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FORMATS OF RADIO PROGRAMMES

You are by now familiar with a radio station. The previous lesson helped you to understand how a radio station works.

When you read a popular magazine, you will come across various things. There will be an attractive cover, advertisements of different products, stories or articles on issues ranging from politics to sports and cinema, interviews and other features.

Similarly, a radio station also broadcasts programmes of different types. Think of the different types of programmes you have heard on radio. You would probably remember film songs, phone in programmes, talks, discussions, news, cricket commentaries etc. These different types of programmes are called formats.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- list the factors to be taken into account for making a radio programme;
- describe the different formats of radio programmes;
- explain the ingredients of a radio programme;
- identify the technology based formats.

11.1 FACTORS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR MAKING A RADIO PROGRAMME

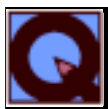
Think of the village or town in which you live. You find people belonging to all communities men and women, rich and poor. Radio plays a very important role in the lives of the people of India. Though there are plenty of rich people and highly developed cities, a majority of our people are poor and a large number of them cannot read or write. So the only medium that can really reach them to inform, educate and entertain is the radio. Radio stations especially those run by the government perform a public service duty.



The requirements of listeners of radio stations are not the same. To serve them, we need to know many facts about them. Let us make a list of what we should know about the audience:

- (a) Number of people — i.e. the total population of the area.
- (b) Number of men and women — Sex ratio
- (c) Literate people/Illiterate people
- (d) The languages spoken in the area.
- (e) Schools/Colleges
- (f) Children going to school
- (g) Health facilities — availability of doctors, primary health centre, clinics, hospitals.
- (h) Any major diseases
- (i) Religions in the area-population wise
- (j) Power supply
- (k) Nearest radio stations/Television stations
- (l) Climate of the place
- (m) Main occupation of the people
- (n) Income per head/people below poverty line
- (o) Roads/transport facilities
- (p) Irrigation facilities
- (q) Number of people engaged in agriculture/other occupations.
- (r) Types of crops.

You can add many more issues to this list. We need to know these facts to decide the language, the type of broadcast, timing of programmes etc. Radio formats therefore are decided on the basis of the needs of the audience.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 11.1**

1. List any five factors that you need to take into account about the listeners before making a radio programme.
2. Write the names of any five programmes you have heard on radio.
3. Fill in the blanks with appropriate word/s:
 - i) The only medium to reach the illiterate people to inform, _____ and entertain them is the _____.



- ii) A radio station broadcasts programmes like talks, discussions, _____, _____ and _____.
- iii) It is important to know the requirements of the listeners to decide _____ of broadcast and _____ and _____ of programmes.
- iv) Radio programmes are decided on the basis of _____.

11.2 TYPES OF RADIO FORMATS

Do you remember the programmes you have heard on radio. Try and recall some of them. You may have heard the names of radio stations, from where the programmes are broadcast. Many of you would remember Vividh Bharati, AIR FM Gold or some private commercial station. You may also remember the time being mentioned and what programme you are going to listen to. These are called **announcements**. Announcements have been traditionally made by people who are known as **announcers**. The commercial radio channels may call them Radio Jockeys (RJs) or anchor persons. Before you learn about the different radio formats, you must know the ingredients of a radio format.

As you know most of what is spoken on radio is written down. As you have already learnt that what is written for radio is heard and is referred to as 'spoken word' as against the 'written word'. But the spoken words on radio is written down or what is generally called 'scripted'. A Radio format can be split into three parts: They are:-

- (a) Spoken Word or Human Voice
- (b) Music
- (c) Sound Effects

All radio formats have the above three ingredients. So let us first classify the spoken word format.

● SPOKEN WORD

1. **Announcements** : These are specifically written clear messages to inform. They can be of different types. For example station/programme identification. These mention the station you are tuned into, the frequency, the time and the programme/song you are going to listen to. As mentioned already you find in today's commercial radio channels, these announcements have become informal and resemble ordinary conversation. There can be more than one presenter in some programmes like magazines.
2. **Radio talk** : The radio talk probably is the oldest format on radio. There has been a tradition in India and Britain to invite experts or prominent persons to speak for 10 or 15 minutes on a specific topic. These talks have to go through a process of being changed into radio's spoken word style. Over the years,



these long radio talks have become unpopular. Instead, today, shorter duration talks are broadcast. Of course, you can listen to these talks only on public service broadcasting stations.

3. **Radio interviews:** Have you ever interviewed anyone? Probably yes. In the media, be it the newspaper, magazine, radio or television, journalists use this technique of asking questions to get information. There can be different types of interviews in terms of their duration, content and purpose.

Firstly, there are full fledged interview programmes. The duration of these may vary from 10 minutes to 30 minutes or even 60 minutes depending up on the topic, and the person being interviewed. Most of such interviews are personality based. You might have heard of long interviews with well known people in the field of public life, literature, science, sports, films etc.

Secondly, there are interviews which are used in various radio programmes like documentaries. Here the interviews are short, questions specific and not many. The purpose is to get a very brief, to the point answer.

Thirdly there are a lot of interviews or interview based programmes in news and current affairs programmes. Have you heard such interviews on radio?

With phone-in-programmes becoming popular, you might have heard live interviews with listeners. These interviews have been made interactive.

There is another type of interview based programme. Here generally just one or two questions are put across to ordinary people or people with knowledge on some current topic to measure public opinion. For example when the general budget or the railway budget is presented in the parliament, people representing radio go out and ask the general public about their opinion. Their names and identity may not be asked. Such programmes are called 'vox pop' which is a Latin phrase meaning 'voice of people'.

You have to be very inquisitive and hard working to be a radio interviewer with good general awareness and communication skills.

4. **Radio discussions :-** When you have a problem in your family or with your friends, don't you say "let us discuss?" Yes we do. Through a discussion we can find out a solution to problems. In any discussion there are more than 2 or 3 people and then ideas can be pooled to come to some conclusion. In radio, this technique is used to let people have different points of view on matters of public concern. Radio discussions are produced when there are social or economic issues which may be controversial. So when different experts meet and discuss such issues, people understand various points of view. Generally, these discussions on radio are of longer duration-say 15 to 30 minutes. Two or three people who are known for their views and a well informed senior person or journalist who acts as a moderator take part and discuss a particular topic for about 30 minutes. The moderator conducts the discussion, introduces



the topic and the participants and ensures that every one gets enough time to speak and all issues are discussed.

5. **Radio documentaries/features:** If you see a film in a movie hall, it is generally a feature film, which is story based and not real. But there are also documentary films which are based on real people and issues. A lot of programmes you see on television are educational and public service documentaries. Radio also has this format. Unlike documentary films, radio documentaries have only sound – i.e. the human voice, music and sound effects. So a radio documentary is a programme based on real sounds and real people and their views and experiences. Radio documentaries are based on facts presented in an attractive manner or dramatically. Radio documentaries are radio's own creative format. The producer of a documentary needs to be very creative to use human voice, script, music and sound effects very effectively. Radio documentaries are also called *radio features*.
6. **Radio drama:** A Radio drama or a radio play is like any other play staged in a theatre or a hall. The only difference is that while a stage play has actors, stage, sets, curtains, properties movement and live action, a radio play has only 3 components. They are the human voice, music and sound effects. Radio of course uses its greatest strength for producing radio plays and that is the power of imagination and suggestivity. For example, if you want to have a scene in a radio play of a north Indian marriage, you don't have all physical arrangements made. All that you have to do is to use a bright tune on the shehnai and excited voices of people to create in a listeners' imagination, a wedding scene. The voice of the actors, music and sound effects can create any situation in a radio play.
7. **Running commentaries :** If you can't go to see a football or cricket match in a stadium, you may watch it on television. But for that you have to be at home or at some place where there is a television. But if you are travelling or outside, then you may listen to radio for a running commentary of the match. A commentator would give you all the details of the match such as the number of players, the score, position of the players in the field etc. So by listening to the running commentary, you get a feeling of being in the stadium and watching the match. The commentator needs good communication skills, a good voice and knowledge about what is going on. Running commentaries on radio can be on various sports events or on ceremonial occasions like the Republic Day Parade or events like festivals, melas, rath yatras, swearing in ceremony of ministers, last journey (funeral procession) of national leaders etc. Today radio running commentaries especially of cricket and other sports can be heard on your mobile phones.
8. **Magazine programmes :** You are familiar with magazines which are a form of print media. They are published weekly, bi-weekly, fortnightly or monthly. There are general magazines and magazines for specific readers. These



magazines could be for children, women, youth or on health, sports, science or music. If you open any one of these magazines, you will find articles, reviews, features, photo features etc. Radio also has magazine programmes like those in the print media.

A radio magazine is broadcast at a particular time on a particular day of a week or a month. That means it has periodicity. Similarly it has plenty of variety in contents. Some or many formats of radio are included in a radio magazine. These may be talks, discussions, interviews, reviews, music etc. Likewise, the duration of each programme or item in a magazine programme also vary. Another characteristic of a radio magazine is that it has a signature tune. A signature tune is an attractive piece of music which is specific to a programme. It can be like the masthead (title) of a magazine. A magazine programme also has a name and one or two presenters or anchor persons who link the whole programme. In the beginning, the titles of the day's programme will be given by the presenters after the signature tune. They also give continuity and link the whole magazine.

Magazine programmes are generally broadcast for a special or specific audience. As the name suggests, a specific audience refers to listeners with specific needs as mentioned in the beginning.

9. **NEWS:** Among all the spoken word formats on radio, news is the most popular. News bulletins and news programmes are broadcast every hour by radio stations. In India, only All India Radio is allowed to broadcast news. Duration of news bulletins vary from 5 minute to 30 minutes. The longer news bulletins have interviews, features, reviews and comments from experts.
- **MUSIC :** When we say radio, the first thing that comes to our mind is music. So music is the main stay in radio. There is no radio without music. Music is used in different ways on radio. There are programmes of music and music is also used in different programmes. These include signature tunes, music used as effects in radio plays and features. India has a great heritage of music and radio in India reflects that. Let us understand the different types of music.

Classical Music

There are 3 types of classical music in India. They are:-

- Hindustani classical
- Carnatic classical
- Western classical

There are also vocal and instrumental music forms. There are also light classical music forms like, Thumri and Dadra. Instrumental music forms include string (sitar, sarod etc.) wind (like flutes, shehnai) and percussion (drum) instruments. You might have heard such music on radio.



You may know of a large variety of devotional and folk music in your area and across the country. Which are broadcast on radio.

But which is the most popular form of music? You would most probably say ‘film music.’ While there are film songs in different languages, the one with a national appeal and popularity is Hindi film songs. On most radio stations, be it public service or commercial, Hindi films songs are heard every where.

Light western and pop music are also popular among some groups of listeners and there is a large section of young people listening to western pop music.

● **SOUND EFFECTS**

Let us see how sound can be used in radio formats.

- Sound can play a major role in evoking interest.
- Sound can be used for comic effects to evoke laughter
- Sound can be used to create certain moods or enhance them.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 11.2

1. Fill in the blanks with appropriate word/s:
 - i) Announcers are also known as _____, _____.
 - ii) Whatever is written for radio is also known as _____.
 - iii) Announcements mention the _____ you are tuned into, _____ and _____ of broadcast.
 - iv) There can be different types of radio interviews in terms of _____, _____ and purpose.
 - v) A film based on real people and issues is called a _____.
2. List the ingredients of a radio format.
3. Differentiate between a radio discussion and a radio drama.
4. Match the following :

i) announcements	a) republic day parade
ii) commentary	b) oldest radio format
iii) interviews	c) inform listeners
iv) discussion	d) asking questions
v) radio talk	e) moderator



11.3 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BASED FORMATS

India has taken giant leaps in the field of information technology and radio as a medium, has taken a lead in applying information technology in its broadcasts. Let us discuss some of these formats:

1. **Phone in programme** – In this age of technological development, phone-in is the most important format. This is called interactive programming where the listener and the presenter talk to each other. Their talk goes on air instantly. The listener has the satisfaction that his voice is being listened to and replied immediately. Other listeners also listen to him. Such presentations need advance publicity so that the listeners get ready to air their grievances/queries or requests. They dial up the announced telephone number at a stipulated time and get their problems discussed with experts in the studio. Initially this format was introduced for playing the listeners' request based film songs. Now it is being used for health related programmes, rural broadcasts, complaints against the government/administrative machinery etc.



Fig. 11.1: Phone-in programme

2. **Radio bridge** : Radio bridge means connecting different stations throughout the length and breadth of the country. In this technique, for example, an expert sitting at Chennai can interact with the common man in the studio in Delhi. This format was first used by All India Radio during elections.
3. **Radio on internet** : Radio on internet is a growing phenomenon with thousands of radio stations operating through computer modems. It is altogether a new format that removes the restrictions of frequency or license. It is relatively



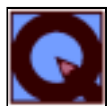
Notes

cheap to set up. It has certain advantages as well as disadvantages. Now all the national and international radio stations like BBC, Voice of America, and All India Radio are available on internet. It is now possible to listen to the programmes from a radio station while working on the computer.



Fig. 11.2

All India Radio started its services on internet on 1st May 1998. With this, it was possible to extend the coverage of programmes to all parts of the world including USA and Canada.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 11.3

1. Fill in the blanks with appropriate word/s:
 - i) A phone-in programme is also called _____ programming.
 - ii) AIR started its internet services on _____.
 - iii) Phone-in programmes need advance _____.
 - iv) Radio bridge means _____ different radio stations.
2. List any three IT based radio formats.
3. Mention any three areas where phone-in programmes are used.
4. Name the radio format which is available through a computer.



11.4 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

Formats of radio programmes

- ▶ Factors to be taken into account for making a radio programme
 - Area population, sex ratio, languages spoken, number of schools and colleges, health facilities, religions, climate, types of crops, transport facilities, main occupation of people
- ▶ Radio formats
 - ingredients of a radio format – spoken word, music and special effects
 - types of formats – announcements, radio talk, radio interviews, radio discussions, radio magazine, radio documentaries and features, running commentaries, radio drama, news, music
 - Information technology based formats – phone-in, radio bridge, internet radio

Notes



11.5 TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. Discuss in detail the factors to be taken account before making a radio programme.
2. Explain with examples the different formats of radio programmes.
3. Describe information technology based formats used in the medium of radio.



11.6 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

- 11.1**
1. Pl. refer to Section 11.1
 2. examples: news, music programmes
 3. i) educate, radio
 ii) news, commentaries, magazines
 iii) communities, rich , poor
 iv) language, time, type
 v) needs of the audience
- 11.2**
1. i) Radio jockeys/anchor persons
 ii) spoken word

**Notes**

- iii) station, frequency, time
 - iv) duration, content
 - v) documentary
2. spoken word, music, sound effects
 3. Pl. refer to Section 11.2
 4. i) c) ii) a) iii) d) iv) e) v) b)
- 11.3**
1. i) interactive ii) May 01, 1998 iii) publicity iv) connecting
 2. Pl. refer to Section 11.3
 3. Pl. refer to Section 11.3
 4. Radio on internet