

Demand for business-related programmes on radio and TV among micro and small entrepreneurs in Lao PDR

Air Chansamone, 18 October 2003

1. Introduction

Broadcast media are widely accepted as effective tools in disseminating information and knowledge, providing entertainment and bringing news to mass audiences. In addition, some radio and television programmes are also directly relevant to micro and small enterprises. These programmes can provide useful information to help in running businesses, and can raise awareness among many people about the potential of running their own business.

The ILO is considering support for the development of radio or television programmes aimed at small business in Lao P.D.R. The purpose of this study is to find out the real situation, which will demonstrate to broadcasters and potential sponsors in the private sector that substantial demand exists for such programmes. This research also fleshes out how such programmes should look, in order to maximize viewer- ship/ listener-ship.

The paper outlines the methodology, target group, problems faced during the survey, entrepreneur's profile, and enterprise's profile. It also identifies the perspectives of MSEs (Micro and Small Enterprises) about the radio and television programmes aimed in small business, forming conclusions and making recommendations for future action.

2. Methodology

The survey used both personal interviews and completing of questionnaires with MSEs based in the areas around the outskirts of Vientiane Municipality. The questionnaire was designed with guidance provided by the ILO. First, it was tested with 10 respondents, before adaptation and launch for the survey of 150 small enterprises. The questionnaire had 3 sections; the first section focused on the entrepreneur's profile, the second asked about radio programmes, and the last section asked about television programmes. In addition, the questionnaire included some open questions, in order to collect additional information from the respondent.

3. Target group.

This study involved 150 small enterprises, in four types of business: Manufacturing, Trading, Service and Transportation; all were located in the outskirt areas around Vientiane Municipality. Especially, the survey focused on the views of woman entrepreneurs, reflecting a particular interest of the ILO.

4. Problem faced during the survey

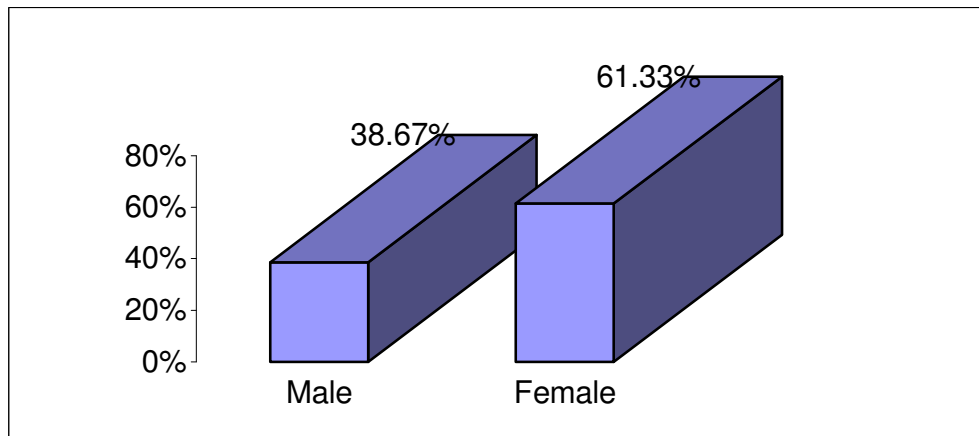
Many barriers occurred during the survey. One problem was that some respondents still didn't participate or answer the questionnaire. Some of them just answered the closed questions, with few additional comments. The second handicap was that respondents were more interested in Thai radio and television programmes, because they give more choice than the Lao ones. So some respondents had difficulty in talking about Lao programmes.

5. Findings

5.1. Entrepreneur's profile

❖ *Sex*: 61% of the respondents were female and 39% were male. The women were more in trade, while most of the men were in manufacturing (see chart 1).

Chart 1: Sex



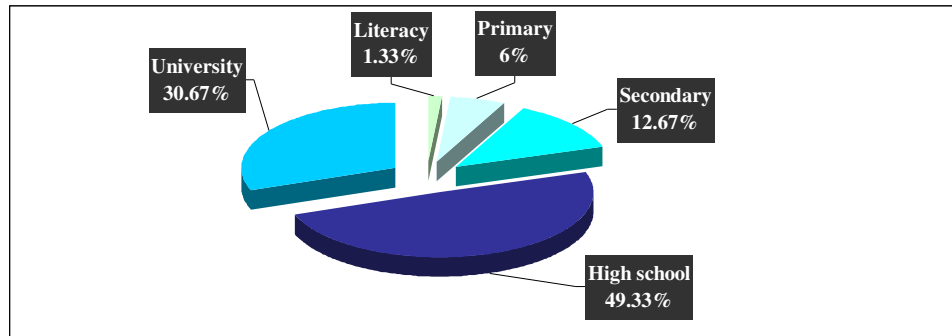
❖ *Age*: As results, 39% of respondents were aged between 30-39, 28% were between 20-29, and 19% were between 40-49. Only 7% were between 50-59, and 3% more than 60; 3% were younger than 20 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Age

Age	Respondents	
	Amount	Percentage
Under 20	5	3.33%
(20-29)	42	28%
(30-39)	59	39.33%
(40-49)	29	19.34%
(50-59)	10	6.67%
After 60	5	3.33%

❖ *Level of education:* The average education of the respondents was in the middle of the range: 49% had been to high school, while 31% had graduated from university and 13% had been to secondary school. 6% only had primary education. 1% only had basic literacy (see chart 2).

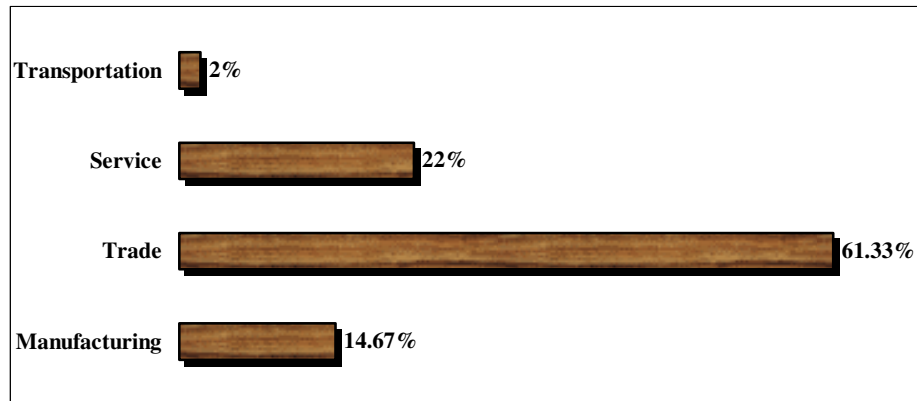
Chart 2: Education



5.2. Enterprise's profile

❖ *Type of business:* This study was conducted on four types of business: Manufacturing, Trade, Service and Transportation. 61% were in Trade, 22% were in service businesses, 15% were in manufacturing, and 2% were involved in transportation (see Chart 3).

Chart 3: Type of business.



❖ *Number of employees:* 55% of respondents had no employees, with the others employing between 1-7 employees (see Table 2).

Table 2: Number of employee

	Amount of respondents	Percentage
No employment	83	55.33
1-7 employee	67	44.66

5.3. Best way to get useful information to help in running business

Most of the respondents thought that television is the best way to get useful information to help their business, because the television can deliver the information and also show the picture. 89% chose television, while 65% chose radio and 41% chose newspapers. Only 9% chose magazines, and 7% the Internet (see Table 3).

Table 3: Best way to get useful information (Multiple response question)

	Percentage of respondents
Television	89.33%
Radio	65.33%
Newspaper	40.67%
Magazine	9.33%
Internet	6.67%

6.2. Radio

Respondents noted that FM is more popular than AM, because FM is convenient to find, clear, and the signal can reach further. With AM, it can be difficult to find the frequency, and the strength of the signal varied with the weather; it also did not reach so far. Moreover, the radio channel that can get more useful information to help in running businesses is broadcast on FM. 67% selected FM 105.5 MHz, 47% FM 103.7 MHz, and 29% 97.25 MHz. 23% chose AM 580 KHz, 5% AM 6130 KHz, and 8% AM 50 KW (see Table 4).

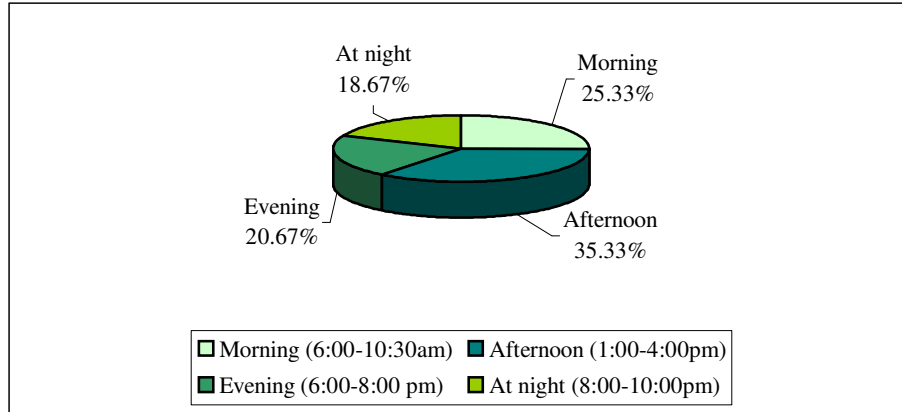
Table 4: Radio Channels that can give useful information to help business (Multiple response question)

Radio channel		Percentage of respondents
AM 580 KHz	Lao National Radio	22.67
AM 6130 KHz	Lao National Radio	4.67
AM 50KW	RTV Vientiane M.	8
FM 97.25 MHz	LNR (multi-language)	29.33
FM 103.7 MHz	Lao National Radio	46.67
FM 105.5 MHz	RTV Vientiane M.	66.67

❖ *Convenient time:* 35% reported that it was convenient for them to listen to the radio in the afternoon (1:00-4:00 P.M); they like to listen to radio programmes to relax, and to get news and information to help in their business, while they are waiting for customers. 25% find the morning convenient (6:00-10:00 am),

while 21% like the evening (6:00-8:00pm), and 19% like to listen at night (8:00-10:00 P.M) (see Chart 4).

Chart 4: Convenient Time



❖ *Convenient day:* Many respondents could not identify a preferred day. This was particularly true for traders, who liked to listen to the radio while waiting for customers. 49% were comfortable to listen every day, 33% listened on Sundays, and 29% on Saturdays (see Table 5).

Table 5: Convenient Day (Multiple response question)

	Percentage of response
Monday	8.67
Tuesday	9.33
Wednesday	7.33
Thursday	8.67
Friday	10.67
Saturday	28.67
Sunday	32.67
Everyday	49.33

6.2.1. Responses about current radio programmes relevant to MSEs

“Business Society”, AM 580 KHz (LNR) covers successful businesses as case studies; however, 50% of respondents had never listened to it, while 38% did not listen regularly, and only 12% listened regularly. Most of those who had listened to the programme thought that it was OK or good; only one thought it was bad. Nonetheless, they still had ideas about how the programme could be improved: they felt, for example, that the programme tended to promote one product too much, and needed to be broadened out. The broadcaster should

improve the frequency to be more clear, include more songs and make the programme longer (see Table 6).

Another radio programme relating to small businesses is "Economy of the Capital", FM 105.5 (RTVVM). This programme supports Lao households to generate more income, by providing daily news, information related to business, and popular songs. 47% sometimes listen to the programme, 39% never listen, and only 13% listen regularly. Most of respondents evaluated the programme as good, because it provided knowledge relevant to their business, while being entertaining and relaxing at the same time. The programme should add more relevant information, for example to cover business in expanding and popular markets. The programme should also explain things clearly, and contain more information about the policy environment in Lao PDR. The programme could also be improved technically, with more modern songs, and more time allotted to it (see Table 6).

Table 6: Radio programme more related to small business

Programme	Percentage of responses			Comment
	Regularly	Some time	Never	
Business Society	12	38	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Include knowledge that can help in business, not just promote products ◆ Look for new information to present. ◆ Some information should be more detailed ◆ Give advice on how to promote products. ◆ Improve the frequency to be more clear ◆ Open with a lot of songs. ◆ Add more time
Economy of the capital	13	47	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Add more relevant information, which can help in running business. ◆ Discuss more about businesses that are booming and popular now ◆ Explain clearly. ◆ Present more about Lao policies. ◆ The speaker should improve technique to present the programme. ◆ Open with modern songs. ◆ Add more time.

6.3. Television

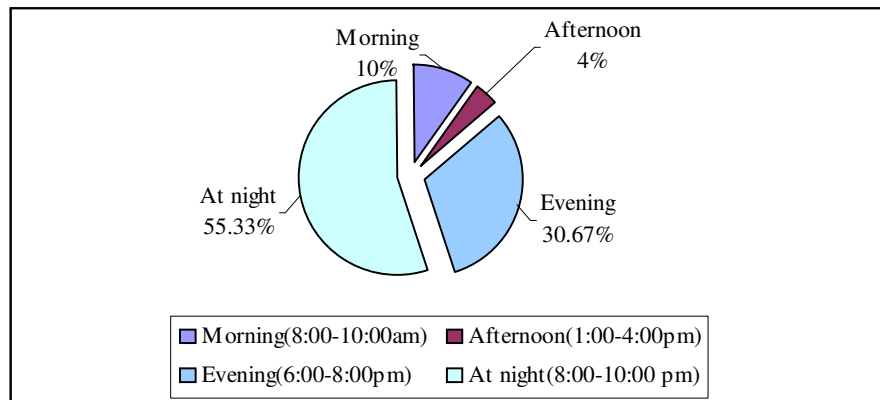
As found in the previous survey by EDC for ILO, there are four television channels in Lao P.D.R. including Channels 1, 3, 5 and 11. Channel 1 and Channel 3 are presented in Lao language, Channel 5 in French, and Channel 11 in Vietnamese. Many of the respondents thought that Channels 1 and 3 were the most important for them in their businesses, because those channels aired in Lao, which they can understand more clearly. 76% preferred Channel 3, 53% Channel 1, 25% Channel 5, and 14% Channel 11 (see Table 7)

Table 7: TV Channel giving useful information for your business

	Percentage of response
Channel 1	53
Channel 3	76
Channel 5	25
Channel 11	14

- ❖ *Convenient Time:* 55% found it convenient to watch TV at night, since from 8:00 to 10:00 pm they are free from other activities; they like use the time to relax by watching television programmes with their family. 31% like to watch in the evening between 6:00-8:00 pm, 10% watch in the morning at 8:00-10:00 am, and only 4% watch in the afternoon between 2:00-4:00 pm (see Chart 5).

Chart 5: Convenient Time



- ❖ *Convenient day:* Watching T.V is a family activity as every night, family members like to sit, follow and criticise television programmes together. 47% found this convenient every day, 32% are comfortable to watch on Sunday, 29% Saturday, 11% on Saturday. Monday to Friday were 10-12% each (see Table 8).

Table 8: Convenient Day (Multiple response question)

	Percentage of respondents
Monday	12
Tuesday	11
Wednesday	10
Thursday	10
Friday	12
Saturday	29
Sunday	32
Everyday	47

6.3.1 Analysis of television programmes aimed in small business

There are six television programmes that are related to MSEs: “Suk Sa Dee Mee Pa Yoth”, “Economics”, “Market Economy”, “Friend of the Worker”, “Nying Lao Hob Hu” and “Kouan Hu Ku Lao”. These programmes can provide knowledge in running business and tell about the real situation of the Lao economy excellently.

“Suk Sa Dee Mee Pa Yoth” is an educational programme, which presents the business knowledge such as business management and accounting. 15% watched this programme regularly, 51% sometimes, and 35% never. Respondents reported that they found the programme to be practical, since they could use the knowledge and new skills from the programme to improve their business. Nobody rated the programme as bad.

Nonetheless, they made some suggestions for improving it, such as that the programme should be expanded, to include different lessons; it should also be broadcast at a more convenient time. Some teaching of English and agriculture should be added (see Table 9).

“Economics” is a talk show that interviews successful businesspeople, talking about the strategy and tactics which made them successful. 7% watched this programme regularly, and 63% sometimes. 30% had never watched the programme. Most of those who had watched rated the programme as good, as they were learning from another business person.

The respondents also gave some recommendations to improve the programme, such as that it should be longer, and that the producers should find different types of business to be the guests. The programme should also include some businesspeople who had problems in their business, and invite an expert to give advice on solving those problems. It should also include more information on the economy (see Table 9).

The programme called “Market Economy” is the programme that uses Japanese actors who face many difficult situations in running a business, and also

discusses ways of solving those problems. 47% of respondents never watched the programme, 45% sometimes watched the programme, and 8% often watched it. More than half of those who had watched it thought that it was an excellent programme, providing a lot of information on running a business. The programme should however be longer, and focus on problems that occur in business regularly. The format should be made more interesting, and the time of broadcast should be changed to be more convenient (see Table 9).

“Friend of the Worker” promotes the rights of workers, and encourages the worker’s skills; it is provided by the Trade Union. 7% watched it regularly, while 33% watched it sometimes. 60% never watched it. In principle, the programme can help workers to know more about their rights, and protect them from their employers. This knowledge would also be useful for employers, to know how to treat their staff.

The way to improve this programme is that the programme should discuss more about details of worker’s rights, and give comments on how to solve problems that they might face with their employer. The programme could also be more interesting, for example by using actors/ actresses. The speaker could also improve the level of presentation and attitude (see Table 9).

“Nying Lao Hob Hu” aims to help Lao women to generate income; it interviews women who are successful in running business, and lets viewers see every part of their business. 12% watch this programme regularly, 44% sometimes, and 44% never. Most of those who had watched it considered it to be very good, because it can help women to do business, and can also let people see what women can do.

Some suggested that the programme should be longer, to present a wider variety of women in business. It should promote different sizes of business in different provinces, and should present both good and weak points in the businesses being profiled (see Table 9).

“Kouan Hu Ku Lao” focuses on innovation or creativity, including the invention of products such as handicraft, pottery, textile, and agricultural and other products. 14% watched this programme regularly, 61% sometimes, and 25% never.

Most of those who had watched it thought it was excellent, as it can create employment for Lao people, improve production skills, and help people to start a business. The programme should present more detail on production processes, step by step, so that viewers can follow and understand clearly. Moreover, the programme should be longer, present various types of products, and include more material from rural areas (see Table 9).

Table 9: Television programme more related to small business

Programme	Percentage of responses			Comment
	Regularly	Sometimes	Never	
Suk Sa Dee Mee Pa Yoth	15	51	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Add more time. ◆ Teach many different kind of lesson that can help in running business. ◆ Include new material regularly. ◆ Change the airtime. ◆ Explain more clearly. ◆ The content of the programme still limited. Thus, the programme should add more knowledge. ◆ Should add knowledge of English. ◆ Focus on agriculture
Economics	7	63	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Add more time. ◆ Find many types of business to be the guest. ◆ Should give some samples of the businesspersons who have problems in their business and invite an expert to give some advice to solve the problems. ◆ Should present more about economy.
Market Economy	8	45	47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Add more time. ◆ Focus on problems that occur in business regularly. ◆ Should improve the way of presenting the programme to be more interesting. ◆ Change the airtime.
Friend of the Worker	7	33	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Discuss worker's rights in more detail ◆ Give comment on how to solve problems faced by workers with their employers. ◆ The programme should be more interesting as may use actors/ actresses to be samples that have questions or don't understand about labour law. ◆ The speaker should improve the presentation and the attitude.
Nying Lao Hob Hu	12	44	44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Add more time. ◆ Present various types of business. ◆ Promote many sizes of business, located in many provinces. ◆ Should present both good points and weak points of the sample's business as showing the real situation.
Kouan Hu Ku Lao	14	61	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Add more time. ◆ Should present more detail of process of production as step by step.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Present various types of product. ◆ The programme should present more from the rural areas.
--	--	--	--	--

Conclusion

While radio and television can bring much knowledge and information to MSEs, some Lao people don't follow Lao radio and television programmes regularly because they don't know the airtime exactly. Another barrier is that Lao channels may not be as interesting as Thai channels (which this study did not cover). Nevertheless, many respondents still helped to make this survey effective, helping broadcasters to design new programmes, to be more useful for small businesses.

Recommendation

Programmes should be made more interesting, so that the audience is motivated to follow them regularly. The programme presenter should also have an active and smooth style. The time and day of the broadcast should also be advertised more widely, together with indications of the content. Finally, programmes should be broadcast at times of day, and days of the weeks, which are convenient for the target group.