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# Adapting Approaches for Radio in the Digital Era: Does Radio Still Serve as a Communication Platform for the Community?

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## Abstract

The evolving role of digital media has transformed traditional media consumption in Cambodia. To understand the role of radio in the digital era, this study utilises qualitative data to understand the radio consumption behaviour in the era of digital media. This study's sample comprised 19 in-depth semi-structured interviews. The findings highlight that radio consumption among the younger generation is lower. However, older individuals and those in remote areas, such as indigenous communities with limited internet access, radio remains a source of their information. The generational divide in media consumption highlights the need for radio stations to adopt innovative strategies by reintegrating their broadcasting through digital media platforms to engage audiences across different demographics. The study discovered that to improve adaptation approaches for radio in the digital era, radio stations should also produce more engaging and multimedia content, including short videos, podcasts, and interactive live discussions. Most respondents expressed that radio remains relevant for the rural communities with limited internet access. The radio broadcasters are recommended by the indigenous communities to develop targeted radio campaigns focused on early marriage prevention, alcohol and drug abuse awareness, gender-based violence intervention, and legal awareness.

**Keywords:** Traditional Radio, Digital Media, Communications, Radio Audience, Remote Community

## 1. Introduction

In the digital era, radio consumption in Cambodia faces growing challenges as more people turn to digital media for information and entertainment. As of 2022, 57% of Cambodians had internet access (World Bank, 2022). Similarly, 56.7% of the population uses the internet, leaving approximately 7.37 million people offline (Data Reportal, 2024). Traditional print media has even more limited reach, with only 8% of Cambodians obtaining information from newspapers and just 3% from magazines. This is partly due to low literacy rates, especially in rural areas, and the lack of a strong reading culture (BBC Media Action, 2012). In Cambodia, the number of radio stations in Phnom Penh stayed unchanged, with 83 FM stations and one AM station, while an additional 137 radio stations operate across the provinces (Orm, 2022; Sam, 2022).

With the rise of the Internet, in Cambodia, radio has declined in popularity and is now the third-largest media sector after TV and online platforms, reaching 35% of the audience (Cambodian Centre for Independent Media,

2017). In the digital era, radio transformation is a step to maintain and to continue fulfilling its roles in providing information, education, entertainment, and persuasion (Ismandianto et al., 2022). Approximately 6% of Cambodia's population uses radio, whereas 87% are social media users. Social media usage is more prevalent among individuals from urban areas and those with higher socio-economic status, while it is lower among the non-working population (BBC Media Action, 2021). Cambodia's literacy rate stands at 62.8%, which is considered low, due to political and social challenges, especially in rural areas, where approximately 80% of the population are farmers (Puy, 2007). Thus, radio remains essential for delivering information and education to local communities, particularly in rural areas with limited internet access (BBC Media Action, 2021). There is, however, a gap in the literature as to the popularity of radio and individuals' radio consumption preferences in the digital era, particularly among those living in rural areas, which has yet to be thoroughly examined.

To fill in this research gap, this study aims to explore radio consumption behaviour in the digital media era and identify traditional radio consumption preferences in Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Battambang, Siem Reap, and Ratanakiri provinces. This study aims to determine whether radio continues to serve as a key source of communication for rural communities. This research makes a valuable contribution to the field of media and communication by benefiting radio broadcasters, radio program producers, and academics. It provides insights into evolving radio preferences and highlights the necessary changes for radio broadcasting to remain sustainable in the media market.

## **2. Literature Review**

This chapter focuses on key aspects of the literature relevant to the study, including the radio landscape in Cambodia, and adapting strategies for radio in the digital era in the context of disruptive innovation theory.

### *2.1 Radio Landscape in Cambodia*

In Cambodia, 87% of people aged 15 to 30 use social media as their primary form of media, while TV and radio usage is decreasing to 34% and 6% respectively. Television and radio are still significant for more vulnerable groups in rural locations and those with lower socio-economic status. Although most young Cambodians now access the internet through websites, social media, or messaging apps and use smartphones, there are still differences among demographic groups, in which men live in urban areas and those from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to have higher usage rates (BBC Media Action, 2021).

In Cambodia, the first state-owned radio station was established in 1947, and the radio station was known as RNK (Radio Diffusion Nationale Khmère). Its primary goal of establishing the radio station was to broadcast significant events both domestically and internationally. Additionally, it aimed to provide education on various topics, including customs, traditions, science, health, agriculture, road safety, and household knowledge. The station also offered entertainment through traditional and modern songs, opera, drama, and music, among other programs (Puy, 2007).

Radio has declined in popularity with the rise of the Internet, now ranking as the third-largest media sector after television and online platforms, reaching 35% of the audience (Cambodian Center for Independent Media, 2017). According to the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2021, the share of households owning a radio in Cambodia significantly declined from 16% in 2019/2020 to 12% in 2021. In Phnom Penh, household radio ownership also dropped sharply from 17% to 9% in the same period (National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, 2022). The study by Glean (2025) highlighted the decline in traditional radio listenership, particularly among younger audiences. However, digital platforms, especially social media, demonstrated strong engagement, especially among individuals under 34. This research sheds light on the shifting media consumption trends in Cambodia.

With 175 registered radio stations, the market is highly fragmented, and competition for licenses is intense. However, no data is available on the number of active stations or their transmission coverage (Cambodian Center for Independent Media, 2017). Currently, ABC Radio is considered the most popular station, with nearly one in four Cambodians tuning in. Meanwhile, the most widely followed radio programs are Radio Free Asia (RFA) and

Voice of America (VOA), which are broadcast nationwide on 15 different radio stations (Cambodian Center for Independent Media, 2017).

## *2.2 Adapting Strategies for Radio in the Digital Era in the Context of Disruptive Innovation Theory*

In the competitive effects of the innovative market changes, Christensen (1997) presents the disruptive innovation theory by focusing on two aspects of disruptive innovations, including business-model innovations and radical (new-to-the-world) product innovation. In this theory, Christensen and Raynor (2006) assert that to be considered an innovation, a new business model must expand the current economic value, either by bringing in new customers or by increasing the consumption of existing products. Business-model innovation does not create new products or services; instead, it transforms the way existing products or services are perceived and delivered to customers (Christensen & Raynor, 2006). For instance, companies such as Amazon, Schwab, Dell, Swatch, and Southwest are seen as innovators in business models because they launched new approaches in their industries that drew in new customers, thereby expanding their markets.

Therefore, with the emergence of digital media, radio broadcasting underwent a dramatic transformation to seek its popularity among its audience and to meet audience expectations. Ajisafe and Dada (2023) state that radio broadcasters have demonstrated resilience and adaptability by embracing digital platforms, utilising data analytics for personalised content, and fostering interactive engagement. In addition, they also try to explore the innovative ways of technology, such as hybrid broadcasting, immersive audio, and integration with smart devices, to present new opportunities for service expansion and audience growth. Moreover, the radio broadcasters utilise some strategy to incorporate visual elements, interactive features, and user-generated content to enrich the listening experience and to strengthen community connections. Liang (2025) suggests that traditional radio stations must urgently adopt innovative strategies for content creation and distribution, develop influential programs and introduce new formats as effective ways to drive transformation and growth. Additionally, to stay relevant, radio stations need comprehensive reforms and innovations, not only by diversifying content but also by expanding program formats and enhancing transmission platforms. These improvements will boost audience engagement and create a more interactive experience. Additionally, radio stations must stay aligned with evolving audience preferences, closely monitor industry trends, and adapt their communication strategies accordingly. Keeping pace with these changes is essential to maintaining a competitive edge and ensuring long-term sustainability in an increasingly challenging market.

## **3. Research Methodology**

This research study aims to analyse the attitudes and behaviours of the radio audience by utilising a qualitative methods approach in data collection and analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of the audience regarding radio consumption in the digital media era.

### *3.1 Research Approach*

Qualitative data were collected through convenience sampling, which is a technique used to collect respondents from sources that are easily accessible, such as those nearby or available (Turner, 2020). The data collection was conducted in one city and five targeted provinces, including Phnom Penh city, Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Battambang, Siem Reap and Ratanakiri provinces, for semi-structured interviews, aiming to explore prospective audience preferences, interests in radio programs, and general listening habits.

### *3.2 Research Instrument*

Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to conduct discussions with one participant at a time using a set of open-ended questions. This approach enables a more in-depth exploration of relevant issues and policies while maintaining a clear focus on the research topic, ultimately providing valuable contextual insights. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes to answer 18 questions, focusing on the respondents' media consumption habits, favourite radio programs and content, and radio consumption for behaviour changes.

### 3.3. Piloting Interview Question Guide

To analyse the validity of the interview question guide, the researcher conducted interview pilots with four people before proceeding with the data collection.

## 4. Research Results

The sample for this study comprises 19 respondents, representing diverse regions including Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Battambang, Siem Reap and Ratanakiri province. The participants' ages range from 19 to 71, with 4 males and 15 females. Of these, 4 respondents are regular radio listeners, while 15 are non-radio listeners (see Table 1).

Table 1: Interview demographic characteristics ( $n=19$ )

Gender:		Respondent Type:	
Male	4	Radio audience	4
Female	15	Non-radio audience	15
Age range: 19 – 71			
Age and gender:		Current Residency:	Respondent Type:
Pisey (26, Female)		Phnom Penh	Radio audience
Kanha (21, Female)		Phnom Penh	Non-radio audience
Bopha (19, Female)		Phnom Penh	Non-radio audience
Nalina (21, Female)		Phnom Penh	Non-radio audience
Voleak (67, Female)		Kampong Cham	Radio audience
Kesor (63, Female)		Kampong Cham	Radio audience
Bopreak (47, Female)		Kampong Cham	Non-radio audience
Melia (40, Female)		Kampong Thom	Non-radio audience
Pich (21, Female)		Kampong Thom	Non-radio audience
Tola (61, Male)		Kampong Thom	Non-radio audience
Seyma (21, Female)		Battambang	Non-radio audience
Meta (21, Female)		Battambang	Non-radio audience
Reaksmey (62, Male)		Battambang	Radio audience
Borin (51, Male)		Siem Reap	Non-radio audience
Sopheak (52, Male)		Siem Reap	Non-radio audience
Molika (71, Female)		Siem Reap	Non-radio audience
Kosamak (24, Female)		Ratanakiri	Non-radio audience
Serey (24, Female)		Ratanakiri	Non-radio audience
Chakrya (25, Female)		Ratanakiri	Non-radio audience

### 4.1 Radio vs. Digital Media Consumption in Cambodia

As has been seen, this study has revealed that the highest proportion of interview respondents is consuming social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube for receiving daily information and entertainment purposes due to the convenience and accessibility these platforms offer for consuming information. Bopha and Nalina described:

*“I don’t listen to radio programs. Generally, I get my information from Facebook and YouTube because they are more convenient.” (Bopha, 19, Female, Phnom Penh)*

*“Basically, I don’t listen to the radio, but I follow online news on social media because it is widely accessible and saves me time searching for it. To survive in the digital era, I think radio stations should expand their broadcasting on YouTube and shorten the clips by selecting only the most interesting parts*

*to post on Facebook. If listeners are interested, they can find the full details on YouTube.” (Nalina, 21, Female, Phnom Penh)*

Interview respondents expressed those social media platforms, particularly Facebook, serve as the primary source of information, suggesting a shift in media consumption behaviour, where digital platforms are favoured over traditional radio for information access. Bopreak and Seyma mentioned:

*“I listen to various radio programs, but not regularly. I tune in occasionally since I don’t enjoy listening all the time. Most often, I listen to health-related programs when I have free time. In general, I get information from Facebook.” (Bopreak, 47, Female, Kampong Cham)*

*“Generally, I receive news through Facebook because it allows us to get information quickly.” (Seyma, 21, Female, Kampong Thom)*

In this study, interview respondents highlight that the majority of them change their media consumption habits from regular radio listening to digital media. The convenience of accessing content and a variety of information on social media appears to be a key factor in the interview respondents’ preference. Pisey explained:

*“After moving to Phnom Penh, I haven’t listened to it as much. When I’m at home in the provinces, I enjoy listening to them for entertainment after studying. I enjoy listening to radio programs on social media because they are easy to find, and I can listen to them at my convenience instead of tuning in to live broadcasts when I’m busy.” (Pisey, 26, Female, Phnom Penh)*

These results illustrate that interviewees are engaging with digital media more than traditional radio. It is suggested that the radio should greatly focus on integrating its broadcasting programs on social media platforms, particularly Facebook. By sharing radio content or highlights on social media, the radio station can make its programs more accessible and appealing to younger audiences who prefer quick and easily accessible news.

#### *4.2 Reasons for the Decline in Radio Audiences*

In exploring the reasons for the decline in radio audiences, interview data indicates that the rise of social media, with its multimedia elements such as images and short videos with informative and entertaining content, attracts more listeners to focus more on social media rather than radio in some areas. However, in remote communities with limited internet access, radio remains an important medium for receiving information and entertainment. Meta and Nalina stated:

*“I think in the community, people no longer listen to radio programs because information is more widely available now, and people can access news on social media with both images and audio. However, for remote communities, I believe radio still plays an important role in receiving information and listening to music for entertainment, as it serves as a communication platform for them to stay informed about what’s happening outside their community.” (Meta, 21, Female, Battambang)*

*“To survive in the digital era, I believe radio should improve its content to capture the attention of youth. This could include a wide range of topics, such as educational programs focusing on study tips, scholarships, skill development, and business incubation. Moreover, radio should expand its broadcasting to trending platforms that youth are using, so that its programs can reach the target audience.” (Nalina, 21, Female, Phnom Penh)*

Additionally, interview respondents highlight a lack of interest in the radio program and a preference for Facebook as the primary source of information. The interviewees also note a shift in how even elderly individuals of the community consume media, with many now opting for television on their phones rather than traditional radio, indicating changing media consumption habits. Kanha, Molika and Sopheak elaborated:

*"I don't listen to that radio program because I'm not interested in it. Generally, I get information from Facebook. In the past, elderly people in the community used to listen to the radio, but now they also watch television on their phones." (Kanha, 21, Female, Phnom Penh)*

*"I have never listened to radio programs, but I usually watch TV. I usually get information from TV and Facebook. Although radio is important, most people don't listen to it much. Instead, they prefer Facebook and TV because they find them more entertaining. Only the elderly tend to listen to the radio, as they are interested in political news and topics related to religion." (Molika, 71, Female, Siem Reap)*

*"I have never listened to local radio. I usually follow national and international news from VOA, because I think that local radio and television are biased. When villagers underwent any difficulty, their voices were rarely heard or broadcast on local radio and television." (Sopheak, 52, Male, Siem Reap)*

These findings suggest that the decline in radio audiences is largely driven by the rise of social media, which offers engaging multimedia content, making it a preferred source of information. Interview respondents expressed a preference for Facebook and TV over radio, mentioning a lack of interest in radio programs. While radio remains relevant in remote areas, younger audiences increasingly rely on digital platforms. Additionally, concerns about bias in local radio and television have led some listeners to seek news from international sources. These findings highlight shifting media consumption habits and the growing dominance of digital platforms over traditional radio.

#### *4.3 Reasons for Listening to a Radio Program*

The study explored the reasons why individuals continue to listen to the radio program. Interview respondents reveal that she is particularly interested in programs about women's rights, women's decision-making, children's rights, and gender equality. In her community, women experience issues related to gender stereotypes. Pisey explained:

*"I listen to Women's Radio programs because I enjoy programs about women's and children's rights, especially those focusing on vulnerable women, women's decision-making, marriage planning, and women's rights against discrimination. In the community where I grew up, I noticed that most people still don't fully understand the importance of valuing women. This became even more apparent when I moved to Phnom Penh for my studies—my neighbours didn't encourage me and even told my parents that it wasn't appropriate for their daughter to attend school away from home." (Pisey, 26, Female, Phnom Penh)*

Additionally, interview respondents expressed that the radio program broadens their understanding of human rights, social issues, women's rights, democracy, health and violence prevention, which is why they tune in. Interviewees find the radio program to be an informative tool that enables listeners to apply the knowledge gained to improve their own lives. Voleak shared her thoughts:

*"Radio plays an important role in the community by informing us about issues, laws, customs, and health. Moreover, we can apply this knowledge to our daily lives. When I listen to the radio, I take the useful points and share them with my children and grandchildren. For example, when I hear about dangers in certain areas, I always tell my children and grandchildren not to go out at night or ride motorbikes too fast because of the risks. Additionally, when I learn about harmful situations, I use that information to warn them, like advising them to be cautious because several gangsters were arrested." (Voleak, 67, Female, Kampong Cham)*

The study identifies key reasons why individuals continue to listen to the radio program. Interview data highlight that listeners are especially interested in topics related to women's rights, children's rights, and gender equality. Respondents also mentioned that radio increases their awareness of human rights, democracy, health, and violence prevention. The radio is viewed as an informative tool that listeners apply in daily life to improve themselves and

educate their families. Interviewees value the program for sharing critical issues, laws, and advice that benefit their communities.

#### 4.4 Significance of Radio Program in the Community

The study also investigated the radio audience's perspective on the significance of the program for their communities. Interviewees mentioned that the radio plays an important role in advocating for democracy, the constitution, law enforcement, and social security, as well as educating people on social issues such as gender equity, women's empowerment, violence prevention, and online or phone fraud. Kanha, Bopreak and Nalina shared the following insights:

*"Radio is important to the community because it promotes our country's democracy, constitution, law enforcement, and social security measures. For remote communities, I believe radio is important because it does not require the internet. This means that, regardless of the area, people can still listen to it."* (Kanha, 22, Female, Phnom Penh)

*"I believe that the Women's Radio program is important to solve issues such as gender equality, empowering women's rights, and preventing violence in communities because some women lack awareness. They often fall victim to deceit, for example, being tricked into sending money with promises of receiving something in return."* (Bopreak, 47, Female, Kampong Cham)

*"I think radio programs are significant based on their content. For instance, while travelling without internet access, the radio can entertain and be useful for listeners. Additionally, I think radio is vital for those who are living in rural areas without internet access."* (Nalina, 21, Female, Phnom Penh)

Similarly, interviewees highlight the value of radio in rural communities where access to social media may be limited. Bopha stated that radio plays a vital role in keeping people informed in areas where digital platforms might not be as accessible. Additionally, Nalina suggests the radio improve its content. Bopha explained:

*"I believe radio is important for remote communities because it provides information to people in rural areas when they are unable to access news through social media platforms. Therefore, I think radio is truly essential for them to stay informed."* (Bopha, 19, Female, Phnom Penh)

To understand the significance of radio in indigenous communities, testimonies were collected from residents. Kosamak, a Krueng Indigenous woman, emphasised the importance of radio as a primary source of information for education and problem-solving. Kosamak explained:

*"If a radio antenna were installed in Ratanakiri, it would be beneficial. Many elderly individuals are not proficient in using smartphones or lack internet access. They rely on the radio for updated information."* (Kosamak, 24, Female, Ratanakiri)

Serey, another Krueng Indigenous woman, shared how her father regularly tunes in to the radio in the morning and evening to follow social news and gain practical knowledge. Having witnessed the positive impact of radio on her community, Serey advocated for the establishment of a radio antenna in Ratanakiri, believing it would be highly beneficial in educating and addressing local challenges. Serey noted:

*"After listening to agricultural programs, my father has been able to apply new farming techniques learned from the broadcasts."* (Serey, 24, Female, Ratanakiri)

The study highlights the significant role of the radio program in communities, especially in advocating for democracy, law enforcement, and social security, and educating people on social issues. Radio is also important in promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, violence prevention, and raising awareness about online



or phone fraud. Many participants emphasise radio's importance in remote communities where internet access is limited because radio can help people stay informed without requiring the internet.

#### 4.5 The Investigation of Current Challenges in Communities

Regarding the investigation of current challenges in the communities, interview data revealed that women face a wide range of challenges, including gender stereotypes, social norms, limited decision-making power, domestic violence, barriers to education, gender inequality, mental health and financial literacy. These issues highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to empower women's education, eliminate early marriage, and promote women's empowerment and mental health awareness. Pisey and Nalina shared the following insights:

*"Currently, when I visit my village, women in my community often say that I'm getting older and should start thinking about having a family. I believe their mindset is still limited. They don't encourage their children to focus on their studies. Most of the time, when children reach adulthood, they are allowed to marry and start families. Violence issues have been addressed, but it remains serious. Women's Radio educates women to be brave enough to stand up and escape violence. If they understand these messages, it would be beneficial, as the issue of violence also affects their children." (Pisey, 26, Female, Phnom Penh)*

*"One of the challenges I think radio should focus on to capture the youth's attention is mental health-related issues. In the past, individuals didn't notice or realise that it was a pressing issue, but now people are gradually understanding its impacts. In addition, financial literacy is important for youth to learn how to save money, as many young people lack these skills and understanding." (Nalina, 21, Female, Phnom Penh)*

Interview respondents identified domestic violence as a critical issue within the communities, emphasising the need for comprehensive measures to address this problem. Molika and Kanha provided further insights, highlighting the complex nature of the problem and the importance of addressing these root causes to mitigate the prevalence of domestic violence.

*"In Siem Reap province, women faced challenges such as domestic violence, which is often linked to arguments and a lack of knowledge. I think radio can help by providing useful information that addresses these issues." (Molika, 71, Female, Siem Reap)*

*"Women in my community, especially in households where women have no work and depend on their husbands, often face difficult living conditions. I have also witnessed domestic violence, such as husbands abusing their wives." (Kanha, 21, Female, Phnom Penh)*

The research findings from the investigation into current community challenges indicate that women face a range of significant issues, including gender stereotypes, restrictive social norms, limited decision-making power, domestic violence, educational barriers, and pervasive gender inequality. Interview participants underscored the necessity for comprehensive interventions to empower women, particularly through education, the elimination of early marriage, and the prevention of domestic violence. Domestic violence was identified as a critical concern, with respondents highlighting the role of limited awareness and communication barriers in its persistence.

#### 4.6 Media Consumption and Social Issues Addressed by Radio

Chakrya, a Krueng Indigenous woman, highlighted the generational differences in media consumption:

*"Most older people in the community listen to the radio, while the younger generation primarily uses mobile phones and digital media. Although internet access is available in the village, it is unavailable in farming fields, making radio the only accessible medium for older individuals in those areas." (Chakrya, 25, Female, Ratanakiri)*

Beyond delivering news and educational content, radio serves as a key platform for addressing pressing challenges faced by indigenous communities. According to Serey, radio programs in Ratanakiri should focus on issues such as early marriage, financial struggles, land disputes, Indigenous rights violations, drug use, crime, LGBTQ+ discrimination, and mental health awareness. Kosamak further elaborated on the challenges faced by Indigenous women:

*“Rights violations and sexual violence remain significant issues, especially for women living far from schools. A tragic case in my community occurred in 2017 when my friend was raped and killed. Violence persists today, as I have seen through my work with women’s associations. Reports indicate that in Ratanakiri, violence affects children, women, and the elderly, particularly during economic downturns when financial stress leads to domestic conflicts.” (Kosamak, 24, Female, Ratanakiri)*

In Ratanakiri, radio remains a powerful tool for education, awareness, and social change. It bridges the gap between information and action, empowering villagers to improve their livelihoods and make informed decisions. Given its impact, further investment in community-based radio initiatives, such as the establishment of a radio antenna, could enhance outreach efforts, particularly in remote indigenous areas. By continuing to address critical issues such as early marriage, financial struggles, land disputes, Indigenous rights violations, agriculture, drug use, sexual harassment, mental health, and LGBTQ+ discrimination, radio will remain a vital medium for shaping the future of Indigenous populations in Cambodia.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 The Key Findings on Whether Radio is Still Significant for Communities

The analysis of qualitative data in this study presents a mixed picture of radio consumption and preferences, highlighting significant variations based on respondents’ age groups and geographic locations. Specifically, the results reveal that older respondents tend to demonstrate preferences for traditional FM radio, while younger respondents are more inclined to utilise digital platforms. The largest proportion of respondents falls within the 20 and 60 age old. This demographic breakdown emphasises the dominance of digital media usage within the sample.

The respondents primarily belong to Generation Y (1981–2000), commonly known as Millennials, or Generation Z (2000–2020). According to Din (2020), Generation Y in Cambodia is characterised by their technological proficiency, individualism, confidence, and public activism. Vogels (2019) highlights that Millennials are notably tech-savvy, with 93% owning smartphones and 86% actively using social media. Ouch further reports that half of Millennials are engaged in e-commerce. In contrast, Din (2020) characterises Generation Z as ‘digital natives,’ highly engaged with social networks, mobile technology, and multiple realities, including exposure to misinformation. These characteristics suggest that the majority of respondents from these generations are digital media users.

The respondents indicated their preference for digital media over traditional radio. Respondents recommended that the traditional FM radio integrate social media platforms, particularly Facebook, into its program to enhance its reach and appeal to younger audiences who prioritise quick and easily accessible news. Respondents also expressed that the decline in radio audiences can be attributed to the rise of social media, which offers more engaging multimedia content, making it a preferred source of information. However, respondents acknowledged that radio continues to play a significant role in remote areas, with younger audiences increasingly turning to digital platforms.

Notably, the results revealed that many respondents continue to tune in to radio programs due to their focus on topics such as women’s rights, children’s rights, and gender equality. Interviewees also highlighted that the radio program raises awareness of human rights, democracy, health, and violence prevention. For many, the radio serves as an important resource for improving personal growth and community well-being. Programs addressing critical

issues, such as social security, law enforcement, and gender equality, are viewed as integral to community education.

The respondents from Ratanakiri, a rural Indigenous community with limited internet access, illustrated a different picture of radio's significance. Respondents reported that radio remains an essential bridge to crucial information, particularly in remote areas where internet access is scarce. For villagers, the radio is both convenient and affordable, as it does not require an internet connection and can operate using simple battery-powered devices.

Although younger generations in these rural communities are more likely to use digital media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram, radio remains popular among older individuals. Many respondents recognised the educational value of radio, especially in areas with limited access to other forms of media. In case the radio antenna was established in Ratanakiri, it could serve as a valuable resource for elderly individuals who are less proficient with smartphones or lack internet access. Radio would allow these individuals to stay informed and help address community challenges effectively. Additionally, interview respondents emphasised the role of radio in tackling pressing issues within Indigenous communities, such as early marriage, financial struggles, debt, land disputes, Indigenous rights, drug use, crime, gender-based violence, and mental health. Radio serves as a key platform for raising awareness and advocating for change in these critical areas.

In conclusion, the findings of this study reveal a mixed landscape of radio consumption, influenced by both technological access and generational preferences. While individuals with broad internet access increasingly rely on digital media for news and information, people in remote areas, such as the Indigenous communities of Ratanakiri, continue to rely on radio. However, within these communities, younger individuals are more likely to use digital media, while older individuals in the rural areas with limited internet access tend to prefer the convenience and familiarity of radio. This suggests that, while radio remains an essential tool in certain contexts, particularly in areas with limited access to digital platforms, its role is evolving as digital media becomes more pervasive.

### *5.2 The Impact of Radio Programs on Audience Perceptions and Behavioral Changes*

The findings of this study indicate that respondents reinforce the significant role of radio by raising a case of Women's Radio in shaping audience attitudes and behaviours, particularly about women's empowerment and self-confidence. Interviewees highlighted that the program not only provides critical knowledge for personal growth and informed decision-making but also encourages advocacy against gender stereotypes. This behaviour aligns with the Diffusion of Innovations theory, which explains how new ideas, practices, or technologies spread within a society over time (Jacobs, 2011). According to the theory, individuals adopt innovations in stages from early adopters to the majority, with various factors influencing their decision to embrace change. These stages include knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. In the case of Women's Radio, the innovation is the adoption of feminist media that challenges traditional gender norms, amplifies women's voices, and addresses key issues such as gender equality, social justice, and empowerment. The audience of the radio station often represents a community of early adopters, those eager to embrace new ideas, particularly those that offer alternative perspectives on women's rights and social roles.

The Diffusion of Innovations theory also highlights the importance of communication channels in spreading new ideas. Women's Radio serves as a crucial channel for disseminating feminist ideas and raising awareness about social and political issues. As early adopters listen to the programs, they are exposed to new concepts and perspectives that challenge mainstream media narratives. They, in turn, share these ideas within their communities, helping to spread feminist concepts more broadly. As the audience moves through the stages of diffusion, the content on Women's Radio influences attitudes and behaviours, gradually reaching a wider audience. The spread of feminist ideas through the radio shows how innovation can reshape public discourse and promote the adoption of progressive social values, particularly those related to gender equality and women's rights. Therefore, Women's Radio is not just a source of information but also acts as a catalyst for the diffusion of feminist ideas, allowing the audience to participate in transforming societal norms.

Moreover, interview respondents emphasised that Women's Radio fosters empowerment by equipping listeners with valuable insights that promote gender equality and enhance confidence. The program serves as an educational platform, offering knowledge about diverse livelihoods, particularly in agriculture, through inspiring stories of successful individuals. By featuring real-life experiences, Women's Radio raises awareness, encourages social change, and empowers individuals to make informed decisions and take proactive steps toward both personal and community development.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the evolving role of radio in Cambodian society, particularly in the context of digital transformation. While digital media platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, have become dominant sources of information for younger generations, radio remains a vital medium for older individuals and those in remote areas with limited internet access. The study confirms the essential role of radio in indigenous and rural communities, where limited internet access makes it a primary source of information. In these areas, radio serves as an educational tool, providing insights into pressing societal challenges, including gender-based violence, financial literacy, legal rights, and social justice.

The generational divide in media consumption highlights the need for radio stations to adopt innovative strategies to maintain audience engagement across different demographics. Despite changes in media consumption, radio continues to serve as an influential platform for raising awareness of critical social issues, particularly concerning women's rights, gender equity, youth empowerment, and democratic participation. The study reveals that radio programs not only educate listeners but also influence attitudes and behaviours, contributing to positive changes in gender roles, domestic violence prevention, and community engagement. The strong audience preference for issue-based, informative programs focuses on the significance of content that addresses women-related issues and promotes youth engagement and civic engagement.

### 6.1 Recommendation

The study offers the following recommendations to enhance radio's impact and sustainability. First, strengthen digital integration by expanding radio's presence on social media platforms to engage younger audiences who primarily consume radio content online. Second, radio producers should develop multimedia content, including short videos, podcasts, and interactive live discussions, and they are suggested to diversify program content by expanding the coverage of critical issues, including gender equity, domestic violence prevention, financial literacy, mental health, and Indigenous rights, as identified by respondents. More importantly, it would be interesting to incorporate more expert-led discussions and real-life storytelling segments so that the content will be more engaging and relatable. Last but not least, to improve educational and behavioural impact on the rural communities, the radio broadcasters are recommended to develop targeted radio campaigns focused on early marriage prevention, alcohol and drug abuse awareness, gender-based violence intervention and legal awareness programs to educate communities about their rights and available support mechanisms.

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