

Bayok of the Mandaya as a Tool for Disseminating Messages on El Niño Phenomenon

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Abstract

Bayok is one of the traditional medium of communication that still exists and is used by the Mandaya's of Davao Oriental. It is a communication tool to settle disputes, to formally declare one's intention to marry, to relate significant events and experiences, and to express one's happiness for good fortune. To a great extent, *Bayok* communicated El Niño and its disastrous effects in the region. The Mandaya's belong to a group of indigenous people mostly living in the hinterlands of Davao Oriental in Region XI. Their population is estimated at 300,000—roughly 68% of the total population in the eleven municipalities of Davao Oriental. This project was conducted to determine the potential of *Bayok*, a Mandaya folk media as a tool to disseminate information. The initial phase of the project was a contest, held on June 17, 1998 at the Audio-visual Room, DOSCST, Mati, Davao Oriental. One hundred twelve (112) individuals consisting of students, faculty and some

Keywords: *Bayok*, Mandaya folk medium

Introduction

Mass media is a powerful tool in communication and plays a vital role in development. But some sectors of our society are less privileged to have access to and take advantage of the gains of mass media. Consequently, these sectors are left inadequate in comprehending disseminated relevant issues and information for progress and development, as well as survival. They are the lumads, the tribal people and highlanders mostly found in the remotest corners of the countryside.

Development planners, appreciating the value of using traditional or folk media as a viable alternative communication strategy in development programs, have found this as a missing piece in the jigsaw puzzle. Folk media, like all forms of communication or expression, are dynamic. These take in new ideas, form, methods and techniques. Effective and appropriate media of communication must be used

to enhance skills, cultivate positive values, and promote innovations acceptable to target audiences, without necessarily sacrificing modernization. This way, folk media gradually become agents of change, and potentially improves the quality of life in the countryside.

Bayok is one of the traditional medium of communication that still exists and is used by the Mandayas of Davao Oriental. It is a communication tool to settle disputes, to formally declare one's intention to marry, to relate significant events and experiences, and to express one's happiness for good fortune. To a great extent, Bayok was a big help to them when El Niño and its disastrous effects hit the region.

The target audience of the project were the Mandayas, a group of indigenous people mostly living in the hinterlands of Davao Oriental in Region XI. Their population is estimated at 300,000-roughly 68% of the total population in the eleven municipalities of Davao Oriental.

During social interactions, the Mandayas communicate with each other orally, through signs and body language, and even in writing. They use the simbal (drum) and budyong (shell horn) and other instruments when emergency cases occurs and whenever they call everyone to an assembly. The sound of these instruments has a corresponding message that they easily understand.

While illiteracy is still common among old folks in the Mandaya tribe, valuable collections of their oral literature and the practice of singing the Dawot and Bayok which are usually instant compositions they make according to the occasion, is a clear manifestation of their talents, intelligence and creativity.

This project aimed at creating awareness among the Mandaya tribe of Davao Oriental on the ill effects of the El Niño phenomenon. Likewise, to present some preventive measures and contingency actions to address the problem. This will serve as a tool for disseminating important events and messages as in the case of the El Niño phenomenon.

Statement of the problem

1. Are the Mandayas in the audience of the Bayok contest made aware of the illeffects of the El Niño through Bayok?
2. Is there an alternative folk medium to be used in taking course of actions visa- vis the El Niño phenomenon?
3. Can the cultural heritage of the Mandayans of Davao Oriental be promoted through Bayok?

Significance of the Study

Bayok can inform the Mandaya of Davao Oriental about the ill effects of the El Niño phenomenon. Through their metaphysical context and social reality, the incidence of El Niño can be explained. El Niño consequences can be elaborated upon when contingency actions can be undertaken. Likewise, preventive measures, if possible, can also be adopted.

Methodology

The project was initiated through a contest held on June 17, 1998 at the Audio-Visual Room, DOSCST, Mati, Davao Oriental.

Invited were tribal leaders, barangay captains, and DOSCST students enrolled during the first semester, 1998-1999. The performance of the contestants was videotaped and later edited. A pretesting on the video documentation was then conducted. •The pretesting covered residents of Barangays Matiao (semi-urban) and Don Salvador Lopez (rural). The two barangays are within the political jurisdiction of the municipality of Mati, Davao Oriental. Since the data were gathered through the use of questionnaire, results and findings of this study solely depend on the written answers of the respondents.

The pretest had a sample size of 5 which was determined through the non-probability convenience sampling.

Results and Discussion

A. Common message of the managbayok.

The common message of the managbayok (Bayok chanter, Plates I and 2) regarding the El Niño phenomenon was that it was a punishment of the Magbabaya (God) because of the wanton destruction of the forests. El Niño was

The common message of the *managbayok* (*Bayok* chanter, Plates 1 and 2) regarding the El Niño phenomenon was that it was a punishment of the *Magbabaya* (God) because of the wanton destruction of the forests. El Niño was



Plate 1. Tribal chieftain, Augusto Diano (*Bayok* 1st prize winner)

perceived to cause the drought leading to the death of plants and animals and the onslaught of diseases and poverty. While the *managbayok* attributed a metaphysical cause they suggested pragmatic solutions such as wise use of resources (i.e., water) and respect for the forest. They likewise suggested that the government should construct water dams and initiate programs to alleviate the effects of the El Niño.



Plate 2. The *managbayok* (all four contestants)

B. Characteristic of the Bayok contest audience

Table 1 shows that all of the selected students of Mandayan descent were single and majority were female, aged between 18 to 19 years of age, were from the municipality of Lupon, and have had at least one exposure to Bayok performances.

While 4 (21%) had multiple exposures, Table 2 shows that only five percent of the respondents had the skills in chanting and understanding Bayok. Multiple exposures may not necessarily result in acquiring skills in chanting and understanding Bayok.

C. Characteristics of the Bayok videotape audience and videotape effectiveness

The videotape entitled Bayok was pretested among Manaayans living in two separate places: in Don Salvador Lopez (DSL), and Matiao in Mati, Davao Oriental on September 22 and October 1, 1998, respectively. DSL is a barangay in which residents are dominated by Mandayans. It is typically rural. Matiao, on the other hand, is semi-urban, and is dominated by Cebuanos.

The researchers made use of the interview in gathering feedback from the respondents. A meeting was called for this purpose.

Before the respondents were interviewed, they were first allowed to view the videotape Bayok. They were allowed to converse with their companions while watching. After viewing, the researchers conducted the interview using the prepared questions.

Table 3 shows that 5 respondents from Matiao were females. Also, majority from Don Salvador Lopez were females while only 4 were males. This is a common observation that whenever an activity like meetings is called, usually these are the women who attend

Most of the respondents were married. Six respondents belonged to the 31 to 40 years old age bracket followed by those in the 51 to 60 age brackets. The average age of the respondents was 43.8. Generally, respondents were adult Mandayans.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the contest audience

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage (n=19)
Sex		
Female	11	58
Male	8	42
Civil status		
Married	0	0
Single	19	100
Age		
16-17	2	11
18-19	12	63
20-21	4	21
22 and above	1	5
Municipality by origin		
Banaybanay	1	5
Lupon	15	79
Mati	1	5
Manay	1	5
Tarragona	1	5
Exposure to <i>Bayok</i> performances		
Once	9	47
Twice	6	32
Many times	4	21

Table 2. Possession of the skills in chanting and understanding *Bayok* after exposures to it

Response	Skills in chanting <i>Bayok</i>	Understanding <i>Bayok</i>	Percentage (n=19)
Yes	1	1	5
No	18	18	95

Results also reveal that most (9) of respondents were housekeepers. Five were farmers while 2 were barangay health workers.

Table 3 also shows that Matiao respondents have higher educational attainment as compared to the Don Salvador Lopez respondents. More than half (6) of the DSL respondents reached only elementary level while two finished elementary. Only 1

reached college level. Matiao respondents, on the other hand, have 3 respondents who reached college. Two from Matiao and another two from DSL reached high school level. This confirms the usual observation in a typical rural area. Generally, residents have low educational attainment.

All of the DSL respondents had been previously exposed to Bayok while all (5) respondents from barangay Matiao had not been exposed to it. This only confirm the data that as the natives migrate from their places to the urban areas, they tend to give up on some of the practices handed to them by their ancestors. Respondents in Don Salvador Lopez said they are exposed to Bayok since if occasions call for it, some old folks practice the singing of Bayok. Those in Matiao said they have not witnessed it ever since.

Table 4 is the result of the test to determine the effectiveness of the videotape Bayok as perceived by the respondents. Five components of effectiveness were used as criteria. These are comprehensiveness, acceptability, attractiveness, self-involvement and persuasiveness.

For comprehensiveness, ten (63%) respondents found the Bayok comprehensive, whereas six (37%) respondents found it otherwise. They reasoned that the dialect used was not fully understood or too old to be understood by them.

Majority of the Don Salvador Lopez respondents understood the messages conveyed in the videotape Bayok but not respondents from Matiao as 4 out of 5 respondents said they did not understand the message. Those who did not understand reasoned that they cannot easily get the message since the singers used the old Mandayan dialect. This type of dialect uses words difficult to understand. Another reason is that the audio aspect of the videotape was not well modulated making the message difficult to understand.

Table 3. Socio-demographic characteristics of the *Bayok* videotape respondents

Characteristic	Frequency		Total	Percentage (n-16)
	Matiao	Don Salvador Lopez (DSL)		
Sex				
Female	5	7	12	75.0
Male		4	4	25.0
Civil status				
Married	4	11	15	95.0
Single	1	0	1	5.0
Age				
20-30	1	1	2	12.5
31-40	1	5	6	37.5
41-50	2	0	2	12.5
51-60	1	3	4	25.0
61-70		2	2	12.5
Occupation				
Farmer		5	5	30.0
Brgy health worker		2	2	12.5
Housekeeper	5	4	9	57.5
Educational attainment				
Elementary level		6	6	37.5
Elementary graduate		2	2	12.5
High school level	2	2	4	25.0
High school graduate		0	0	0
College level	3	1	4	25.0
Previous exposure to <i>Bayok</i>				
Exposed	0	11	11	69.0
Not exposed	5	0	5	31.0

Surprisingly, all Matiao respondents believed that the material is acceptable as it was free from annoying elements. However, 4 respondents of Barangay Don Salvador Lopez said it was unacceptable. This was in reference to the costumes used by some of the singers of the Bayok which they felt were not genuine Mandayan costumes. Rural Mandayan communities are still particular about traditional dresses unlike the semi-urban Mandayans.

Table 4. Effectiveness of the videotape

Characteristic	Frequency		Total	Percentage
	Matiao	DSL		
1. Comprehensiveness				
Comprehensive	1	9	10	63
Not Comprehensive	4	2	6	37
2. Acceptability				
Acceptable	5	7	12	75
Unacceptable	0	4	4	25
3. Attractiveness				
Attractive	2	11	13	81
Unattractive	3	0	3	19
4. Self-Involvement				
Involved	5	1	16	100
Not Involved	0	0	0	0
5. Persuasiveness				
Persuasive	1	8	9	56
Not Persuasive	4	1	5	31
Undecided	0	2	2	13

In the attractiveness component, 13 respondents answered Bayok is attractive while the rest (3) found it not attractive because of the actions of the participants and the whole presentation which they found defective. All respondents from Don Salvador Lopez considered the Bayok presentation attractive which meant it caught their interest.

In the aspect of self-involvement, all of the respondents believed that the message on Bayok was directed or intended at them and that the message contained no insulting or bothering statements. For the persuasiveness component, a slim majority (56%) of the respondents found the video persuasive and were convinced they needed to follow the recommendations of the managbayok

The summary of the results showed that the effectiveness of the Bayok video as tool to disseminate developmental messages is only seventy-five (75%) percent.

Table 5. Summary table of the videotape's effectiveness

Component	Percentage
Comprehensiveness	63
Acceptability	75
Attractiveness	81
Self-Involvement	100
Persuasiveness	56
Average	75

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The message in the Bayok was not very clear and the audience were not fully convinced of the recommendations given.
2. The communication material (Bayok) was perceived relatively effective by the Mandayans in the villages as the message is thought to be directed at them. They found it interesting. It did not also contain annoying elements.
3. The material must be pretested among older Mandayan folks to further determine its comprehensiveness.
4. A comparative study on the effectiveness of the material may be done to determine the difference in perception among audience in remote villages and in semi-urban areas.
5. Cultural preservation and appreciation activities must be enhanced.

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