message to the people of Jamaica.

Random Sampling Results:

The method used for this random sampling consisted of a simple questionnaire as set out below, handed to a number of people in the area covered:

- Q.1 Which Radio station do you listen to most?
- Q.2 Which is your favourite programme on JBC?
- Q.3 Which is your favourite programme on RJR?
- Q.4 Who is your favourite radio personality?

The random sampling so far tabulated on the question " Which radio station do you listen to most? " shows the following results:

<u>STATION:</u>		<u>RJR</u>	<u>JBC</u>
Area No.1	Urban	59%	41%
Area No.2	Rural	662/3%	33.1/3%
Area No.3	Rural	62%	38%
Area No.4	Rural	61%	39%
Area No.5	Rural	42%	58%
Area No.6	Rural	40%	60%
Area No.7	Urban	56%	44%
		<u>386.2/3</u>	<u>313.1/3</u>
		55.2% Average	44.7%

This random sampling shows unquestionably that RJR is still the more popular of the two stations with the broad mass of the people.

Any other result in an examination of the relative popularity of two stations one of which is nearly 11 years old, the other of which is not yet 2 years old would have been surprising. But what it does show also is that the JBC programmes seem to be gaining in favour rapidly with the public especially in rural areas where of course by far the greater population of the people in Jamaica live.

FUTURE SURVEYS

It is essential to the development of the means of mass communication in Jamaica that regular and thorough surveys be undertaken on an islandwide scale.

Whether the reason for taking the survey is to give advertisers information on what type of programme is likely to reach the greatest proportion of their potential customers or whether it is to help broadcasters to gauge the effectiveness of their work and public response to their ideas, surveys are necessary.

But, it is essential that surveys that purport to provide results to guide advertisers must include some comparison of various media and should not assume automatically either that radio is the most effective medium and therefore is the only medium that needs to be measured, or that other media have established accepted strength and so need not be measured against each other or against radio.

It is also essential that all future surveys be sufficiently penetrating to include all areas of Jamaica's population and be confined neither to homes with telephones nor people who live in cities and towns.

Jamaica is still predominantly an agricultural community and most Jamaicans live outside of the area immediately surrounding Kingston.

CONCLUSION

Amid the spate of circulars, claims and counter-claims with which those interested in advertising and mass communication are flooded it is somewhat difficult to plead the case for clarity and integrity, but it must be done in order to see the situation as it is and not the way anyone would wish it to be.

At the JBC we are concerned primarily with the truth. We are not concerned with extravagant claims. Nor are we concerned with past history as much as present facts and future growth.

At the JBC we are honestly anxious to know whether or not our programmes are growing in popularity with the people of Jamaica. Because if they are not we naturally want to find out why. We are not as much concerned with which station is getting the majority of listeners votes now, as we are with what type of intelligent programming is finding a growing response from the ambitious industrious people who make up the bulk of the population of Jamaica.

The purpose of these notes therefore is NOT to attempt to suggest that the JBC is reaching 40% or more of the listeners or that radio listeners tune to the JBC 40% or more of the time.

This is emphatically NOT the purpose of these notes and would indeed be a quite unwarrantable assumption from the random sampling that has been described in preceding pages.

We have deliberately described this document as "NOTES ON TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF RADIO LISTENING HABITS IN JAMAICA" because that is what this is - NOTES - nothing more.

The real purpose and motive behind this document is to add force to the current arguments in favour of a proper island-wide survey including the comparison of various media.

To do this effectively we have spent considerable time and effort to take random samples, tabulate them and circulate these notes in order to stimulate all those concerned into making a meaningful survey possible by indicating by thoughtful argument and practical means that trends and patterns in radio listening seem to be evolving in a manner which commands careful and thorough study.
