

m-Loy9: mobile phones to increase youth participation in Cambodia

Loy9 is a multimedia initiative to increase youth access to information about civic life and opportunities for participation in Cambodia. BBC Media Action's trial of a mobile phone component to *Loy9* showed that young people were very positive about the pilot service and willing to share it with others.

The project

Loy9 includes a weekly magazine programme broadcast on national TV and a radio phone-in show, both supported by a website and social network pages. The radio programme is broadcast all year round, while season two of the *Loy9* TV programme ran from March to June 2013. The *m-Loy9* service was divided into four segments, with participants able to choose between a drama, quiz, facts or voice message service. Content changed weekly and was designed to run in parallel with the topics covered by the TV programme running at the same time.

Research approach

In 2013, BBC Media Action recruited 30 young people aged 15 to 24 to participate in a trial of *Loy9* mobile content (*m-Loy9*). Each participant

was asked to call the *m-Loy9* short code once a week for the 16 week trial, and to complete a diary detailing experiences and impressions of the service. Findings from participants' diaries were combined with data from monthly in-depth interviews with the same individuals and technical data from the service provider. Our analyses of this data provide insight into participants' impressions of the trial content and format, supporting future programme development.

Key findings

- The *m-Loy9* trial indicated that it could be an effective format to add to the *Loy9* multimedia initiative.
- Participants were most likely to engage with *m-Loy9* once or twice weekly and were very positive about the trial service. It appeared to be valued because it was seen as encouraging co-operation, improving confidence and providing important information.
- The drama and facts sections of *m-Loy9* content were the most popular among participants. However, the quiz was also popular and many reported listening to it after the drama and facts so that they would be better able to answer the questions.
- The order in which these segments were presented to participants appears to have a strong influence on the order in which they engage with them, for example the

drama was the first option presented and also the most likely to be chosen.

- A much higher number of unique callers made contact with the *m-Loy9* short code than were participating in the trial, suggesting a willingness to share the content among participants.
- The most commonly-reported barrier to accessing *m-Loy9* was a lack of mobile credit. All participants reported one problem with or barrier to accessing *m-Loy9* at some point during the 16 week trial.

Project context

Almost 66% of people in Cambodia are under 25, and more than 30% are aged 10–24. In addition to the ongoing issue of inadequate education and employment opportunities, young people are particularly vulnerable to the risks of urban and cross-border migration, reproductive health issues, HIV/AIDS, gender-based and gang violence, and alcohol and drug abuse.

However, in line with traditional values, the voices of youth are rarely considered or incorporated into development planning, even though young people comprise a third of the workforce and will continue to drive growth. Most young people lack the kind of basic civic awareness necessary to make demands of elected leaders and participate in political and decision-making processes. A 2010 BBC Media Action baseline survey found that young people have very limited knowledge of democratic institutions and their roles, particularly of representative bodies such as parliament and commune councils. In addition, only 8% of respondents had ever voiced their opinions to government or NGOs, and only 4% had contributed to a commune plan.

Loy9 combines entertainment and education to inform people about opportunities to participate in civic life. Young Cambodians can get directly involved in *Loy9* through phone-in

radio, TV magazine shows and drama, online, print, and even live games.

Implications and impact

The *m-Loy9* trial indicated that it could be an effective addition to the *Loy9* multimedia initiative. Participants were positive about the trial service and reported that the content encouraged co-operation, improved confidence and provided important information. There were some minor technical issues but they did not impact on participants' very positive overall ratings of the *m-Loy9* service.

As participants were not screened for past or current exposure to other *Loy9* content via TV or radio, the trial provided an opportunity to see how mobile content could support overall *Loy9* content via other media. Some participants reported that they would be more likely to watch *Loy9* on TV after using *m-Loy9*. Though some did watch *Loy9* on TV during the *m-Loy9* trial this was not universal, suggesting the mobile content could reach a different audience not currently engaged with *Loy9* in other ways.

“Last month there was a village meeting with over 20 participants including villagers, NGO representatives, the village chief and youth ... I expressed my opinion about the [problem of] clean water and diarrhoea ... then I dialled the m-Loy9 code and we listened about this problem.”

m-Loy9 trial participant

Registered office: Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA, UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 8008 0001, Fax: +44 (0)20 8008 5970, Email: media.action@bbc.co.uk

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