
UNIT 3 TRENDS IN BROADCASTING

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

Broadcasting encompasses much more than transmission of a single programme from each radio transmitter. The rapid advancements in technologies, and the ever-extending areas of broadcasting are leading to a review of the legal basis of broadcasting. Given the new and innovating range of technologies and the delivery system, increased attention is being paid to the contents which are expected to inspire, entertain, educate, enlighten and of course inform the listener about as many topics as possible. It is in fact being speculated that the traditional types of radio stations equipped with elaborate paraphernalia would no more be required to reach the audiences. The need today is the ability to plan, design, target and execute the programmes in a technically slick style. There is a large scale expansion of the electronic media and radio has to discharge its role in a competitive environment.

The broadcasters, therefore, will have to ensure that the messages reach the audience effectively, on time and in an interesting way. It is in this direction that the overall broadcasting activity has now to concentrate and focus. Again, it is because of this end in view that so many genres of broadcasting are being created. It is said '*The old order changeth yielding place to new*'. This aphorism is very much true of broadcasting today. The main objectives of this unit are to familiarise you with the recent trends and developments that are taking place in the field of radio broadcasting.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- identify the changes taking place in different areas of broadcasting;
- describe the changes in structures;
- discuss the changes in regulations;
- analyse the transformation ushered in by technology;
- enumerate the changes taking place in the area of programme concepts; and
- outline the changes in the area of production and presentation.

3.2 NEW TRENDS IN DIFFERENT AREAS

Communicators often debate the subject whether software leads or follows technology. Generally speaking, technology perceives the gaps in communication and comes up with innovations to fill them. The broadcast specialists respond to these innovations positively and the changes we witness today in the area of broadcasting have evolved over a period of time as a result of this response. The changing trends are broadly noticed in the following areas:

- structures and regulations;
- mode of transmission;
- programme concepts; and
- production and presentation.

Let us examine each of these areas in detail.

3.3 CHANGES IN STRUCTURES AND REGULATIONS

You have read in the preceding unit that the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India), an autonomous body was set up in 1997 to administer radio and television. The network of All India Radio functioning under Prasar Bharati is quite elaborate to cover the entire country in terms of area and population. It has a three-tier system of providing national, regional and local services. When you look at the growth of the broadcasting network you observe that broadcasting began as a public service activity in a few cities. It developed as a regional / sub-regional service with a national component. It resisted the temptation to centralize its pattern of communication.

The renowned communication guru **Marshall McLuhan** observed that the world has become a "global village". The shrinking of the world has become possible due to strides in technology. With the use of technology such as, the printing press, the high power transmitters and satellites, communication has tended to become centralised. This has led to a uni-directional flow of messages and the system has little regard for diversified audience. However, during the last few years the trend is seeing a reversal. Local newspapers and local editions of national newspapers are coming up. This trend is evident in radio broadcasting as well.

3.3.1 Changes in Structures

In our country there is a growing emphasis on local self-government and decentralised administration. In tune with this, broadcasting is also becoming more decentralised in structure. Local Radio is one of the recently developed concepts in radio broadcasting. For providing decentralised services, radio is eminently useful and effective. Since the interests, needs and problems of a small and compact area are generally shared by all the inhabitants of that area, such stations serve the purpose for disseminating useful information to the people in that area.

In India, five local stations were first established by AIR during the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) on an experimental basis. The local radio stations scheme received a massive push from the government as the experimental stations proved extremely popular wherever these were set up. While stressing the crucial significance of local radio All India Radio's document for Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) stated: "Experience has shown that a local broadcasting service where the broadcasters and his audience could interact more intimately, can be an effective agent." The first station came up at Nagercoil in Tamil Nadu in 1984. This local station was started with a view to meeting the area specific information needs of the local population and ensuring their participation in the local developmental process.

Strictly speaking, there are three general types of local radio stations on the basis of funding, these are:

- public service local radio station;
- commercial local radio station;
- community local radio station including campus radio station.

A **public service local radio station** is funded and operated as part of public service broadcasting networks, as in the case of U.K. and India. In U.K. several of them provide ethnic broadcasts. In India there are district level stations serving the communication and development needs of the listeners within a district. **Commercial local radio stations** cater to the entertainment needs of a small community of listeners and serve the trade interests of the area. An independent radio authority, as in UK, regulates the working of these radio stations. In India, a number of private radio stations that are coming up will mostly be commercial stations of a local nature. Their working will be regulated by the terms of license granted to them by the government or an authority it may create. They are owned by private companies or entrepreneurs.

The **community local radio station** is a non-profit broadcasting operation, dedicated to providing programming specifically for residents of a designated community with distinctive geographical, cultural and linguistic patterns of its own. Support from listeners, or non-government organisations is the mainstay for such a station's operation and sustainability. **Campus radio stations** come under the category of community local radio stations. Educational institutions set up their own radio stations in the campus for the benefit of students.

The most important characteristic of the local radio stations is its easy access to the people. In addition, wider participation of the people and local community management are equally important. The programming has a greater input on information and education. The local radio can effectively support both formal and informal education of the local people.

3.3.2 Changes in Broadcast Regulations

Broadcast is regulated in every country while the nature of regulation varies from country to country. Some countries have enacted separate legislation for regulating broadcasts. There are countries where the constitutional law permits broadcasting activities. Regulatory authorities have been created in several countries. In Germany it is governed by public law and inter-state agreements. In UK, the BBC works under a royal charter while the private radio stations are under the control of an Independent Broadcast Authority (IBA). In the U.S., the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) set up under the Commission Act of 1934 supervises broadcasting. In Australia, it is in accordance with the Broadcast Service Act. In China it is governed by Article 22 of the constitution of the Peoples Republic of China. In India, the Indian Telegraph Act of 1885 is the only legislation which is applied to regulate broadcasting. The broadcast policy however took recourse to Article 19 (1) of the Indian Constitution. The situation changed to some extent with the coming into effect of the Prasar Bharati Act. More changes are due especially when technology is changing at an extremely fast pace. The convergence of Telecommunication, I.T. and broadcast technologies is a reality today. In this scenario, the present legislation namely the Indian Telegraphs Act of 1885 is not adequate to cope with. The Indian government has proposed a convergence bill which would cover broadcasts as well as telecommunications.

Along with regulation, there has been a noticeable trend in deregulation. Public service broadcasts do not undertake any activities of a commercial nature. In Japan by an amendment of 1950 broadcast law, NHK was enabled to undertake auxiliary services. The BBC has a number of activities which help it to earn considerable income. The BBC World accepts commercial advertisements which is not done in the home service. AIR's commercial broadcasting which was confined to Vividh-Bharati channels now extends to cover primary channels. Due to compulsions of generating income it started auctioning time slots on FM channels.

In every country there is a regulatory authority to ensure that its regulations relating to media are complied with. In India the Press Council in India is performing the function of a complaints board with regard to the press in the country. People aggrieved by the print media may approach this council for redressal. In the BBC there is a separate body which functions like a complaints board. In India, such a provision exists in the Prasar Bharati Act but it is not implemented. An idea is being mooted of creating a new media council enlarging the function of the press council to cover the broadcast media.

Check Your Progress: 1

- Note:** 1) Use the space below for your answers.
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Why is it important to revise the existing broadcast regulations?

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2) What are the different types of local broadcasting stations?

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3.4 CHANGES IN THE MODE OF TRANSMISSION

Medium wave transmission has been the preferred mode of broadcasting in most of the countries. Short wave transmission has been supplementing it to enlarge the coverage. The trend has changed as transmission on FM mode, use of satellites in broadcasting and digital audio transmissions are becoming more and more popular.

Medium wave and short wave transmissions are based on amplitude modulation technique. You will read more about these transmissions in Course MJM-003. Suffice to say here that Medium wave service was considered a first grade service while short wave was considered second grade. Over the years, large scale expansion of the radio network and consequent repeat of the same frequencies in different locations led to the problem of limited availability of medium wave frequencies. This resulted in interference in transmissions affecting the quality of reception. The remedy lay in switch over to FM mode of transmission, at least partially.

3.4.1 FM Radio

FM is the frequency modulation system of transmitting radio programmes. FM transmitters can reach distances upto 70 kms unless obstructed by tall structures or hillocks in its line of sight that is path of transmission. FM gives very good sound quality and is superior to AM. FM is best suited for stereo music broadcasts and can carry upto 10 harmonics (multiples of sound waves) while AM can carry only upto 2 harmonics. FM cuts out a lot of atmospheric disturbances.

FM technology was developed as early as 1933 but as a system of broadcasting it stabilized itself in 1961 when the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), the regulatory authority in U.S. approved of FM radio broadcasts. Today, three fourth of radio broadcasting in U.S. is on FM. In India FM transmission was first started in 1977 at Madras (Chennai). Later FM transmitters were set up in the other three metropolitan cities.

Indian radio was poised for large scale expansion under the VII Five Year Plan. It was then decided to set up the new radio stations with FM transmitters. The same pattern followed in the subsequent plans. The medium wave transmitters set up during the earlier decades had to be replaced as they had become un-serviceable. These transmitters are being replaced by FM transmitters.

3.4.2 Sky Radio

You may be aware that AM and FM transmitters are land-based. Sky radio refers to satellite-based broadcasting system. You may have observed that the national news bulletins and programmes originating from Delhi are relayed by other stations. Before the advent of satellite, the relays were done through the short-wave transmissions from Delhi or through coaxial cables or microwave provided by the telecommunications department. Now a days, programmes are uplinked from Delhi to the satellite. The relaying stations have been equipped with the device for downlinking the programmes obviating the need for relay through short-wave or other means. Similar satellite uplinking provision is now available at the regional stations for transmitting programmes and news of regional relevance.

Another innovation in the use of satellites has given birth to sky radio. The *Doordarshan Kendras* in many state capitals as in the case of AIR have satellite transmission facilities which enable the other *kendras* in the state to relay their programmes. Radio programmes from the regional state capitals can be uplinked to the sub carrier available with TV carrier on the satellite. The programmes can be downlinked with the help of a sky radio converter. The sky radio signals can be converted to FM band which can be received through a conventional FM radio receiver. This arrangement can be utilized by a cable operator for distributing the sky channels on the cable network which can be received through an FM radio receiver.

Similarly, the general overseas service of AIR can be embedded with Doordarshan international satellite channel in sub carrier mode. The radio service will reach Europe, Middle East, parts of Africa, the Indian sub-continent and South East Asia along with Doordarshan channel.

Direct to Home (DTH) TV broadcast has been permitted in our country. The external broadcasts of several broadcasting organisations through 'short-wave' transmissions are in a way "direct to home" radio broadcasts. Direct to Home radio broadcast from the satellite has now become possible. M/s World Space is already operating satellite derived radio channels including Ail India Radio which are directly received at home.

3.4.3 Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB)

There are two methods of broadcasting, one is known as the analog and other digital mode. Analog refers to "a series of sound waves that closely resemble the sound waves of the original". Digital mode involves "a collection of samples of original sound" translated into a binary computer language. Digital is not original sound it provides a superior sound than analog.

Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) is one of the recent developments in sound broadcasting. The DAB procedure delivers a sound fidelity equal to that provided by a CD player right in the home. It can accommodate a large number of channels. It is easy to operate and is power-efficient. Obstructions in the path of transmissions which affect FM do not affect it. DAB receivers can receive satellite as well as terrestrial signals. However, DAB cannot be received on the existing consumer radio. Besides, because of the nature of DAB technology, the number of DAB stations assigned to each market must be decided in advance and allocated in blocks. The DAB stations will have to be specifically and specially designed because the present outfit will interfere in its efficient functioning. AIR has made a beginning in digital broadcasting.

Check Your Progress: 2

- Note:**
- 1) Use the space below for your answers.
 - 2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the advantages in the FM mode of transmissions?

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2) Explain the concept of sky radio.

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3.5 CHANGES IN PROGRAMME CONCEPTS

So far, we have examined the changes in respect of the technological part of broadcasting. Software has also been trying to keep pace with the changes in technology and adapt itself for better programming. There has been a marked change in the approach to programming, particularly in the area of items of educational value and in involving the listeners in the programme process.

3.5.1 Local Radio

We have discussed the background to the introduction of local radio stations in the country in sub-section 3.2.1. As local radio is a new concept, the programmers have to reorient the approaches taking into account that each of the local stations is serving a small area. The programming is flexible and spontaneous enough to enable itself to function as the mouthpiece of the local community. Its approach is down-to-earth, intimate and inhibited. The microphone is used in such a way that it is able to reflect and enrich the life of the society. The programmes are area specific aimed to satisfy the local needs and aspirations.

Due to its participatory nature, Local Radio aims at demolishing the division between the broadcaster and the audience. Local authorities, police, emergency service, adult educationists, schools, transporters, farm scientists entertainers can all look up to local radio for a sustained community service. Its accent can be on handling the local problems extensively, and on local news and views as it is available to a broad spectrum of the local people. Comprising predominantly of field-based programmes, it can adopt a down-to-earth character and establish a two-way communication between the listeners and the extension agencies of various Government Departments. Local events and functions, games, and sports exhibitions and fairs, meetings and debates-cultural or literary can find ample coverage. Its 'Access' programmes can provide opportunities to distinct groups in the community to present their own programmes affording scope for the articulation of local talent and views. It can organise a number of 'Helpline' services to the listeners in employment, education, housing, law and even family problems. Local radio in India has the disadvantage of serving a whole district with the result that there is a dissipation of its focus.

3.5.2 Interactive Programmes

With vast and rapid developments in technology, radio has been endeavoring to serve the masses in multifarious ways. There is a new trend of taking radio to the listeners' doorsteps. The interactive programme is one such effort. Under this kind of development are included "phone-in services", also called "phone-in radio". In a new interactive service called '**Radio on Demand**' listeners can place music/song request on AIR through telephone and the requested music/song will be automatically retrieved from a computer in the radio station and channeled to the transmitter for broadcast.

Another phone-in service is to provide advice, counselling, information and suggestions on a given topic of mass and common use. For example, when there is an increased incidence of viral fever in a city or town, radio invites and answers instantly questions from the audience about viral fever, and experts render on-the-spot advice to those who ring up on a particular day and time and receive elaborate answer to their problems. Topics generally covered are civic issues, health, hygiene, and consumer affairs. Radio counselling for education through phone-in is being implemented by IGNOU in collaboration with AIR stations.

Extending the techniques of phone-in, radio stations organise **Radio Bridges**. Experts placed in the studios of different radio stations with a moderator in the Delhi studio not only discuss among themselves subjects of importance but also clarify doubts of listeners from any part of the country or world.

3.5.3 Entertainment-Education

It is common knowledge that programmes for children are popular because they adopt the technique of story telling to convey educational messages. Taking a cue from this, a new school of thought is developing according to which education must be combined with entertainment. Researches have revealed that social learning is easier when messages are conveyed in a play or drama format. There are successful examples of such plays which are often referred to as soap operas. They include several role models for listeners to emulate.

The trend in news-casting is for presenting news as a magazine instead of straight news bulletin. There is also a disturbing trend of sensationalizing news in the name of presenting them in an attractive and entertaining way. A serious practitioner of the radio medium however, makes a clear distinction between fact and fiction.

3.5.4 Value Added Services

There are several additional services which can be provided using the same radio transmitter. We shall confine our discussion to the service which is directly related to supplementing the audio programmes. Radio Data System (RDS) is related to programmes and provides Programme Associated Data. The listeners can get in the form of text, the name of the producer, director, singer, lyricist, or graphics and text explaining a radio lesson on the air. There are broadcast through the same transmitters sub-carrier. To receive this RDS data a special receiver with a built-in monitor is required. The sub-carrier can be used for additional channels also but here again the FM receiver would require additional gadgets to receive the programmes transmitted through the sub-carrier. There are other services like radio paging which are not related to the radio station programming. Some radio paging companies use broadcast transmitters for radio paging.

Check Your Progress: 3

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Explain in brief the concept of local radio.

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2) What is your assessment of entertainment education?

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3.6 CHANGES IN APPROACH TO PRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION

Production is aided by technology. Recording constitutes a predominant component of production which benefits by the new hardware. With the changes in production methodology, presentation which is an integral part of software is also changing in tune with the times.

3.6.1 Recording

The conventional way of recording and editing is by the use of cassette recorders, ultra-portable and portable recorders, and the console tele receivers. Lately, computer hard disc-based recording, editing and playback systems are being introduced to enhance the efficiency and quality of programme production.

Provision of portable digital news gathering equipment to the news correspondents will enable them to feed news dispatches to the news edition in Delhi or the state capitals from anywhere in the country where events takes place. This will enhance the speed and quality of news gathering. Several radio networks have this facility.

TRACT (Transportable Communication Terminal) with direct access facility to the satellite is available with the radio networks. This facilitates instant coverage of festivals and happenings. Live commentaries of cricket and other matches, *Rath yatras*, processions, music festivals are made using the TRACT and this can provide blemishless quality in relays.

3.6.2 Presentation

You might have observed that on ceremonial occasions the guests invited have to put on formal dress as prescribed by the hosts. In a radio programme presentation, particularly of a public service broadcasting organisation has been emphasising 'formal' manner of presentations. It is more of an 'announcement' than presentation. The radio announcer very often uses the word 'we' and eschews the singular word 'I'. The pattern has been changing and is still changing. From the stage of formal announcements by a single announcer the pattern has changed to that of compering. A compere who is also an announcer tries to establish personal rapport with the audience. This is done mostly in programmes for special audience. The next stage is presentation by two comperes who converse between themselves while doing the presentation. This dialogue pattern has been very useful particularly in the programmes for rural audiences. The chatty type of presentation has been later adopted for presenting morning information programmes in a lively manner.



A lively presentation by radio announcer

The advent of FM as a separate music channel and induction of private producers in FM broadcasting has led to the development of a new cadre of Disc Jockeys. They present film and pop music programmes in an innovative way often involving a free style where the DJs make witty statements and jokes. They provide entertainment interspersed with information on various issues including traffic and weather information. The phone-in technique is also used in presenting programmes. This style of presentation is especially popular among the younger generation. DJs are given a hero's welcome when they visit colleges and youth clubs. But radio organisations particularly the public service broadcasts need to ensure that the FM music channels do not degenerate into 'pop and prattle'.

3.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we discussed some of the recent changes that are taking place and new innovations in modern broadcast media. These new trends and innovations help the broadcasters to reorient the services. Moreover, as electronics engineers and broadcasters are working constantly on new gadgets in broadcasting, several new possibilities open up for widening the basis of future changes and inventions. Since radio is under some strain due to widespread use of television, sound broadcasting has to undergo several changes in order to stay relevant in the age of television.

In this unit, you have seen how modes of transmissions, such as, FM, Sky Radio, and Digital Audio have arrived on the broadcasting scene. The structures of broadcasting are changing to facilitate decentralized broadcasting. Broadcast regulations have been changing and are bound to change further. Production is becoming easier and slicker and presentation more attractive than before. It is interesting to keep track of the rapid changes taking place in Radio Broadcasting.

3.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

- 1) The existing legislation, namely the Indian Telegraphs Act of 1885 is not adequate to cope with the technological changes and the convergence of broadcast technologies. There is a strong need for reviewing and revising the outmoded and dated Act. A new bill needs to be brought to cover broadcasts as well as telecommunications.
- 2) There are three types of local radio stations. These include: public services oriented local stations, commercial local stations and community local stations including campus radio stations. Public service local stations get their funds from government or its agencies or through license fee permitted by government. Commercial stations get their funds from advertisement revenue while community stations are funded by voluntary agencies or contributions from the members of the community. Campus radio is usually financed by the educational institutions themselves.

Check Your Progress: 2

- 1) The advantages of FM radio are many. It can give very good sound quality as it is superior to AM sound. It is best suited for stereo music broadcast. It cuts out a lot of atmosphere disturbances associated with AM broadcasting.
- 2) Sky Radio refers to radio broadcasting through the use of satellite. In the early years when the Indian satellite was launched it was used for radio networking purposes. Today, sky radio aims at providing programmes to listeners in a direct-to-home mode on FM sets. For this the listeners have to take the help of cable operators. There are also specially designed radio sets which can receive satellite derived radio channels.

Check Your Progress: 3

- 1) Local radio aims at area specific programming. It seeks to provide opportunity to the local community to use the radio as a forum for its enrichment. It enables distinct local groups to have access to the radio and articulate their talents. Its helpline services benefit the listeners in finding a solution to their problems.
- 2) Entertainment education is communication of useful and socially relevant messages through programmes of entertainment. Listeners have the tendency to switch off spoken-word programmes which contain didactic elements or heavy messages. If these messages are interwoven in short stories or plays listeners could assimilate them better. The characters in the plays could influence them as role models.