



## FM Radio broadcasting services in India & the threat of losing local language culture

Mahadeva M.S, Assistant Professor, Department of Kannada, Government First Grade College, Bannur, T.Narasipura Taluk, Mysore District.

**Abstract :** *Indian youth are always great lovers of music. With the widening of the FM bands Radio audience have almost tripled in India. There has been a rising trend amongst young Indians to listen to music almost 12 hours per day. Growing globalization has given stimulus to private FM bands which are very popular in India, but along with the rising attraction of youth towards FM radio there is a rising challenges of losing the local language. Several of the radio bands are owned & managed by corporate companies who care very little for local culture & local language. This paper analyses the need for policy interventions for FM bands as a mechanism for survival local language culture in these days of globalization.*

**Keywords:** *FM bands , youth mentality , challenges for local language , need for policy interventions*

### Introduction:

In the global history of modern communications, Radio grew as a unique technology which combined the use of sound with narrative without recourse to visual or graphic imagery. Its appeal came from humanity's long experience of spoken language as the primary means of communication. Every civilization was originally nourished by words uttered by familiar voices in the course of storytelling or singing. The great thing about the radio was that human voice could now cover long distances and thereby create large communities of listeners. The radio's characteristics as a medium redefined education, creating the possibility of learning long after childhood had passed.

1. It opened up a new world of creative expression in familiar genres like story, drama and poetry.
2. Radio added a new dimension to music and discursive prose. New

genres like reportage that were specific to radio arose.

3. As a medium of mass communication, radio found a congenial climate in India's vast geography and varied cultural terrain.

### Indian experiments with Broadcasting-

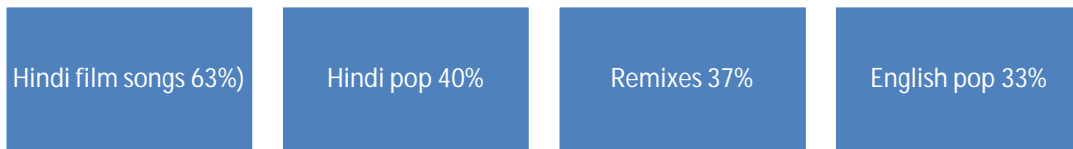
India started the experiment of FM station in mid 90s Times FM now called as radio Mirchi started from Ahmadabad in 1993. AIR was the official radio broadcast agency till 1993 in this year government decided to privatize radio broad casting sector. FM Channels In Indore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Vizag & Goa to Private Operators, who developed their own program content. In 2000 FM Frequencies were auctioned. India has 350-400 millions for FM listeners today.

1. Radio has a reach of 56% and there is a distinct twist towards males.



2. Radio Mirchi is the most popular station and is tuned by people
3. People listen to FM at home (70%), while driving (32%), at public places (9%) and at the office (7%).
4. Almost 51% of the people listen to FM for an average time of one hour and another 39% listen to FM for a longer period of 1-3 hours.
5. Sunday listenership is dramatically low with only 10% of the people tuning in to FM vs. weekdays where the number of tune-ins is as high as 94%.

As Shown in Chart -1 Majority of the people listen to Hindi film songs (63%), followed by Hindi pop (40%), remixes (37%) and English pop (33%).



**Source :** FICCI-KPMG Media & Entertainment Report 2013

With the rollout of FM Phase III licensing, the Indian radio industry is optimistic about its huge growth. Never before has the FM industry so looked forward to a policy getting implemented. Phase III implementation will bring about a change the industry has never seen before. Over the last two decades, this business has reached a level of maturity where it is in a position to know how to take advantage of all benefits that Phase III will bring in its wake. To get a clearer understanding, one needs to delve a little into the past to see how the industry has reached this far.

When private FM radio was launched in India in 1999, the programming comprised a plethora of music - Hindi film, English pop and rock, Western classical, trivia, and more. FM was dedicated to music and more music. All people loved it. In Phase I of its development, FM was made open to

private broadcast channels in Chennai, followed by Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Goa, and then Bangalore, Hyderabad, Jaipur, and Lucknow. Regulatory norms prohibited the broadcast of news and other non-music programming. Hence, the content was all about music and art (mostly films). In 2005, during Phase II of its development, 338 frequencies were offered, of which about 237 were sold. FM radio spread through the country with local players. Programming still had to be confined to music. Unlike print and television media, the FM radio sector has had to work harder to keep its head above the water. Even so, for all these years the FM radio industry in India has stuck it out and managed to survive. (Indian express dated 22-11-2014)

According to a recent FICCI-KPMG Media & Entertainment Report, the radio industry registered a robust growth of around 24 percent with the top eight



metros still dominating the market, accounting for 70-75 percent of industry revenues. The average growth rate for larger, established players like 92.7 BIG FM among others was in the range of 15-20 percent. For smaller players, the average growth rate was in the range of 45-50 percent. ( History of Indian radio )

Given the challenges encountered with respect to content regulation, all radio Channels had to think out of the box to attract listeners. Moreover, as per current legal stipulations, private FM broadcasters can own only one frequency per city. On a positive note, what this has achieved is that FM radio has managed to attract a wide cross section of audiences across SECs to their respective stations. These stations thought of a number of innovative ways to hold listeners to their respective channels. In the case of 92.7 BIG FM, it managed to achieve a fair amount of success by keeping its ear to the ground and fine tuning its content based on the needs of its listeners. The Bangalore station was the first to go 100 percent Kannada. Similarly, very recently, through regular interactions with listeners and based on their feedback, 92.7 BIG FM changed the programming theme of its Delhi station to Retro across all shows. This in turn has had an immediate positive effect on the listenership numbers. The Delhi station managed another coup when it became the only FM station in the country to have a chat with President Pranab Mukherjee a day before he took his oath. In spite of every challenge faced, it must be said that the FM industry has pushed itself to the limits to survive against all odds.

The biggest factor in the FM radio play will be quick implementation of the much awaited Phase III licensing. The hopes of

the industry hinge on this one. With the rollout of Phase III licensing, the Indian radio industry is optimistic about its exponential growth. The industry, which currently brings in Rs 1000 crore revenue, will see 800 new radio stations, across 300 towns coming up. With this expansion, FM radio will now touch 90 percent of the Indian population, making it truly a common man's medium. The doors to expansion will be opened and the industry expects to see 30 percent year-on-year growth.

The future looks hopeful with two other critical factors pertaining to the industry finding a closure. One such challenge was the Copyright Act (Amendment) Bill, 2012, which is passed by the Lok Sabha. This closure to a very long pending issue is a constructive and beneficial step in truly recognizing the real owners of music, which is so critical to our business. This move will give radio stations a greater flexibility to play music recomposed or readjusted by creators of songs and will lead to generation of more music and better music. Another key development last year was the increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) from 20 percent to 26 percent, making it a good time for strategic investors to look at the industry. The incentives offered in Phase III guidelines will make it very attractive for investors to look at this sector. Like other players, 92.7 BIG FM will be looking at multiple frequencies, which will act as a revenue multiplier. Considering the constraints within which it had to survive, the benefits in terms of flexibility in programming, content, and presentation will in all likelihood bring about a creative explosion, which will immensely benefit the listeners, the advertisers, and the industry itself. After final implementation of Phase III, there will be a substantial change in content



and programming though limited to entertainment.

Current affairs have been broadly classified into information pertaining to sporting events, traffic and weather, coverage of cultural events, festivals, coverage of topics pertaining to

1. examinations,
2. results,
3. admissions,
4. career counseling,
5. availability of employment opportunities,
6. public announcements pertaining to civic amenities like electricity, water supply, natural calamities, and health alerts.
7. News can be relayed by All India Radio (AIR) broadcast

#### Challenges -

1. substitute audio platforms are available for youth
2. there is shift in listeners' mentality
3. audio reach out has changed
4. Programming has become less local & less relevant as FM channels are being debonair & more urbane .
5. as advertizing expenditures are growing FM channels

**Conclusion :** Radio offers tremendous opportunities for advertisers & media planners need to explore various options They can make use of radio for media mixing. They can promote articles through FM marketing . FM radios can make awareness about good drinking water, sanitations , health tips, physical activity tips etc. flexibility in

programming , content , presentation will in all likelihood bring about a creative

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