
UNIT 8 RADIO MAGAZINES

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8.0 INTRODUCTION

So far you have been familiarized with the programme concepts and formats such as drama, serials, features, documentaries and music programmes. You must be familiar with the term 'magazine' associated with print based periodicals. What does a magazine contain? News, features, interviews, quotes, jokes, poems, cartoons etc. assembled into one document normally forms a magazine. Similarly, radio magazine is also a mix of different formats. In this unit, we shall look at what a radio magazine is, and what makes it different from other formats. We shall also discuss the various aspects associated with the conception, compilation and production of Radio Magazines.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- distinguish a radio magazine from other programmes;
- plan magazine programmes; and
- use a variety of radio formats like talks, interviews, poems etc. on diverse themes and subjects.

8.2 MEANING AND ELEMENTS OF RADIO MAGAZINE

A magazine in the print medium is referred to as a 'periodical publication usually illustrated, containing contributions of various writers'. A Radio Magazine is a periodical compilation based on 'good material chosen and skillfully assembled in the right order'. It is a distinct entity made up of "bits and pieces" each complete in itself. This attribute of 'completeness' distinguishes it from other collage types of programming. The magazine can comprise various items in different formats including a review, an eyewitness account or dispatch from the field, a report, an interview, a talk, a short discussion or a news summary. A judicious selection of the items in different formats invests the magazine with a character and idiom of its own. A topical and fast-moving magazine with a variety of carefully selected items involves the listeners emotionally as well as intellectually.

A radio magazine consists of a variety of items, like a small talk (talklet), a small feature (featurette), review, report or an interview. In addition to formats, the subjects chosen for radio magazines are not only varied, they cover different regions as well. Nonetheless, these items, have elements of consistency. The programme title, which stems from the composition of the programmes aims at registering in the listeners' mind. It helps the listener to relate with the previous programme, at the same time gives a clue to the content of the magazine. The signature tune helps to identify the programme; it is an invitation to the audience to listen. The placing of the programmes at fixed transmission time also provides an element of consistency to the magazine. In addition, the presenter builds a relationship with a listener and invests the magazine with a distinct personality of its own. The presenter, who is a good communicator, introduces the items and links them throughout the programme in his/her own distinct style. This also provides consistency to the magazine. Thus, a good magazine programme should give a sense of a well structured programme rather than in the words of Robert McLeish a "ragbag of items loosely hung together".

8.3 TYPES OF RADIO MAGAZINES

Radio magazines can be broadly classified into two types – the general and the specialised. A general magazine includes subjects from different areas of human activity. A Specialised Magazine, however, is devoted entirely to one subject; e.g., culture, literature, news, sports, business, music, science, health etc.

General Magazine

As the title suggests, a general magazine includes items of general interest, drawn from different areas of human activities. The items could be some problems being faced by people in public life or a new development, entertainment etc. The Morning Information Service 'Aaj Subah' of AIR and 'Programme Today' of the BBC belong to the genre of general magazines. It has been found very useful in carrying social advertisements, for example, Pulse Polio campaign can be discussed and the listeners be reminded to make use of the facility. Similarly, a tree plantation campaign or clean-the-city campaign can be effectively publicised through such programmes. The element of entertainment is infused with the help of film songs generally presented on listeners' request. Film songs are also used for linking events. Programmes like 'Aaj Subah' have used this style and drawn the attention of the people and authorities.

In such a programme, radio acts as a bridge between the people who have grievances and the authorities who can help redressing them. These problems could be related to power supply, polluted drinking water or apathy of any organisation/public body. Efforts are made to present a balanced viewpoint. A thorough checking of the facts after duly contacting the concerned authorities enhances the credibility of the programme. The success of such a programme lies in basic commitment and sincerity of the producer to improve the quality of life of the people.

Activity

- Select a theme for a general radio magazine.
- State the objectives.
- Define the target group.
- List the items you plan to include in the programme.

8.4 SPECIALISED MAGAZINES

As already stated, specialised magazines are devoted entirely to one subject. These can be news, music, sports or business. A news magazine can provide the listeners insight into developments in different fields and help in updating their general knowledge. The format could be that of a news reel where dispatches come from different locations about the happenings of a day; providing listeners information about the coming events of the day. It could focus upon one issue while touching upon other topical issues and bring out spontaneous reactions to situations and developments.

Let us examine the nature, objectives and items of some specialised magazines in detail.

8.4.1 Music Magazine

A music magazine can be entertaining as well as informative. People generally listen to it for music appreciation. Keeping in view the objectives and the profile of the listeners, the music magazine needs to be planned. The following could be some of the fixed items in a music magazine:

- evolution of music as an art form; divided into different time periods, regions and different types;
- different types of music i.e. classical, light classical and folk;
- series on how to learn music, a fixed series on music of different areas in which one area is taken each time;
- music for different occasions, e.g. birth, marriage, season, harvest and death;
- series on music instruments, the musician explaining salient features of that instrument. This could also give you an opportunity to have a series on those unsung masters who designed and created these musical instruments. An interview with a musician can be interspersed with music rendition by way of illustration;
- news items about new releases on music also make interesting listening. Some maestros could talk about the nuances of ragas or different trends and researches in music.

A research based series on music of different areas and music on different occasions can go a long way in fostering unity in diversity.

8.4.2 Cultural Magazine

A cultural magazine introduces to listeners the lives and styles of those who are physically far away thus bringing the world closer to them. Our country, rich in cultural heritage offers excellent opportunities for the production of cultural magazines. The entire length and breadth of the country may be mapped in an interesting and creative manner talking about the quaint places, traditions, people, their ways of living, outlook, habits; art forms; innovations, etc. The deeper you delve, the more valuable information you are likely to bring out. The producer of a cultural magazine keeps this in mind while working on the magazine.



A village fair in progress

If the magazine is being produced for a small community, the traditions, fairs, festivals, rituals and beliefs that are common in different areas may be covered. Many a time, the dialect/ language or the style of presentation and expression differs. If the producer is able to present the cultural pattern of a far-flung area which has many common threads with the culture of the target area, s/he would give a feeling of proximity to the listeners. Such is the power of sound bytes. Some interesting themes for the cultural magazine could be:

- varied food, clothing and customs;
- folk music of different areas properly linked together;
- fairs and festivals of different areas;
- celebrations and community activities e.g. paddy sowing and harvesting of crops;
- arts and crafts of a specific region.

8.4.3 Sports Magazine

A listener tunes to a sports magazine to have an in-depth understanding of what is happening in the area of sports. Some may like to learn about a particular sport or catch up with the lives and styles of sports personalities who interest them, others may derive the thrill of an event which they may not have heard. The list can be endless! The producer may plan the fixed items and the topical items of a sports magazine. The fixed items could be:

- explanation of the finer points of a game;
- interview with a sports person or a feature on a sports personality;
- resume of a sports event with a specialist, providing insight into particular aspects;
- coverage of sports events through live dispatches;
- a quiz on sports;
- phone-in on a particular sporting event;
- physical, mental and emotional benefits of sports;
- sport as an industry;
- health and medicinal aspects of sports.

Some of these items may be information-oriented, while others could provide thrill or some practical and useful hints.



Commentary on a football match in progress

The magazine can be a lively format to express the views about the performance of particular sports-person, the expectations from different sports-persons, about the role of organisers, about how we can perform better as a nation, as a state or as a small unit, etc. Thus, a magazine can also offer new ideas to the organisers and act as a bridge between the players and organisers; players and the common man; players/coaches and the youth aspiring to be sport-persons. The issue of physical fitness and nutritious diet for an aspiring sports-person can also be taken up as a regular feature.

8.4.4 Science Magazine

Science communication helps to inculcate a scientific temper among listeners. It aims to develop analysing abilities among the listeners/viewers which is an essential condition for a happy and healthy life. Science magazines with a variety of subjects and formats can serve a long way to achieve the desired objectives of science communication. One of the pressing challenges for science communicators, is a bias among people who presume that science is not relevant to their lives. Therefore, the most important factor for the success of a science magazine is that the programmes not only attract the listeners but the listeners are able to relate with the contents and find them useful to improve the quality of their lives.

Science magazine programmes have to be conceived keeping two broad categories of listeners in mind: those having a science education background and the others without it. The producer should clearly identify the target listeners and include items appropriate or relevant to the target audience.

The magazine programme should include a variety of subjects from different disciplines of science. A science magazine can, therefore, include:

- a current topic;
- science news;
- lives and works of scientists and their achievements;
- scientific institutions and new researches;
- series on environment, dealing with different aspects at the global, national, village and individual level; bio-diversity, ecological degradation, wildlife etc.;
- science-based trades (coverage of trades has been discussed in the business magazine).

As in other radio magazines, the role of a script writer is crucial in a science magazine as well. A skilful handling of script goes a long way to relate an issue or concept with the day-to-day life of the listeners. The technical words, jargon and straight readings of scientific definitions are not appreciated by the listeners. The use of the simplest possible language, though applicable to other specialised programmes, is particularly important in science communication. To facilitate this, broadcasters often avoid recording straight talks and instead choose the interview format. An interview allows the interviewer an opportunity to interpret the scientist's statement in a home-spun language.

Snippets giving the news from the world of science should be diverse and presented with explanations. This enables the listeners to understand the concepts and the developments better. There are many issues, which are debated at a particular point of time, and their in-depth coverage makes good listening. For example, the first edition of the National Science Magazine, "Radioscope" of All India Radio in April, 1995, covered the issue of leaded/unleaded petrol since the unleaded petrol became available in the country during that period. Similarly, the first edition of National Science Magazine in Hindi 'Vigyan Patrika' in January, 1998 presented Republic Day Parade from the perspective of science. The same edition talked about Auto-Expo 1998, held in Delhi, from the environment point of view to discuss 'How green is the new automobile technology'. The impact of the use of polythene bags which involves the listener as users, can also be highlighted through radio magazines.

Introduction of interactivity in the science magazine enhances the comprehension and draws listeners' involvement. Questions can be invited from listeners and explanations provided by scientists. Listeners could be posed a question in the beginning of the programme and the answers could be given in the end or in the next edition.

8.4.5 Health Magazine

A health magazine may not have much of entertainment value but can be of great service to society. The suggestions and help offered in a health magazine can lessen the burden on the medical facilities to some extent. The programmes can help save counseling time spent by doctors with their patients. A health magazine can include:

- do's and don'ts for healthy living;
- explanation by specialists on nutrition, exercise, hygiene etc.;
- precautions for common ailments and some traditional ways of building immunity;
- new medical discoveries and case studies;
- health news;
- some diseases prevalent in the target area;
- health guide for frequent travellers;
- medical advice to problems received through letters/phone/SMS; and
- health quiz.

A series could be planned on the latest developments, researches in the field of medicine highlighting successful experiments, surgery, etc. conducted elsewhere in the country or the world. The magazine should be presented in such a manner that the information given inspires the listeners to develop a positive attitude towards health. This can be achieved by giving suggestions and advice, highlighting the sufferings which may result if a person does not take appropriate action at the right time. An interactive session can be a popular feature in a health magazine where listeners can send in their problems on a particular ailment and a specialist can offer his/her advice on radio. Prior publicity is crucial for the success of such programmes.

A literary magazine can enrich the discerning listeners intellectually as well as emotionally. The magazine programme provides insight into the literary world. The magazine should be devised and produced keeping the two types of audience in mind: those with literary orientation and the common man. A literary magazine generally includes:

- a book review;
- serialised novel reading;
- a short story, preferably in a dramatised format;
- poetry presented in the voice of the poet or composed by a music director and dramatised when presented by two or three voices bringing the essence of the poetic thought;
- works and life of a literary personality interspersed with musical renderings;
- a symposium/discussion;
- a fixed item as the art of writing/speaking;
- book publishing – the industry, writer, publisher and copyright laws etc.;
- excerpts from *Mushairas* or *Kavi Sammelans* before an invited audience; and
- quiz, writing and speech competitions .

The literary magazine can serve as an effective vehicle for cross-linguistic /cross-cultural communication by presenting translations from literature in different languages/ from different cultures and geographic areas, thus creating bonds of unity. A good literary magazine may also promote a reading habit among some listeners.

8.4.7 Business Magazine

The purpose of broadcasting a business magazine is to enhance the business acumen of the listeners by providing them with information and guidance. A business magazine could include a series on new trades, information about raw material, quality control, consumer laws, production process, labour management, researches in the trade, etc. These items should be planned and produced in such a way so as to make the listener derive useful hints from the programme and inspire and motivate him/her to enter the trade.



A business reporter filing a story

A magazine can be a virtual teacher in the skills of marketing. It can teach as to how to cut down production costs, develop good accountancy and other business skills which make a successful businessman. The magazine can also serve the investors by giving them tips about the best investments, educating the investors about fluctuations at the stock market. The listeners can be educated about tax laws through interactive programmes in which questions from the listeners can be answered by a specialist. Analysis on the market trends, the price index, glut in the market, the ways and means to get good rates can be given. The problems of local businessmen and their possible solution could be presented in the programme. An in-depth interview with a successful entrepreneur will make interesting listening. In addition, a business magazine can focus attention on the dying traditional trades of the country. It can serve as a forum to give voice to those artisans who are struggling to keep these trades alive and draw the attention of the authorities concerned to intervene in the matter.

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) How does a radio magazine resemble a print magazine?

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2) What are the main features of a radio magazine?

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3) What care should be taken while writing a script for a specialised radio magazine?

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8.5 PLANNING A RADIO MAGAZINE

As in the case of other radio programmes, planning constitutes a vital part of production of a magazine. This includes target-related content planning, selection of the production team, planning of the content, selection of items and appropriate formats etc. Let us discuss them in some detail.

8.5.1 Defining the Target Audience

Before planning a radio magazine, it is imperative to know your audience. If the magazine is being planned for regional or sub-regional level listeners, the culture of the target area must be understood for ascertaining the interests, requirements and needs of the listeners. One can assess the interests of the listeners by surveying other radio programmes, which are popular or not so popular. If the programme is being planned for the national level, then the interests and the cultures of different regions have to be kept in mind. At whatever level the magazine is being broadcast, the planner needs to interact with experts in the specific area e.g. science writers, litterateurs, sports commentators, organizers of sports events, musicians, researchers and so on.

8.5.2 Selection of Production Team

Planning and production of a magazine in a large broadcasting station generally includes a producer, a scriptwriter, anchor person or a narrator. Each has a specific role to perform though sometimes it may not be possible to have separate persons for each job. At a small radio station, the producer may function both as scriptwriter and narrator. However, s/he must have the desired skills and capabilities to perform those functions.

Producer

The producer need not be an academic or expert in the subject matter of the magazine but s/he must have a basic knowledge of the subject and an inquisitive mind. The producer should keep updating his/her knowledge by reading periodicals and journals besides popular sports magazines or science magazines. Some research organizations can be requested to send their newsletters/publicity material, encyclopedia, etc. Journalists and practitioners in a specific area can expose the producer to various developments and undercurrents in that field.

The producer should also identify people who can write scripts and present the magazine. After having detailed discussions with them about the content, treatment and presentation of the programme, a panel of scriptwriters and anchor persons needs to be prepared. Such interactions generate new ideas and sharpen the focus on the existing plans. It also provides a better understanding of the prospective team members about their strengths and limitations within which the producer has to operate.

A producer involves a guest editor for writing an editorial for a particular edition focusing on a particular issue. For example, a literary figure writing an editorial for a literary magazine may assess how relevant a particular stream of literature is in modern times. The item will emerge as an independent piece of literature but it will also add credibility to the radio magazine. An editor can also be invited to present a critique on a book or a literary event or development.

Script Writer

The scriptwriter of a magazine has to have the skill of relating any event, be it national or international, with the lives of the common people. In addition, s/he must have a thorough understanding of the subject to be able to present any item in a simple, straight and interesting manner. S/he should enjoy the full confidence of the producer. However, it is the responsibility of the producer to check facts in the script as anyone can commit mistakes. It is important that the person who voices the programme has a friendly and pleasant voice and has the required skills to become an anchorperson. If the scriptwriter does not have a radio-genic voice; the producer should politely restrict his/her role to scriptwriting only.

8.5.3 Planning the Content

We have already discussed that before planning the content of a programme the interest and requirements of the listeners have to be kept in mind. However, at times, even if the listeners in the area are not likely to relate with the events or happenings, the producer may like to include current national/international topics in the programme. For example, the US Open Championship may interest the city dwellers and the local population may not be familiar with the game or the players. In such a case, it will be proper to include such items in a fixed series, say, 'news from the field'. Each news item should be preceded by an introduction or followed by an explanation so that the listeners get educated about it and a new area of interest is created for them.

The magazine should include some items of topical interest while other items could be produced and kept in store for use in any edition. These could be biographies of renowned personalities, Noble Laureates or other award winners. In addition, series on birds/animals or sports or some short stories of great writers could be dramatized and kept. A magazine can be planned around one theme also. e.g. a particular raga in a music magazine, or cricket in sports magazine. Such topics require extensive research in order to present varied aspects in different ways and formats.

Some fixed items in a general magazine could be:

- issue of the month with reports from different regions;
- an interview with an eminent personality (biography in different formats, viz docu-drama, interview);
- a short feature on an institute/a celebration;
- history of a particular sport or place;
- a book review; and
- a formal lesson.

However, before deciding to include any item, the producer must be able to clearly answer the following questions to choose the right issue in the right format:

- why am I including this item?
- what purpose is it going to serve?
- what are the listeners going to gain out of it?
- how will they gain?

8.5.4 Selection of Format

A radio magazine offers tremendous flexibility to innovate and experiment in order to make the programme interesting as well as creative. Choosing the appropriate format for different items in the magazine is an important skill for the producer. If you intend to cover a certain phenomenon which needs explanation, then a detailed interview would be appropriate where the interviewer may act as common man's representative. If your next item is an event, a dispatch from the venue of the event with good background sounds will be the right format. It is good to have a local person as the field reporter as his/her accent and the knowledge of local culture will make the programme more authentic.

For a monthly magazine, the producer has to wait until the last week of the magazine for topical items. A good producer, however, plans the programme in such a way that sudden developments in the field can also be incorporated at a short notice.

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 care should be taken while planning the content of a radio magazine?

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2) What specific role does a producer have to play while producing a radio magazine?

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8.6 PRODUCTION OF RADIO MAGAZINE

The items of a radio magazine can be recorded in the studio or outdoors according to the format. While recording, the points discussed in the previous units relating to recording and mike perspective should be kept in mind as they hold good for recording magazines as well. Whether an item is recorded in the studio or is O.B. based, good technical quality is essential. No matter how valuable your item is or whether you have pulled a scoop in recording a great personality, if the words are not clearly audible, all efforts would go waste. Therefore, a good producer, reporter and anchor person must have the basic knowledge of handling mikes and recorders to use them to his/her advantage.

8.6.1 Sequence of Items

Sequencing involves the selection of inter-related items and prioritizing them. The producer should conceptualise a sequence of the items so that the interest of the listeners is hooked and sustained till the end of the programme. It helps the scriptwriter to do the linking narration in a cogent manner. It is good to give a brief of all the contents in the beginning of the edition and plan some interesting items towards the end so that the listener looks forward to it. An effort should be made to spread the items evenly so that the content load of the programme does not become heavy. A serious information item may be followed by an interlude or something which is not so serious to give some time to the listener to reflect on what s/he has heard. This could be done with music interludes, interesting informal linking announcements, sound effects, introduction of the next item etc.

A quiz introduced in the end has proved popular among the audience. A question can be posed on the basis of the contents of that programme or a common phenomenon in the lives of people. The answers can be given in the same edition after some gap or after building curiosity with the help of appropriate music. This could be followed by another question for which the answers are solicited from the listeners within two-three weeks' time. A prize for the best respondents could also be announced.

8.6.2 Sound Effects

Sound effects serving as a background, convey to the listening audience an idea about the place of action or its ambience especially when the input is a recorded article in the studios. The sound effects must be genuine actuality recordings. Effects used in drama production should be avoided. Care should be taken to use appropriate sound effects as discussed in the previous units.

8.6.3 Signature Tune

Signature tune or title music invests a magazine programme with a distinct identity. It conveys the style of the programme and establishes the mood and ambience to attract the listener. The music creates an aura that suits the subject of broadcast e.g. signature tune of a sports magazine will be distinctly different from that of a cultural or business magazine. Similarly, the use of western music in respect of a cultural magazine devoted to different regions of India will be totally out of place. An appropriate signature tune extends a 'musical' invitation to the audience to listen.

Activity

Prepare the outline of a radio magazine of your choice, based on the inputs of this unit.

8.7 LAUNCHING OF A MAGAZINE

Once the programme has been produced, it has to be launched with appropriate publicity. Many a time, the listeners complain to radio stations that they were not aware about a programme being broadcast. Therefore, wide publicity for at least one month in advance is required before launching a magazine. A monthly or fortnightly programme is more likely to be missed or forgotten as this needs more publicity than a weekly/ biweekly or daily programme.

The music to be used in the publicity jingles is prepared in advance before the launch of the programme. Advertisement copy should clearly bring out the points as to how a listener would benefit by listening to the new programme being introduced and its contents. You may also use some clippings from the first edition for publicity. Meaningful, catchy and easily understandable title needs to be selected for the magazine. If resources permit, you can invite suggestions from the listeners by giving wide publicity in the print and electronic media. Listeners will thus get involved with the programme right from the planning stage itself.

8.8 LET US SUM UP

Radio Magazine is an important format which allows variety in terms of subjects, formats and in-depth treatment to cater to the communication needs of different sections of society. The items of short duration on different topics are selected and linked together with appropriate narration by the presenter to provide a well-structured programme. The programme title, signature tune, linking style and broadcast time, impart an element of consistency to the programme. The presentation is kept simple, interesting and easily comprehensible.

A variety of specialised radio magazines were discussed in detail in this unit revealing their nature, objectives and types of items to be included. While planning a radio magazine, target-related content selection, selection of appropriate formats and proper sequencing of the items was also stressed. An analysis of the different issues revealed the wide canvas of magazine which can be used creatively and imaginatively for optimum results.

8.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

- 1) Radio and print magazines are brought out (broadcast or published) at periodic intervals and both cover a wide range of subjects in different formats.
- 2) Variety and consistency are the main features of a radio magazine. Variety is in terms of the subject matter, treatment and format; while consistency is in respect of overall construction of the programme, linking style, periodicity and presentation. A radio magazine offers tremendous flexibility to the producer to cover a wide range of subjects, innovate and experiment.
- 3) While writing scripts of specialised radio magazines, an effort should be made to write in simple, straight and interesting manner so that the subject is comprehensible to a common listener.

Check Your Progress: 2

- 1) While planning content of a magazine, care must be taken to ensure that the items being chosen are relevant, topical and capable of meeting the felt as well as the latent needs of the audience.
- 2) The producer researches the referred material and conceptualizes the programme. S/he decides the sequencing of items, selects the script writer, the presenter and coordinates the entire production process.