

Fm Radio in the Digital Era: a Qualitative Study of My Fm and Radio City in Jaipur**Dr. Vidhi Singh¹, Dr. Sakshi Arya², Dr. Pooja Singh³, Bhanupriya Saini⁴, Dr. Mahendra Kumar Dhakad⁵, Dr. Shalini Saxena⁶**¹Assistant Professor, Journalism & Mass Communication Apex University, Jaipur²Sr. Assistant Professor – JMC IIS (deemed to be University), Jaipur³Associate Professor Poornima University, Jaipur⁴Research Scholar IIS (deemed to be University), Jaipur⁵Associate Professor, Faculty of Management and Commerce Poornima University, JaipurEmail ID:-mahendra.dhakad@poornima.edu.in⁶Professor, Faculty of Science and Humanities, Poornima University, JaipurEmail ID:- shalini.saxena@poornima.edu.in**ABSTRACT**

Traditional mass media working has been changed drastically after the growth of digital media. To stay relevant, platforms of traditional media such as radio have changed the way of connecting with their audience, not only in the terms of content but also in many other aspects. By introducing the new kind of content, two-way communication and with the presence of digital platforms, FM Radio has completely adapted the digital era in India.

This study explores how FM radio has transformed in the digital era. It is based on in-depth interviews with 14 radio professionals working in MY FM and Radio City, Jaipur, two major private FM radio networks in India.

The study concluded that FM radio has started focusing on more new relevant things rather than just focusing on the music part. Infotainment, audience engagement and the digital content is something radio has included. To involve the listeners on their shows, radio jockeys use the different ways like interacting through live calls, whatsapp messages, voice messages and social media. What builds a strong emotional content with the audience, is the use of Hinglish and local languages by the radio professionals.

The study also shows that radio stations are now no longer keeping themselves limited to the traditional FM broadcasting, but consuming the digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook You tube and different mobile applications to connect with their existing listeners as well as connecting with new audience globally. Where on one side, MY FM focusses more on the emotional part and entertainment side, Radio City, on the other side follows a more structured programming and prefer the more digital integration.

The study concludes that the traditional mass medium like radio has now changed in into an interactive hybrid and cross platform medium. The findings are based on interviews with 14 radio professionals working in different roles.

Keywords: FM Radio, Digital Media, Digital Integration, Listener Engagement, Infotainment, Media Convergence, India

1.INTRODUCTION

The media has been changed by the rise of digital technology and as per this change, now the traditional media like newspapers, radio and television face the challenges with streaming platforms, social media, mobile applications, websites and podcasts. The content offered by the digital media is personalized, in music streaming platforms like Spotify, Jio Saavn and other forms of digital media is interactive, fast and can be accessed anytime as per their availability.

FM Radio has been seen as a declining medium. With the development of private radio broadcasting, FM radio became very popular in India. Although, this traditional medium has been considerably adapting the technology and social alteration. Private stations offered their listeners a better quality content focusing on entertainment, music, fun, interactive and youth based content.

FM radio has been facing the challenges created by the digital media. Today, listeners can access music from podcasts, YouTube, Social Media, music streaming platforms. As a consequence, FM radio cannot completely rely just on music. FM radio needs to offer an engaging and interactive content that has a local relevance as well. Hence radio has began adopting the digital platforms as a broader form of digital broadcasting. Radio Jockeys today are no longer just a voice on radio. They have now become an influencer, a story teller, a content creator and a community communicator. RJs have now started interacting with their audience via social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, You Tube and various other forms of digital media. The content broadcasted on FM radio is used on various forms in different relevant formats as shorts, video clips, social media posts a such other digital formats.

The present study explores these changes through the insights and observations of radio professionals working with MY FM and Radio City in Jaipur. The study considers three major areas: changes in radio content, changes in audience involvement, and the growing adoption of digital media.

The study is based on interviews with 14 radio professionals. Their experiences enhance understanding of how the everyday working style and practices of FM radio are getting affected by the digital evolution.

2.PROBLEM STATEMENT

Media usage has been changed due to the remarkable growth of digital media. Internet based platforms and smart phones have now made things easier for the people who now can listen to music, follow news, watch videos and connect with others. FM radio, as a result has faced many challenges because of these developments. Although, because of its accessibility, known voices, localized content and an emotional connection, FM radio continues to appeal its audience.

Current research has focused on cross platform integration and digital transformation, but relatively lower attention has been paid to perspectives of radio professionals themselves. Be it content creation, radio programming, listener interaction or other digital activities, they are directly involved. Hence, their observations, experiences and radio insights can help explain how the radio is integrating the digital change.

Therefore, the problem investigated in this study is:

How is FM Radio in the Two-tier city, Jaipur is shifting in terms of audience engagement, content, presentation style and digital adoption in response to the development of digital media.

3.RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The study aims to answer the following questions:

How, according to the radio professionals, has FM radio shifted in the digital era?

What different methods are being used by the radio professionals to build a strong audience interaction?

How has the digital media platforms and technology altered the work practices and content creation?

How do MY FM and Radio city vary in their strategies to the content and digital integration?

4.LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

The emergence of digital media has motivated the scholars to explore the ways traditional media is consuming the new technologies.

McQuail (2010) discusses how media ecosystems change as per the social the social and technological growth. Hence, traditional media needs to shift communication and content part as per the listener demand and preferences.

Jenkins (2006), describes through the Convergence Culture that the content taken by media now moves across the various media platforms. Rather than just simply consuming the content, FM radio listeners are also becoming the active participants as through the social media, WhatsApp and other digital platforms, they are able to interact and do the two-way communication.

Crisell (1994) explains FM radio as an audience-centered medium. It creates an intimate bond between the host and the listener through conversational interaction and emotional relationship build between them. These are the features that remain relevant in the digital era.

Hendy (2000) emphasizes that this traditional medium, radio has remained relevant because of its unique potential to adapt to the cultural and innovation driven changes. Few examples of this continuing adaptation are podcasts, social media, online streaming and mobile applications.

Hendy (2000) argues that radio has survived because of its ability to adapt to technological and cultural changes. Online streaming, mobile applications, podcasts, and social media are examples of this continuing adaptation.

Berry (2015) discusses the progress and evolution of podcasting and highlights that traditional radio needs to evolve beyond the broadcasting scheduled that are fixed. Digital audio permits the listeners and audience access the content as per their convenience.

Livingstone (2004) focuses on the shifting role of internet era's audiences. They are now involved and selective. With RJs through the social media platforms, this can be seen where, in the modern radio listeners send text and voice messages, make calls and involve in the contests.

Uses and Gratification Theory, developed by Blumler, and Gurevitch(1973), briefs that to satisfy the needs as information, entertainment personal identity and the interaction, audience is actively choosing the media according to their choice. These needs are completely fulfilled by the radio through music, content taken by them and, humor, companionship and interaction.

In the Indian media context, local relevance remains a crucial strength of radio as the local issues, local events, known voices and the cultural references help in creating a strong relationship with the radio listeners.

These studies show that FM radio is adapting to the digital technologies and audience preferences. Although, focusing on the daily experiences of radio professionals in India, the available qualitative research is limited. Less

focus has been given to the radio professionals to how the promo producers, copy writers, radio jockeys, promo producers and programming heads are altering their language, presentation style, content and working style in response to the digital media. Also the comparative study of private FM stations is also restricted.

The present study examines this gap by exploring the insights of radio professionals from MY FM and Radio City and comparing their approaches to listener engagement, content and digital platforms.

5.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study aims to:

Explore the changes in in FM radio content in the digital era from the insights and observations given by the radio professionals.

Know the methods and strategies used to engage the audience by FM radio stations.

Analyze the contribution of language chosen, content delivery style and the personalization.

Identify how the digital media has changed the working practices and audience interaction.

Compare the promotional strategies and techniques of MY FM and Radio City.

6.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is guided by the three perspectives: Convergence theory, Uses and Gratification Theory Participatory Communication theory.

6.1 Convergence Culture Theory (Jenkins, 2006) describes the shift of radio content across the FM broadcasting, WhatsApp, You Tube, Instagram as radio has gone beyond being the single platform.

6.2 Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz et al., 1973) explores why the radio listeners are still engaged to this intimate medium, they get the information, entertainment, social connect and compatibility. All these needs are fulfilled by the FM radio of digital era.

6.3 Participatory Communication Theory helps to know the active involvement of audience via phone calls, participating in contests, polls rather than simply receiving one side content and communication.

These theories, together explains the modification of radio from being a traditional medium to a multi-platform interactive medium.

7.METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research Design and Data Collection

The study uses a qualitative research design and approach based on interpretation. Primary data was collected by doing semi structured interview with the radio professionals from MY FM and Radio City. These interviews were based on the content changes, presentation style, promotional techniques, changing listener preferences, audience engagement and listener feedback.

The interviews were conducted individually, recorded with the consent of participants and transcribed for analysis.

7.2 Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used because the study required participants directly involved in radio content and programming. A total of 14 professionals participated in the study, with seven from each station.

The MY FM participants were RJ Kartik, RJ Mohit, RJ Nupur, RJ Eshan, Shruti (Copywriter), Ashish (Promo Producer) and Ankit Sharma (Programming Head).

The Radio City participants were RJ Abhi, RJ Geetanjali, RJ Rohit, RJ Damini, Prem Baniya (Copywriter), Shekhar (Promo Producer) and Ajay Singh Rathore (Regional Programming Head).

The participants had 4 to 25 years of professional experience and represented different roles within radio production and programming.

7.3 Data Analysis

The interview data was examined using the thematic content analysis. The transcripts were reviewed and through the interview, five main areas were emerged: audience involvement, digital platforms, shift from music led programming to infotainment, language and personalization and changing listener behavior. Along with this, the comparative analysis of MYFM and Radio City was also conducted.

Radio professionals were informed about the objectives and purpose of the study and gave permission for interview recordings and academic use of their response and the professional identities were used with their consent.

8.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

8.1 From Music-Based Programming to Infotainment

The findings suggest and reveals the FM radio has shifted beyond being just a music led platform. Radio professionals said that the stories, conversations, infotainment, humor and listeners oriented topics are of greater use. RJ Kartik from MY FM noted that now the radio jockeys engaged with listeners through the stories and conversations. While on the other hand, RJ Abhi from Radio City said that the engaging content that is relevant is required to engage the audience. This highlights the changing preferences of audience and supports the Uses and Gratification Theory.

8.2 Growing Audience Engagement

Interaction with the listeners has become a major part of FM radio. RJs now connect with the audience in numerous ways like WhatsApp calls, voice messages, social media apps like Facebook and Instagram while RJ Nupur from MYFM emphasized on the use of listeners' names and messages on air. This practice shows from one way broadcasting to two way broadcasting and supports Participatory Communication theory.

8.3 Language and Personalization

The participants identified simple, conversational and familiar language as important for audience connection. RJ Rohit from Radio City stressed the importance of speaking in the language of the audience, while RJ Eshan from MY FM noted that a casual style creates greater comfort. Personalization through names, messages, song dedications and local references further strengthens this connection. This supports Crisell's (1994) view of radio as a personal medium.

8.4.Digital Platforms

Digital platforms have become an important extension of FM radio. Participants referred to Instagram, YouTube, mobile applications and WhatsApp for promotion, content sharing and audience interaction. Ajay Singh Rathore from Radio City described radio as content that now exists across platforms, while Ankit Sharma from MY FM emphasized the importance of digital presence. This reflects the convergence of traditional broadcasting with digital media and supports Convergence Culture Theory.

8.5.Changing Listener Behavior

Participants observed that listeners now have many content choices and can quickly move between radio and digital platforms. Therefore, radio professionals focus on content that is short, interesting and effective. Shruti from MY FM and Prem Baniya from Radio City both highlighted the need for concise and engaging content. This has influenced the length, pace and presentation of radio programmes.

8.6 MY FM and Radio City

Both the stations, MY FM and Radio City have showed the similarities and differences, MY FM was described to focus more on humor and entertainment part while Radio City, on the other side, followed more structured approach combining information and entertainment. Both stations use audience interaction and digital platforms but they differ in the promotional strategies used by the stations to reflect their brand identity.

8.7 FM Radio as an Evolving Medium

Overall, the findings show that FM radio is adapting rather than disappearing. Ashish from MY FM observed that radio has changed without losing its basic identity, while RJ Damini from Radio City highlighted its continuing emotional connection with audiences. Traditional strengths such as voice, music, storytelling and local language now work alongside digital platforms and audience interaction. FM radio has therefore evolved into a **hybrid and multi-platform medium**.

9. CONCLUSION

The study explores the digital shift of FM radio through the semi structured interviews with 14 professionals from MY and Radio City. The findings reveal that FM radio has evolved beyond its focus mainly on music and scheduled programming. The main elements of contemporary radio are infotainment, stories, conversations and humor.

The participation of audience has increased through contest, WhatsApp, phone calls and social media messages, Language and personally connecting with the audience has played a crucial role in connecting and creating a relationship with listener. The conversational tone and connect has created a more personal intimacy between radio jockeys and the listeners.

Digital platforms have further expanded the reach of radio. Instagram, YouTube, mobile applications and WhatsApp allow radio stations to promote, extend and interact around their content beyond the traditional FM broadcast.

Overall, the study suggests that digital media have not made FM radio irrelevant. Instead, they have encouraged radio to adapt its content, communication practices and platform presence. FM radio has therefore developed into a hybrid, interactive and multi-platform medium that combines the strengths of traditional broadcasting with the possibilities offered by digital media

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