

**EXPLORING OPERATIONS AND TALENT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES OF FM  
RADIO IN INDIA**

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my dear parents, Usha and Vilasrao Ingle, who stood by me throughout this long journey of thick and thin phases. I wholeheartedly appreciate your strength in doing so, Mommy and Papa.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to my mentor, Prof. Dr Umar Lawal Aliyu, who came in as a hope and was there until the finish line with his constant support. His experienced guidance made this thesis possible; no number of words can fully voice my gratitude for his patience. The SSBM's webinars, specifically those conducted by Prof. Anna Provodnikova, Prof. Minja Bolesnikov, and Ljiljana Kukec, proved to be of great help to me; other than the classroom sessions led by Mia Simcox, on the Geneva campus during the emersion program, shaped my perspective on the global academic world and my writing style. Nonetheless, Dr Sagar Bansal helped me briefly to deduce and reach my research topic.

I am particularly grateful to my UpGrad Buddy, Ms Nabila Shaikh, as she stood by me through the most difficult times, answering every message and arranging for all the help she could get me in time. I thank my fellow DBA Batch mates, who were ahead and together with me, for sharing their experiences from time to time and enriching mine, too. I acknowledge my Tinku friends for serving as pillars of my emotional support.

My Family, my niece Janhavi and my nephew Shreyas for keeping me entertained and loved; My Sister-in-law Nikita, for cooking me healthy meals every day, deserves a share of warmest recognition. I could not have completed this project without the encouragement of my dear mother, Usha, as she backed me up emotionally, financially and practically. When I was required to focus completely on writing the thesis, she helped me adjust the pressure, and having her by my side gave me the courage to keep moving.

## **ABSTRACT**

# **EXPLORING OPERATIONS AND TALENT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES OF FM RADIO INDIA**

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January 2026

Dissertation Chair: <Chair's Name>

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My original contribution to knowledge is a meticulous, grounded exploration of the challenges in operational and talent management front in the FM Radio Industry in India as it sails into digitalisation. While much of the discourse on radio's decline focuses on external factors like the evolution of audio-visual media, competition from streaming platforms, shifting audience preferences, and declining attention span, this study also gives an insight into the internal challenges that continuously shape the industry's course but often remain unaddressed.

The purpose of this research is to find solutions to long-standing, disregarded yet implicit issues, on the verge of raising new issues as the industry sets foot in the digital avatar without losing its soul. The challenges facing FM radio are not completely technological or market-driven, but are deeply rooted in organizational practices, internal advertising rate war, talent management, adaptation to media convergence, implementation and government policies. The study highlights the cultural significance of radio in India. This enduring relationship, also a strong point, can conceal the urgent need for modernization and modification of the medium.

The researcher used an exploratory design of research and with a grounded research methodology, interviewing FM Radio professionals, the outcome reveals the internal realities tackled by FM Radio's programming personnel. This study discloses internal issues of the industry, such as a lack of structured training and upskilling for radio talent in digital competencies, the daily time management tussles of production and sales team to crack a client, the substandard willpower of the Association of Radio Operators for India (AROI) to seek help from the government bodies such as MIB concerned with solving existing business problems of insufficient revenue generation or to offer a sustainable solution. Altogether limiting innovation, obstructing local connection of radio, constraining career development, and ultimately reducing the industry's capacity to compete with the agile digitalised media market, and other mainstream media giants in its full potential.

Radio is a free medium, and it should remain so for the masses. In conclusion, AROI should consider proposing and following up strongly with MIB to urgently come up with sustainable business solutions and relax heavy guidelines. Whereas the FM Radio operators need to rethink where they are heading the industry, and make sure they are prepared with a foolproof foundation first.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

<b>FM</b>	Frequency Modulation
<b>AM</b>	Amplitude Modulation
<b>MHz</b>	Mega Hertz
<b>NTP</b>	New Telecom Policy
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>AIR</b>	All India Radio
<b>TV</b>	Television
<b>IGNOU</b>	Indira Gandhi National Open University
<b>TRAI</b>	Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
<b>MIB</b>	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
<b>GoI</b>	Government of India
<b>BECIL</b>	Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited
<b>CTI</b>	Common Transmission Infrastructure
<b>LTI</b>	Land and Tower Infrastructure
<b>NOTEF</b>	Non-Refundable One-time Entry Fee
<b>GOPA</b>	Grant of permission agreement
<b>ALF</b>	Annual License Fee
<b>ROTEF</b>	Reserved One-time Entry Fee
<b>AROI</b>	Association of Radio Operators for India
<b>Rs. / INR</b>	Indian Rupee
<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>PH</b>	Programming Head

<b>CW</b>	Copy Writer
<b>PP</b>	Promo Producer
<b>FCT</b>	Free Commercial Time
<b>N-FCT</b>	Non-Free Commercial Time
<b>TYNY</b>	This Year Next Year
<b>HR</b>	Human Resource
<b>HRM</b>	Human Resource Management
<b>S-HRM</b>	Strategic Human Resource Management
<b>HRD</b>	Human Resource Development
<b>TRP</b>	Television Rating Point
<b>IRS</b>	Indian Readership Survey
<b>RAM</b>	Radio Audience Measurement
<b>NSD</b>	News Service Division
<b>POS</b>	Public Outreach Service

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The Media Industry ecosystem in India has several industries running within itself, which include the FM Radio Industry. It has long served as a medium for information dissemination and entertainment, i.e. Infotainment, along with educating the masses daily. Especially in India, Radio is culturally connected, and people have memories of growing up with the medium by their side. Millennials and older generations have had their share of radio companionship stories from their childhood, such as how their grandparents used to listen to news, entertainment, cricket commentary, spiritual music, etc, on their radio sets, which left a liking towards radio in them as a child. Radio, due to its extensive coverage area, ease of portability, low setup costs, and affordability, is widely regarded as one of the most popular and cost-effective mass communication mediums (Bhawan and Marg, 2019). Before FM (Frequency Modulation), Radio that was run by the 'Indian State Broadcasting Service' later turned to All India Radio (AIR) used AM (Amplitude Modulation). FM was introduced on a large scale in India in the seventh plan period, while AIR had steadily installed 162 FM transmitters in its network (Srivastava, 2007). During its Ninth five-year plan, the Government opened up this sector to private broadcasters in the year 1999 and offered to allot 108 channels in 40 cities (Phase I) within the spectrum band 88 - 108 MHz, besides its educational channels programmed by IGNOU (Srivastava, 2007). Although only 22 private channels managed to come on-air as private broadcasters, it was a revolutionary turn in audio broadcasting. The FM radio industry has been one of the vital components of the mainstream Media Business since its inception in 2001 in India (Bala and Susmita, 2016). The FM Radio industry witnessed the entry of various private

commercial radio stations, offering diversified content and operational strategies. FM Radio in the early 2000s experimented with formats, rejuvenating the community's interest-based content making, which was popular among the young public (AAFT, 2024). Times FM, Radio City, Big FM, Fever FM, Red FM, Radio Mirchi, Surya FM, Radio One, Mid-day, and a few more started in Phase I of commercial FM Radio (Padmakumar, 2012). This introduced a new era of competition, creative ideas, an out-of-the-box working environment and critically curated content delivery for a wide spectrum of the Public. Celebrity hosts, attractive gifts, jazzy jingles, a language full of slang by RJs, and loads of prizes as gratification for listeners are constantly changing the face of the Radio medium in India. This evolution shows a shift from a singular model for all to a more pluralistic approach, in which numerous stations need demographic data within culturally resonant programming. Nevertheless, the TRAI Guidelines also take care of diversification by allowing not more than 40% dominance of one radio operator at a single location (MIB FM Cell, 2024). This ultimately developed competition and choice for audiences. In other words, Content was the kingmaker.

In 2005, the government announced Phase II, and 243 FM Radio channels spanning 86 cities, including those migrated from Phase I, became operational (PIB Delhi, 2008). As the number of listeners grew in the late 2000s, new FM Radio stations were set up region-wise, and the rollout of Private FM Broadcasting continued in three phases of two batches each, by the 31st of December 2024, there are 388 active FM Radio channels in 113 cities across India by 36 private FM Radio operators by the end of FM Phase III Batch I and II being completed (BECIL, 2025). The government of India, through the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), has decided to open up Phase III, Batch III, now for Private participation within a cabinet-

approved radio network across 234 new locations in India, introducing 730 new FM channels (Kumar et al., 2024). The Rollout anticipated the government's 'Vocal for Local' initiatives, emphasising local dialects and cultures to position FM Radio as a cornerstone in the Indian information dissemination mediums. But the question here is, how are these new stations going to work in a market and audience? Additionally, the National Channel of All India Radio (AIR) was closed down, along with its five regional academies, which had been a popular FM radio channel, especially among the young generation. That was India's first all-night radio channel in the pre-web, pre-FM era. Prasar Bharati is the public service Broadcaster in India that operates the All India Radio (Akash Vani) network and the Television (Doordarshan) Network (TRAI report 23-24, 2024). Prasar Bharati has shut down the channel as part of its cost-cutting measures and to be practical about the service (Kumar, 2019). The Decision was reached after recognising that the listener base of the National channel was dwindling and listeners were moving to new FM Channels with better audio quality.

The FM Radio Industry's share of Advertising Expenditure has declined in recent years, mainly due to the growth of digital media and shifting consumer preferences. According to the Dentsu-e4m Digital report of 2025, FM Radio advertising held a 2% market share in 2024 with ad revenue of ₹1679 crore, but is anticipated to drop to 1% in 2025 (Vijay, 2025). In Contrast to this, the Pitch Madison Advertising Report 2025 has predicted a 9% growth for FM radio advertising, estimating ₹2700 crore in revenue and maintaining a 2% share in the Indian Market, stating that there is a rise in ad volume (Madison, 2025). However, the report also mentions the coinciding parliamentary elections, which increase political advertisers overall. [Figure 1.1](#) ~~Figure~~

1.1. Below shows the Annual Ad Revenue of the FM Radio Industry in India between 2019 and 2024.

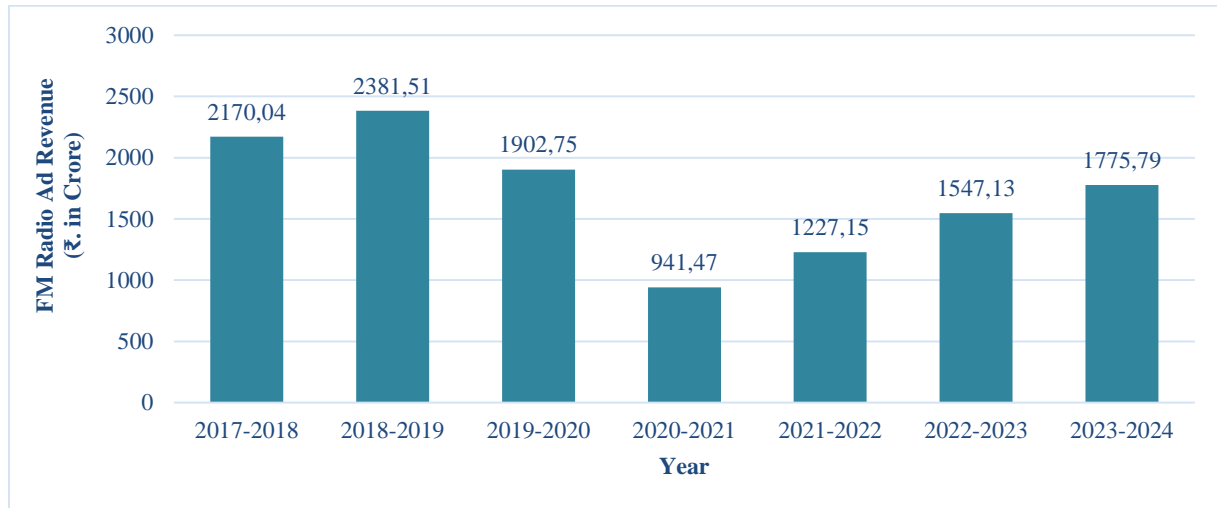
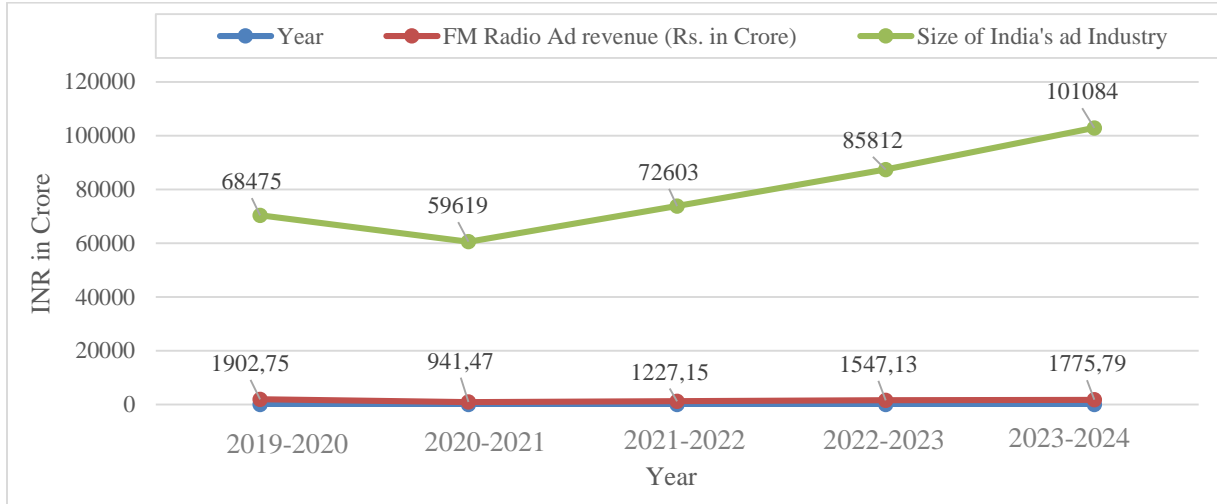


Figure 1.1: Annual Ad Revenue of FM Radio Industry: TRAI, 2024

However, none of the above reports state any increase in the Ad revenue share of the FM Radio industry to increase anywhere above 2% of its long-standing average share in the advertising revenue of the Indian media market. Radio Ad expenditure by advertisers is anticipated to see an average growth rate of 1% in 2025, while the estimated average market share for radio advertising is 1.4%, less than approximately 2% in 2024 (Vijay, 2025). [Figure](#)

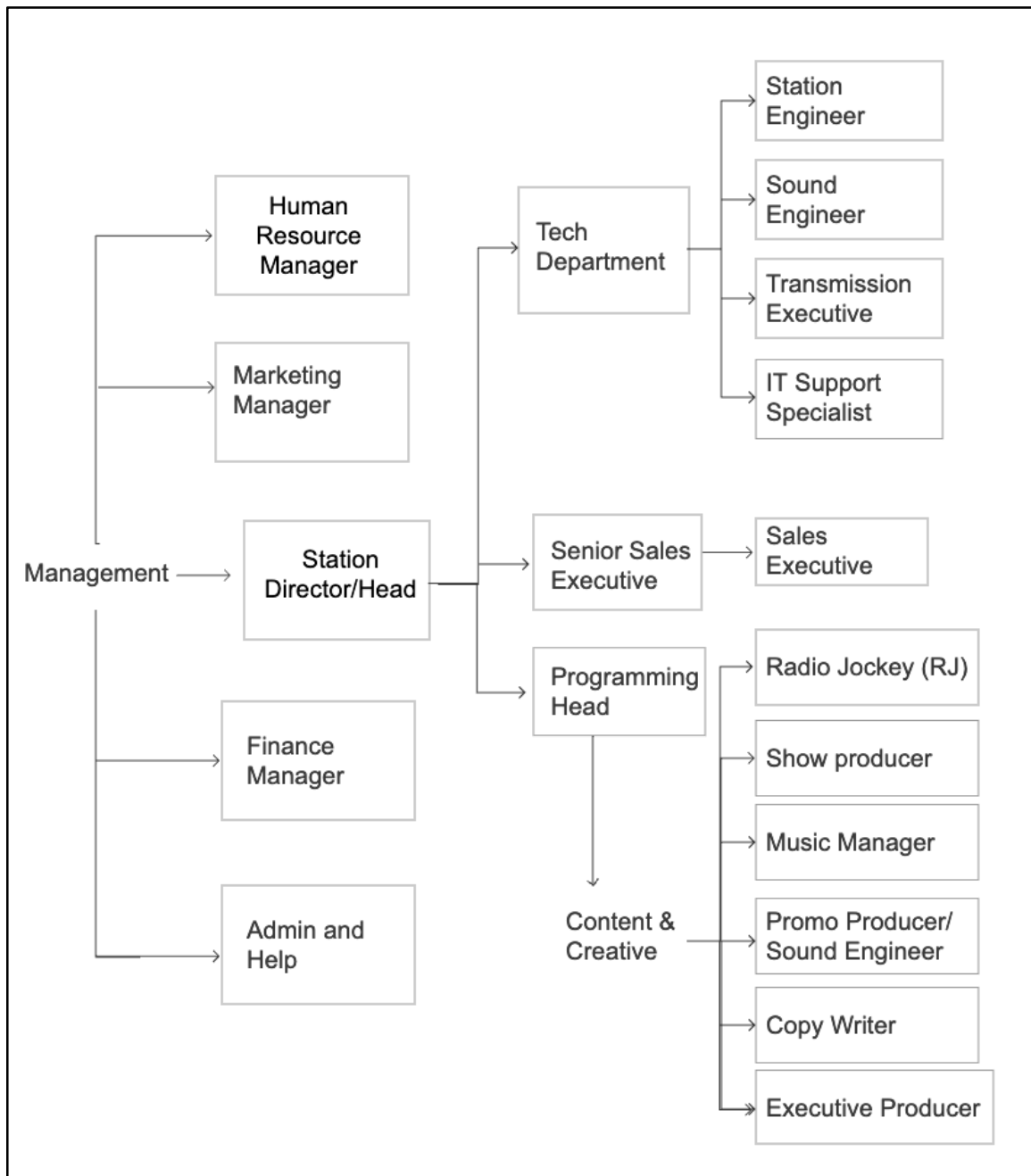
[1.2](#) Figure 1.2, Below shows Year-wise Ad Revenue Market Share of the FM Radio Industry versus the Size of the Indian Advertising Industry (2019 to 2024).



*Figure 1.2: Ad Revenue of FM Radio Industry Vs. Size of Indian Ad Industry: Pitch Madison Advertising Report 2025.*

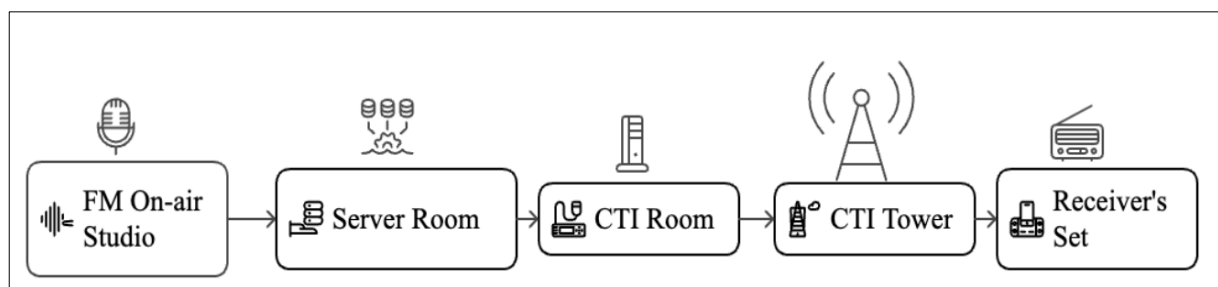
Including the business part, there are four departments in any commercial FM radio station: a) Sales and Finance, b) Programming and Production, c) Engineering and Tech, and d) Administration and Marketing (NIOS, 2020). While the Programming wing provides all the product, the sales wing is responsible to sell it and generate revenue, the Technology wing takes care of all the IT support inside the studio, on the office floors, providing software, and transporting the final audio to the CTI; the Marketing wing is the one who puts out the name and faces of Radio station for promotion on-ground and collab with other companies for barter deals and publicity, while the administrative wing provides all the support and things that are required for the functioning of the station (Keith, 2012). [Figure 1.3](#) ~~Figure-1.3~~. Represents the Basic Structure of FM Employee Roles in Indian Radio Stations. Region and company-wise, there can

be different names for the same position, but the function remains the same.



*Figure 1.3:* Basic Workforce Structure of Indian FM Radio Station: Derived from AIR- Media Ownership Monitor, 2018.

Once the audio is out of the Radio station building, it travels through telephone lines or fibre options and reaches the CTI Room, one allotted to each radio operator, and after amplification, it is sent to the CTI Tower for Broadcasting (NIOS, 2020). ~~Figure 1.4~~ ~~Figure 1.4~~. Below shows a Linear Representation of the Journey of an Audio Signal from the On-Air Recording FM Studio to the Receiver Sets.



*Figure 1.4:* Travel Path of Audio from FM Studio to Receiver: NIOS, 2020.

The receiving end is a listener, even though most listeners these days are not active listeners of Radio, each radio station has a bunch of loyal active listeners who give feedback to the radio station based on their close observation of the programs they follow; because their loyalty and participation make them valuable assets to radio programming people, who often craft content to get the listener's liking (Sen, 2014).

Radio, being a passive medium, is thoughtfully programmed and presented by the programme producers (Heinderyckx, 2013). It is an involuntary habit of passive listeners to tune in to the radio while getting into some routine work, like cooking, exercising, gardening, driving, cleaning, etc. For example, in India, Evening prime time listeners are considered to be the passive car-listeners stuck in traffic, but they are valuable for advertisers (Chacko, 2024). While Active listeners are engaged in the activities of radio stations, this type of listener tunes in regularly, is well aware of the station's show schedules and RJs, and participates regularly by

calling, messaging or interacting at meet and greets organized for on-ground activities and contests (Douglas, 2013). Therefore, every type of listener is important in one way or the other.

**Table 1.1:**

*Differentiation Between Active Listener and Passive Listener.*

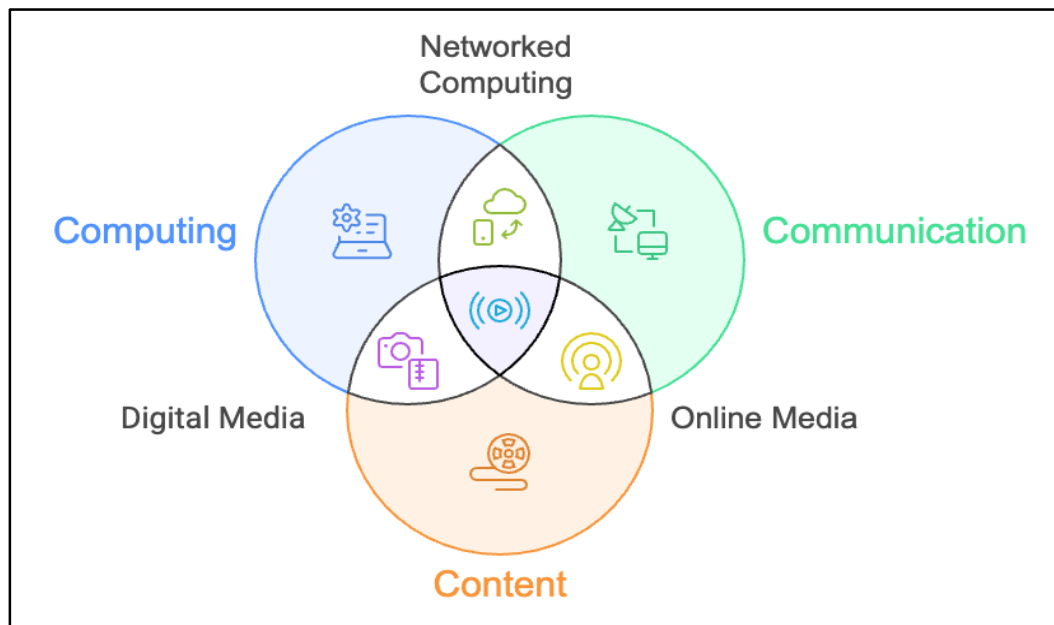
<b>Active Listener</b>	<b>Passive Listener</b>
Highly engaged in interactions with Radio stations on-air and on-ground.	Minimal or no engagement with radio station.
Tunes in regularly.	May or may-not be a regular listener.
Actively participate by calling, messaging, joining contests and attending activities.	Does not participate in contests or station activities.
Provides feedback to radio stations.	Does not provide any feedback.
Highly valued by the programming division of radio.	Valued by the revenue division of radio.
Listener by choice, for liking of a radio content or RJ.	Listener by habit
Contribute to better programming for radio stations	Contribute to attracting more advertisers for radio station

*Source:* Author's own, April 2025.

The business landscape is competitive and full of hurdles, and organisations face challenges to sustain (Maamari and Majdalani, 2017). Similarly, media houses are no exception. In addition, Radio, due to its 60-minute clock format, has many limitations, unlike other media competitors, who have the scope to increase their room for advertising space (Lombardi, 2012).

## 1.2 Research Problem

FM Radio stations are rapidly evolving beyond traditional FM inventory, integrating digital content to attract advertisers and expand their reach (Rayburn, 2012). Recognising the shift in audience preferences and the dominance of digital platforms, FM radio networks are leveraging online streaming, social media presence and digital-first strategies to offer advertisers a more dynamic and engaging ecosystem (Laor, 2022). This phenomenon is identified as Media convergence. Media Convergence simply refers to the merging of various types of mass media, such as Traditional mainstream media, Print media, Electronic media, Mobile Internet-based and highly interactive technologies through digital media platforms (Leverage Edu, 2023).

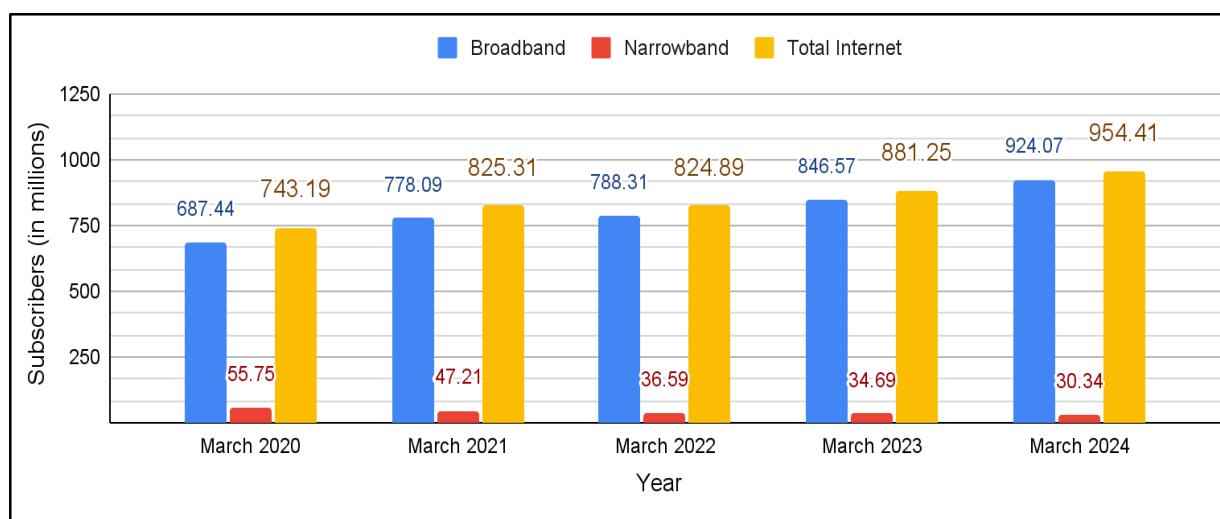


*Figure 1.5: Synergy of Media Convergence- 3 Cs: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025.*

Media convergence is the interconnection of information and communication technologies, Computer networks and Media content. It brings together the 3 C's - Computing,

Communication and Content, and is a direct consequence of the digitization of media content and popularization of the Internet (Flew, 2025). Media convergence transforms established industries, services, and work practices and enables entirely new forms of content to emerge. This can happen due to immense digitalization and the widespread use of the internet, as shown in [Figure 1.8](#)~~Figure 1.8~~. The Cycle of Media Convergence.

Competition from Digital platforms, internet-based web radio, and online streaming service apps has intensified, raising the demand for employees with multitasking skill sets possessing qualities fulfilling the need to be relevant with growing media convergence and with market mergers (Hendy, 2013). The audio world is exploding with possibilities: streaming audio, downloadable audio, preference-based tracking music players like Pandora, on-demand choice-based services like Spotify, applications that enable subscribers to create music via playlists, online rooms and forums that allow groups of listeners to message and interact with each other while listening and podcasting (Rayburn, 2012). [Figure 1.6](#)~~Figure 1.6~~ shows the growing demand for internet services.



*Figure 1.6: Rising Demand for Internet Services- TRAI Annual Report 2023-24.*

Lasar (2016) points out that the invention of broadcasting, radio, has stopped being simple now, only after a century. It has become a profusion of gadgets, formats, platforms and services, so many in numbers and in so many mediums that the FM Radio service providers are constantly trying to fit in the new-normal of new-media and new-audience.

### **1.3 Research Gap**

Radio in India is generally viewed as a single collective space. Commoners often cannot tell the difference between public radio (AIR), private FM stations and community radio services (Lakhendra, 2024), and it is usually not considered a business. The Researcher has attempted to study the gap that is unexplored by scholars, that is, the media convergence between the FM Radio Industry, digital platforms, and new media. Driven by digitalisation and deregulation, this convergence enables and stirs a confluence between platforms that used to be treated as different bodies in policy issues and which did not often compete directly (Halder, 2021). Traditional media companies in the information markets are not making profits as they used to do until the last decade, and their business models are no longer as valid as before (Faustino and Noam, 2019). However, the competition with digital and web-based companies and online streaming service providers is increasing, thereby changing the competitive landscape for traditional media like FM Radio. The clear lines and historical borders that once distinguished the field of cable, telecommunications, and broadcasting are blurring. A natural convergence of industries and ITs is fading those distinctions.

Thus, Today's media managers face new industry players and a greater variety of challenges compared with years past (Gershon, 2009). Even if the differentiating aspects of media industries could be found on a functional level compared to other industries, at the

business management level, there are similarities like competition, sales concerns, advertising revenue, and profits. And media management needs a combination of competencies, some general, some based on media characteristics, and some specific to particular media industries, requiring individual and unique talents (Baney, 2019). Consequently, highlighting a need for a unique set of creative employees, leaders and equally flexible Management to adjust according to the digitising FM Industry. The existing studies on the FM Radio Industry do not mention the challenges occurring because of and during the adaptation to digitalization, due to the natural convergence happening within media industries, precisely the convergence of digital media, new media, and FM radio every day.

#### **1.4 Purpose of Research**

In India, people relate to FM Radio as a feeling rather than a medium of broadcasting (Thomas and Shoemith, 1999). Every radio listener has a favourite programme that they feel close to, that they do not want to miss. It is an integral part of everyday life because of the cultural, political, and social goals it complies with. Media differ from other commodities and services due to differences in the functionality of supply and demand. Media products are the outcome of creative, educative, informative and entertaining work (Picard, 2011). Even if the industry alone is showing a slight gradual increase in its revenue compared to its previous years since 2022, as shown in

*Figure 1.7* ~~Figure 1.7~~. It doesn't seem enough in the media spread, as it is a competitor to other media industries, as well as its digital counterparts. It is barely a surviving condition for Radio operators. According to GroupM's Tyny report 2025, a growth of 7% in India's Advertising market is estimated, which highlights emerging trends like the dominance of digital

media, the use of AI-led marketing, and shifts in consumer behaviour, expecting the market to reach ₹1,641,37 crore, and digital media accounts for over 60% of total ad spend. Similarly, in *Figure 1.1* ~~Figure 1.1~~. A slow, slight surge can be observed in Radio Advertising revenue after the second dip in the pandemic in 2020. In a way, one could argue that the Digitisation of radio is now a necessity, and Digital radio is bound to replace traditional Radio (Madison, 2025).

As of the FM Radio industry, along with its digital ads, we can see a pattern of increase in ad revenue in the December quarters of every year, as shown in

*Figure 1.7* ~~Figure 1.7~~. The revenue shows a growth around festival period, within the same pool of advertisers, FM Radio operators are competing with each other using different strategies, Even though there is no proof that it is a healthy growth, NFCT (Non-Free Commercial Time) revenue has significantly grown from 5% to about 30% in the last 4 years with the help of On-ground events (Chacko, 2024). On the other hand, similar to AIR's national channel, the TV Today Network has come to up with a decision to discontinue its radio business, this includes closing down of its Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata stations of Ishq 104.8 FM, the reason being the current market conditions, after the radio business reported losses in FY24 (ET

Online, 2025).

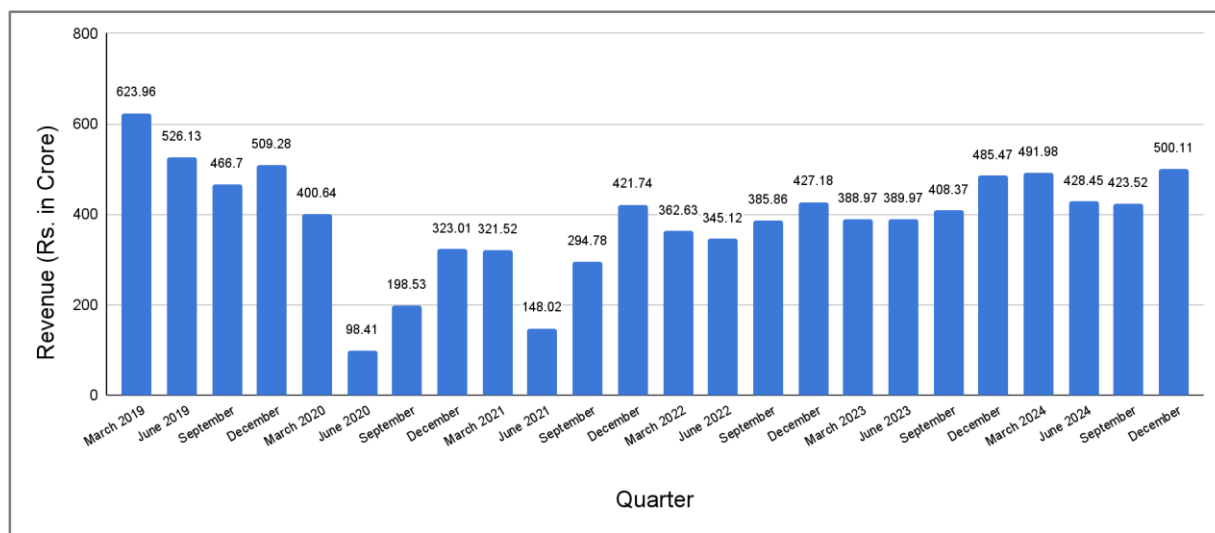


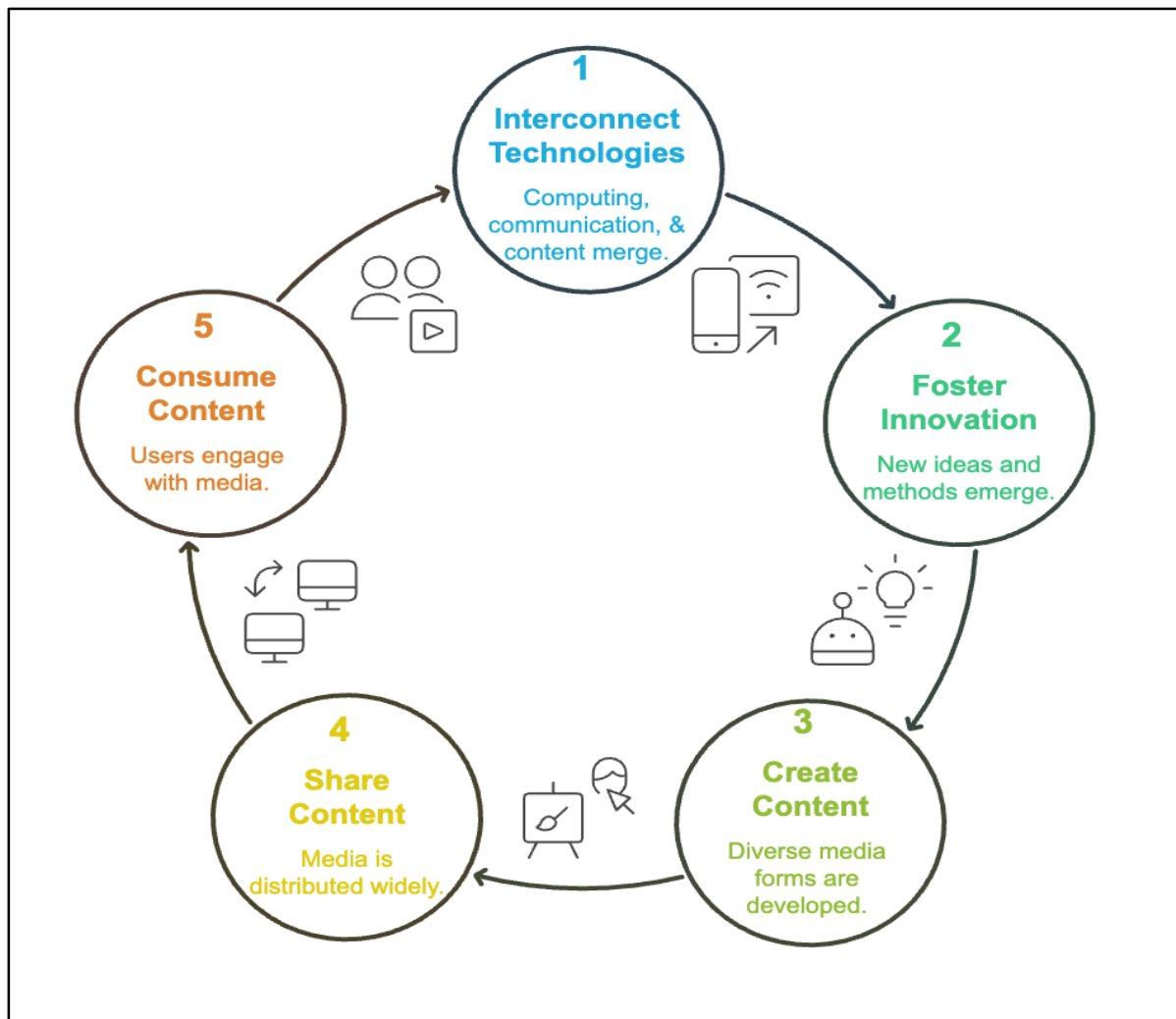
Figure 1.7: Quarterly Advertising Revenue of FM Radio Industry: TRAI, 2025.

One of the leading company's senior executives, while speaking with *Livemint* under the condition of anonymity, says, "In many smaller cities, it's already difficult to generate revenue. The operational costs are high, and finding advertisers is a challenge. There's simply no money left in the system. We're expected to bid for new frequencies and expand into cities where there's little to no advertising revenue. We're cutting staff and expenses just to survive. We've already had to cut staff by 20%. The extended batch of the 3rd phase of FM is laid out to generate employment, while we are finding it difficult to keep existing employment. If these unresolved issues aren't addressed, it's hard to see how the industry can grow or even sustain itself." (Communications Today, 2024). The unresolved issues being mentioned here is the increasing operational costs like the Non-Refundable One-time Entry Fee (NOTEF) that is a Spectrum charge, annual Licence fee - Grant of permission agreement (GOPA) at 4% of gross revenue, Goods and Services Tax (GST), and the requirement for better content flexibility and technological integration, including 'Radio on Mobile' mandate. Including higher royalties to the

music industry, specifically through 'Per Needle Hour' fees. Besides, broadcasters need to pay rent to use their land and tower infrastructure (LTI) to Prasar Bharati, as well as BECIL for the common transmission infrastructure (CTI) setup. All this is other than basic business running expenses such as employee salaries, inventories, operating expenses, etc. Another Industry member - Nisha Narayanan, COO of Red FM has pointed out the bad effects of high-frequency licence costs, 18% GST for radio whereas only 5% to print is creating hardships for the Radio business, limiting FM Radio's ability to attract advertisers in profitable rates, especially in local markets (Nagar, 2024). Nonetheless, a discussion to resolve only two issues took place between the Group of Ministers (GoM) and Association of Radio Operators for India (AROI) in 2011 about the ALF and 'radio on mobile' mandate, which did not solve the financial cringe issue really, as a result several private FM Broadcasters in India are reluctant to expand in the third phase's batch III, as doing so will only worsen their financial strain, citing unresolved financial and regulatory challenges that make the business model unsustainable.

Exploring operations models and revenue streams of the FM radio industry is essential to understanding their sustainability and profitability. On the operational front in the Programming department, initially, the radio industry offered insights on the dramatic radio program-clock changes that occurred in the operating log. These changes witnessed a shift from a one-for-all model to a more pluralistic approach, in which numerous stations need demographic information located with culturally resonant programming. The evolution of the program-clock has seen various revenue flows develop, including sponsored shows, content with brand names such as liners, sparklers, tags, various updates and on-ground live event promotions mentioned as FCT elements in the introduction part.

This research has attempted to find out the operational and management challenges that FM Radio employees have to deal with to cope with these rapid developments due to media and market convergence.



*Figure 1.8: The Media Convergence Cycle: Leverage Edu, 2023.*

It is important to understand how the FM radio industry has adapted to new media trends of the digital age. A thorough understanding of the adaptation to digitalization will enable Radio operators to perform the necessary measures to bridge the training and comprehension

requirements that might have been missed previously. This understanding can help determine whether the decline can be reversed and advertising revenue can be increased, and if yes, then how?

### **1.5 Significance of The Study**

Marshall McLuhan famously described radio as a ‘hot’ medium and others like television as ‘Cool’ in the 1960s, and saw the future belonging to ‘cool’ media like TV. He believed that radio’s time would pass; it would gradually be displaced by the ‘cool’ media of the electronic revolution, which do not privilege any voice or point of view (McLuhan, 1994). Historically, it has played a pivotal role in shaping public discourse and providing accessible audio content in a country of rich culture and a variety of languages (Acharya, 2015). After the unfolding of Internet-based new media and the extensive reach of mobile phones, new challenges emerged. The rapid developments in telecom, IT, consumer electronics and media industries worldwide have led the government to reconsider its NTP 1994, within 5 years of its declaration. According to the Telecom department of the Government of India ‘Convergence of both markets and technologies is a reality that is forcing realignment of the industry’ (Department of Telecommunications, 2025). With the advent of information technology and digitalisation, the sources of traditional and folk media and languages have merged and taken an evolved, demand-based avatar that is interactive with its audiences, and stands true to the Bullet theory of communication (Halder, 2021). However, in research focusing on India’s multilingualism, *Lachman* points out that various technological devices designed to facilitate the mode and range of communication transcending historical traditions do not always lead to better understanding among humans. The relationship of language and culture is woven together uniquely in varied

traditions (Khubchandani, 2004). This is also a reason why Community Radio is still flourishing in India, as it has specific local needs and aspirations (Kumar, 2019). National Radio channels like AIR have already shut down due to a decrease in listener base (Kumar, 2019). The Decrease in Public Radio listeners and Ad revenue is also an alarm for Private FM Radio stations, as they are shifting their focus to revenue race for survival from unique program production, They are also competing with other mainstream media as well as the digital giant for audience's attention which is now facing fragmentation (Ajisafe and Dada, 2023).

Organisational development in Business involves identifying current or potential operational gaps within a business and developing strategies to resolve those gaps. Business Administration research, including Talent Hiring, Operations management and Revenue channels generation, are essential contributor to business growth.

## **1.6 Research Purpose and Questions**

From an external business perspective, the FM Radio industry is frequently seen as marginal, both due to its relatively limited market size and its traditionally ascribed moral responsibility within society (Lakhendra, 2024). Similarly, in a study of those who are aware of the Radio industry, private FM stations are often seen as commercial enterprises; they also engage in significant social awareness initiatives, showcasing the simultaneous tension between their societal and business roles (Venkatalakshmi and Chandraleka, 2013). With the increasing digital presence of FM Radio and the introduction of digital radio, FM radio is expected to grow further, particularly through advertising revenue and innovative programming, even as it continues to face challenges in attracting advertisers compared to the media channels (AAFT, 2024).

The researcher, during her ground work as an employee in the FM radio industry, observed that radio stations have already been using new media, which includes social media platforms, for increasing their reach and business, but all this with a very limited staff; only a few radio stations have fully dedicated teams for handling their digital presence. Hence, looking at the current situation, where Radio media is converging with other mediums, ideally the FM radio operators should be redesigning their job roles and hiring more people, but the shutting down of radio stations such as Ishq FM (ET Online, 2025), laying off of 20% of staff by a leading Radio station (Communications today, 2024), and the issue of decreased ad revenue (Nagar, 2024). All of this pointed towards some underlying challenges.

Nonetheless, the advertisers seek to reach a larger audience, which the Radio medium has the potential to achieve (Kumar, 2004). But the audio-only audience is now fragmented to various other digital platforms and finds no specific need to tune into FM, which summoned a Focus on FM radio programming at first, which can attract listeners (Faustino and Noam, 2019). Even though the Radio stations are now trying to spread their digital wings, hence precisely, the following research questions, derived from the research problem, are specifically designed to explore. They were addressed by the researcher during this study:

- What are the recruitment criteria adopted by the FM radio industry for programming roles, to meet the demands of media convergence?
- What innovative training and skill development practices are arranged for creative programming teams in the FM Radio industry to stay relevant in the era of online streaming?

- What is the management's approach and operational strategy to help FM Radio stations remain competitive and commercially sustainable amid the digital upheaval?

### **1.7 Limitations of The Study.**

The Study is focused on current changes in the FM radio industry with regard to digital practices and how new media has transformed the audio-media world into an audio-visual media world. It also examined novel human resource practices for dealing with these changes, which have occurred only in the past few years. The media world is already witnessing a bigger shift toward Artificial Intelligence (AI) for content creation and easier editing tools, which will surely create a demand for acquiring new skills in the Radio Industry (Furtáková and Janáčková, 2023). Radio stations such as Radio City have launched their first AI RJ, and Early 2023 came in with a breakthrough with the launch of the first AI-powered local radio- RadioGPT (Igarová et al., 2023), which is not a part of this study, but an unavoidable aspect of the media industry.

### **1.8 Definition of Key Terms**

**Active Listener:** An active listener is someone who hears what someone is saying, aligns to their thoughts and feelings turning a conversation into an active, two-way interaction (Gallo, 2024).

An active listener of FM radio is someone from the audience end who is particularly interested and engaged with a specific radio station or show, or RJ (Padmakumar, 2015).

**Broadcast:** Broadcasting is the act of sending out programmes on the television or radio for an unknown number of people to view or listen to.

**Burnout:** It is a state in which one is extremely tired and exhausted, either physically, mentally or emotionally, because of too much work. A situation or state of mental and emotional fatigue experienced by creative professionals, due to monotonous tasks and a lack of innovation and novelty (Bevins, 2018).

**Communication:** The process of conveying information or sharing ideas between two or more people. It is the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. The Communication process is simply reduced to a three-step process, in which a message sender transmits their thoughts in words which travel via a medium, and these words are perceived by a message receiver (Bretz, 1971).

**Convergence:** The process in which differently originated things or people move together from different directions and merge at a point; this point is recognized as Convergence. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, convergence in media is, a phenomenon involving the interconnection of information and communication technologies, computer networks, and media content (Flew, 2025).

**Digitalization:** It is the exercise of turning something into its digital form, which is characterized by electronic and particularly computerized technology (Webster, 2025). In the IT and business realm, Digitalization, is the use of digital technologies to convert a business model and furnish contemporary revenue and value-producing opportunities; it is the process of moving to a digital business (Gartner, 2025).

**Fragmentation:** It is the action of falling into pieces, or breaking into many parts from one single body. In the context of business, it is defined as a phenomenon in which an industry has many bodies or companies that are of similar gravity (Cambridge, 2025).

**Industry:** Refers to a group of companies or businesses that produce or provide a particular kind of goods or services (Oxford, 2025a). It is a group of productive enterprises or organizations that produce or supply goods, services, or sources of income.

**Media:** Refers to the primary ways that the masses receive information and entertainment. Commoners identify media as a channel of receiving information, such as newspapers, books, television, radio and the internet. In an interdisciplinary way, it is defined as a readable device with the ability to create meaningful patterns and propagate information (Herzig and Aßmann, 2014).

**Passive Listener:** A passive listener is someone who listens without responding, where one is not necessarily a part of a conversation; a passive listener absorbs and then processes the information being received without interrupting or questioning or engaging with the speaker (Sky, 2025). A passive listener of FM radio is not exactly the opposite to its active listener, their engagement with the radio stations is minimal, they simply have the radio on in the background without actively following or understanding the content, they do not take an effort to provide feedback or participate in contests but still, they can be a regular listener in certain time band (Padmakumar, 2015).

**Programme:** It is a planned and produced piece of information or entertainment that people watch on television or listen to on the radio (Oxford, 2025b). In the context of FM Radio, a programme can be identified as a radio show.

**Talent:** It is an alternative way to address an employee who is Skilled, capable of walking a new path, possesses knowledge and understanding, and is able to give high-level performance. In the business context, a talent would be an employee who carries the potential to drive organisational growth (Workforce, 2023). Talent refers to an individual employee having unique skills, abilities and potential to contribute to the success of an organization (Qandle, 2025). In the context of industries where creative work is required, such as presenting, writing, painting, singing, dancing, and other content driven field, ‘talent’ refers to individual who possess unique creative abilities, innovative thinking capabilities, specialized skills that contribute directly to the production of content (Chinweizu Oham and Onyinye Gift Ejike, 2024).

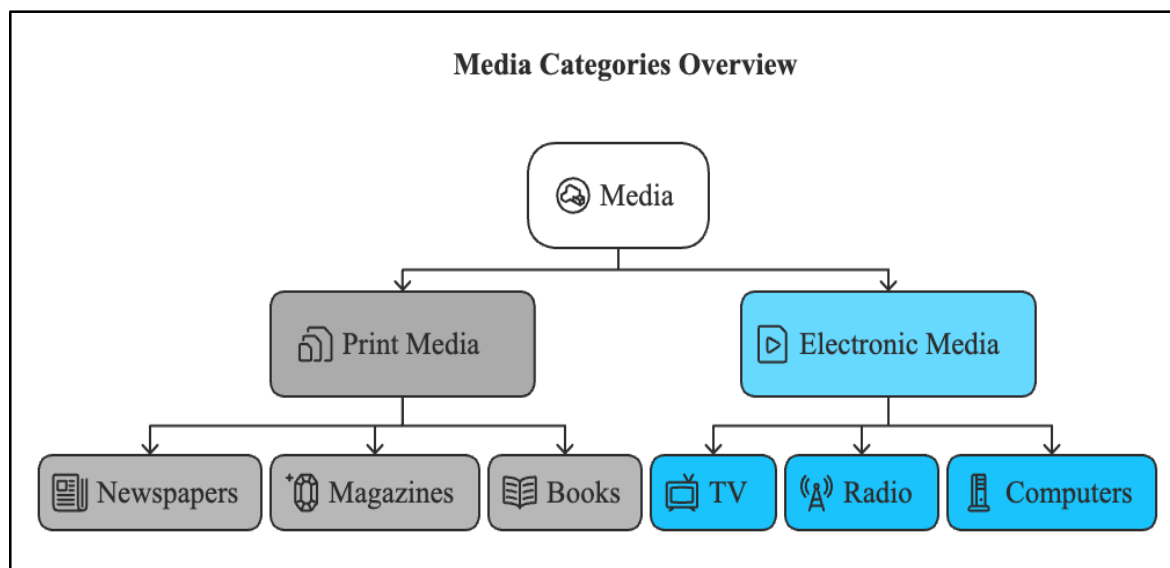
## 1.2. CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

A thorough literature review is a vital part of any research attempt. It gives a critical analysis of existing theories, conceptual frameworks, and empirical findings appropriate to the study's focus. This chapter reviews the literature related to the FM Radio Industry in India, with a particular focus on organizational dynamics as a creative industry, talent management practices and innovative execution within station operations. This chapter examines how changing media factors, such as convergence, leadership styles, and shifting management powers, interact with internal and important elements, such as attracting advertisers, revenue generation, recruitment of profitable talents, recognition and reward systems, creative freedom for innovation, management support and implementation. The study is anchored to the internal challenges of training, skill development, and talent management, the crucial factors for maintaining engagement in a content-driven media ecosystem.

This chapter also investigates through theories how the organizational and managerial components make a difference in both individual and institutional outcomes in the FM radio industry. It highlights existing gaps in the literature, particularly regarding the connections between leadership practices as individual companies and as an industry as a whole for sustainable business performance in the Indian FM Radio business. Utilizing established theories, models, other industry case studies and empirical research, this literature review lays out a conceptual foundation for the study. In conclusion, it directs the empirical inquiry and advances knowledge of how the FM Radio industry in India might improve its performance and reverse its degrowth, to support the broader goal of commercial sustainability in the converging media landscape.

## 2.1 Conceptual Review of Literature.

The concept of media refers to the various channels people use to store, communicate and share information, entertainment, ideas and education. It can be via images, videos, text and audio medium (Haim, 2025). The mainstream media can be broadly categorised into two main types: Traditional Media and New Media (Kohli, 2020). FM Radio is one of the traditional media been here for a long time since its inception, and this medium has witnessed major technological transformations. Now is the time when it is once again going through a change known as Media Convergence (Chowdhury, 2019).



*Figure 2.1: Primary Categorization of Media: Author's Own May 2025.*

**Figure 2.1** presents a structural overview of the two primary media categories for the dissemination of news, education, and entertainment: Print Media and Electronic Media (Haim, 2025). Print Media includes traditional printed forms of content such as Newspapers, Magazines and Books, which are generally used in physical form. On the other hand, Electronic

Media consists of platforms that depend on electronic technology to deliver their content. This category includes Television (TV), Radio, and Computers such as desktops, laptops, tablets, palm tops, etc, which transmit information in the medium of audio, visual, graphics, and/or digital means. All of these sub-categories are different media industries in themselves.

The modest FM radio may not be out of fashion yet. However, there is the persistent threat of modern-day music streaming players ramping up their offerings beyond music by incorporating talk shows and podcasts (Chowdhury, 2019). Talent management is instrumental for the success of most media organizations, the ability to attract listenership could benefit from better Talent management in the Radio Industry (Tetteh, 2008). Managers and HR of FM Radio are needed to achieve common goals while dealing with vastly differing segments of the station population. The results of HRM practice and job satisfaction are strong predictors of turnover in media houses (Mudor, 2011). However, social media can extend the possibilities of audience participation in Radio Broadcasting, thus enriching the listener's experience (Baney, 2019).

In India, private radio stations are licensed solely to broadcast in the Frequency Modulation band. There are 388 operational private FM channels over 113 cities, and this number is likely to go up further soon by 730 stations in 234 new cities and towns (Nigam, 2024). The government has approved amendments to the FM Radio policy, removing the three-year restructuring window, lifting the 15% cap on channel ownership, and easing financial norms for bidding in smaller cities. These changes aim to boost the private FM industry, expand services to Tier-III cities, and create jobs (Bhawan, 2024). However, before setting out on this remarkable milestone, there are a few issues that the FM radio industry faces, such as fragmenting listeners and decreasing ad revenue (Nagar, 2024). FM radio operators are stepping

into digitalisation of radio to chase the digital listeners on the on-demand platforms, attract more advertisers and seek new business opportunities (Cordeiro, 2012).

Media Convergence: According to Borders (2006), Convergence does not function in a vacuum of the print, broadcast or online newsroom, marketing and promotion; rather, convergence to the audience and advertisers is a must. In the last two decades, there has been considerable discussion about the transformation of the media industry and its relation with telecommunications, bringing these industries together and making them more convergent, particularly concerning content creation, management and distribution (Faustino and Noam, 2019). This recognizes a junction between platforms that used to be treated as separate entities in policy issues, and which did not often compete directly (Sen, 2014).

Media companies in many markets are not as profitable as they were a decade or two ago, and traditional business models are no longer as valid as they used to be in the twentieth century, As the competition with digital and web based companies and online streaming platforms is increasing, has changed the competitive situation for traditional media industries such as the FM Radio Industry (Faustino and Noam, 2019). The clear lines and traditional boundaries that once separated the fields of broadcasting, cables and telephony are blurring out of a natural convergence of industries and IT (Gershon, 2009).

Sheridan and Abelson's cusp catastrophe model explains how changing variables such as job stress and group cohesion can turn out to be influential for withdrawal behaviour, reduction in employee commitment or liking towards the organization, which may result in turnover (Sheridan and Abelson, 1983). A 2004 study conducted in Ohio, indicates that the single operating environment of the FM radio requires an approach nuanced to the management of

talents, one that gives priority to interpersonal relationships, creativity and personal fulfilment (Legg, 2004). Employees in the FM radio sector often seek roles that allow them to express their creativity and connect with the public in significant ways.

Researchers, business leaders, and human resource managers are still attempting to find out what causes turnover or why employees quit their positions, which significantly impacts an organization's ability to compete or even survive (Joo, Hahn and Peterson, 2015). But it is also shown that leadership is recognised as a social interaction process in which leaders have a major impact on the behaviours of their followers and, in turn, their performance and their willingness for productive work (McCleskey, 2014).

Human Resource Development (HRD) can play a pivotal role in influencing, attracting, motivating and retaining talents, thus giving on to enduring competitiveness in the long run (Joo, Hahn and Peterson, 2015). Effective Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a decisive role in retaining skilled talent within organizations (Sorn et al., 2023). The manager who also plays the role of a team leader inspires, sets directions, and persuades a group of people to achieve collective objectives (Aliyu, 2019).

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework.**

FM Radio, being a medium of Public broadcasting, touches multiple parts of society. Being a free medium that continues to pay all the taxes that its non-free competitors pay, it is also an industry with great potential. Thus, multiple theories apply to this media, if implemented correctly, are capable of reversing damage that the FM Radio industry is facing in terms of Talent Management as well as Advertising Revenue. A theoretical framework provides a view to understand, interpret and explain the correlation between similar concepts that were tried and

tested for success. This theoretical framework may help FM Radio industry organizations recognize when specific strategies should be implemented to improve performance and adaptability, with the following relevant theories in this study:

- Resource-Based View Theory.
- Institutional Theory.
- Classic Management Functions Theory.
- Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation.
- Lifelong Learning Theory of Training.
- Media Convergence Theory.
- New Media Theory.
- Contingency Theory.

### **2.2.1 Resource-Based View (RBV) of The Firm Theory.**

The RBV theory applies greatly to hiring and retention policies regarding talent; RBV propounds that a company's source of competitive advantage originates from its ability to access and control valued, distinctive, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Wernerfelt, 1984). Tarique and Schuler (2010) highlight that organizations that effectively manage their exclusive resources can optimize their operations, thus growing overall efficiency. In the FM radio industry in Indian, this translated into a focus on human capital, technological infrastructure and innovative programming as critical resources that can produce significant involvement of the public and commercial success. For example, exclusive content creation and attractive marketing are fundamental for building a faithful listener base, which is critical in a market characterized by an abundance of options (Tarique and Schuler, 2010).

As per the study published in the strategic Management Journal in the late 1900s, the idea of looking at firms as a broader set of resources goes back to mid 1900, that has received relatively little formal attention; the reason no doubt is the unpleasant properties of some key examples of resources such as Technology skills which come up as special cases when looked in the same frame with financial resources in the firm (Wernerfelt, 1984).

An RBV study published in a journal of Information Systems Theory points out the issue of resource relation in an organization, the internal interaction of employees, from various backgrounds, like with non-IT resources interacting with an IT resource, is called resource impressionability (Taher, 2012). In the case of the FM Radio industry that unites different professionals, like IT, Sales, and Creative, this issue can be observed distinctly, and RBV can be applied. A principal force determining branding and listener retention are the creative minds of radio professionals' on-air talent (Wernerfelt, 1984).

Within the context of the FM radio business, talent- the people like a host (Radio Jockey), a promo producer, copy writer, voice artiste or show producer can be considered as a critical resource, here non-substitutability of resources implies, where one resource simply cannot be replaced or substituted by another one (Lockett, Thompson and Morgenstern 2009). In India, local cultures and regional languages are important in the radio business, thus, radio stations that can effectively capitalise on local talent in terms of programming team, marketing team, or even sales executives can improve not only their operational effectiveness but also market positioning (Jamilah, Utami and Kurniadi, 2020).

RBV suggest that by identifying and narration these unique talents and resources, FM stations can differentiate themselves and promote deeper connections within their audience

(Padmakumar, 2015). The concept would highlight attracting and retaining such valuable employees through personalized opportunities for growth or unique organizational cultures (Lockett, Thompson and Morgenstern 2009).

The Researcher has examined the possibility of crisis management with the practice of RBV, where even if talents could not replace each other, can effective HRM be implemented to bring together two or more similar talents for the time being to cover for another talent (Lockett, Thompson and Morgenstern 2009). Also, how FM stations capitalize on the competitive advantage of being creative in talent acquisition and retention to keep up with the competition in the mainstream media (Wernerfelt, 1984).

### **2.2.2 Institutional Theory.**

The Institutional theory explains some regulatory changes, such as government policies given by the MIB and TRAI, shaping the structure, growth and operational challenges of FM Radio in India (Biswas and Bathla, 2022). Institutional theory gives a structure for understanding how organisations follow the norms, rules, and expectations of their external surrounding environment to achieve legality and secure survival (Adithi, 2018).

The FM Radio industry in India has gone through a visible transformation. In the beginning, radio broadcasting was monopolised by AIR, which shaped the institutional sense of radio as a free-to-use medium for social unification, education, information dissemination and public awareness (University, 2023). In 1990, the government opened the FM sector to private broadcasters' participation, making a shift towards commercialisation and entertainment-driven content (MIB FM Cell, 2024). This arrangement shows a change in institutional logics, shifting

from state-driven, public service broadcasting to a market-oriented, sales-driven competitive environment that the FM Radio industry is today.

The Institutional theory states that organisations within a field are prone to becoming isomorphic, exhibiting similar structures and practices due to coercive, mimetic, and normative pressure (Adithi, 2018). In the FM radio industry, coercive pressures develop from government regulations, such as licensing requirements, content limitations, restrictions, and policies mandating the use of the AIR infrastructure for new entrants (PIB Delhi, 2008). Mimetic pressures are prominent while private FM stations reproduce successful formats like popular genres of music and tried and tested programming elements, such as sparklers or mnemonics, to attract listeners and advertisers, resulting in the merger of content (Varsha, 2020). Normative pressures surface from the professional standards and industry expectations, further reinforcing similar operational models across stations (Adithi, 2018).

The role of quality is sound, and the management of time is even more manifested by the prominence of training and development in the context of operations management, such as log management, music inventory maintenance, on-ground activities, and annual programme calendar making (Jadhav, Deshpande and Lavy, 2025). In the Indian FM radio context, the dominance of entertainment content and the marginalization of educational or informational programming reflect the limitations imposed by induced institutional logics and regulatory limitations (Varsha, 2020).

### **2.2.3 Classic Management Functions.**

Classic management functions, such as planning, organising, actuating, and controlling (POAC), are significant in the context of operational management within the FM Radio industry.

These functions provide a scaffolding approach to supervise resources, thus smoothing the operations of an FM station (Narindro et al., 2020). Keung (2016) proposes that strategic management in the media landscape essentially requires the adaptation of these functions to the evolutionary progress of the FM radio industry, in particular as determined by technological progress and changes in audience consumption models. The planning phase outlines the crucial process of setting objectives and extends to the prediction of trends, an increasingly relevant activity in an era greatly influenced by disruptive technologies. Effective planning in FM radio stations should take into consideration the rapid development of digital platforms, convert to on-demand and integrate multichannel distribution strategies (Keung, 2016).

Nieborg and Poell (2018) investigated how the media platform impacts cultural production, which proposes that the FM radio industry can benefit from compliant business models that take advantage of online platforms for brand diversification and the participation of the audience. The notion of platform is critical within the radio domain, where traditional transmission must deal with the plasticity and scope of the web platform. Adaptability in commercial strategies allows the FM radio business to explore new sources of marketing, revenue and strategies, aligning with modern consumption habits (Nieborg and Poell, 2018). This adaptability pledges that the FM radio industry can maintain relevance and attract various demographic data of listeners, a vital factor is the increasingly competitive audio panorama.

Goyanes, Rodriguez and Campos (2020) argue that the alignment of Business models with the values of evolving consumers leads to greater innovation and sustainability, which can be particularly advantageous for the FM radio industry that faces the challenge of digital media. By understanding consumer preferences and values, FM stations can modify their operational

plan of action and content offers to better serve the needs of their listeners. They stress that through the innovative application of commercial models in the radio network, the FM radio industry can not only survive but also flourish amid the disturbance caused by the consumption of digital media (Goyanes, Roadriguez and Campos, 2020). This approach to sustainability and innovation underlines the importance of aligning operational capacities with the evolution of the business model against transmitted changes within the media ecosystem.

#### **2.2.4 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation.**

Herzberg's two-factor theory of 1959 identifies two sets of factors that influence employee satisfaction and motivation, and it is based on a two-dimensional paradigm of factors influencing employees' attitudes towards work (Alshmemri, Maude and Akl, 2017).

Motivational factors or intrinsic factors such as advancement, recognition, rewards, possibility of career growth, achievement, and relevant work; Hygiene factors or extrinsic factors such as interpersonal relationships, salary, job security, working conditions, policies and administration, supervision and fulfilment of basic needs at the workplace (Bevins, 2018).

The innovative nature of the industry necessitates intrinsic motivators such as job enrichment, role to experiment, achievements for a sense of satisfaction and recognition for retaining people at the workplace. Simultaneously, the hygiene factors of competitive compensation and job stability become a must to prevent turning away from the volatile business (Alshmemri, Maude and Akl, 2017).

**Table 2.1:***Observations of Two-Factor Theory*

	<b>Motivational Factors</b>	<b>Hygiene Factors</b>
<b>Absent</b>	The outcome is satisfaction	The outcome is dissatisfaction
<b>Present</b>	The outcome is satisfaction	The outcome is no dissatisfaction
<b>Herzberg described</b>	Intrinsic to the job	Extrinsic to the job
<b>Important to job satisfaction</b>	Strong	Poor

*Source:* Life Sciences Journal (Alshmemri, Maude and Akl, 2017, p.13).

The above [Table 2.1:Table 2.1:](#) presents Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which explains employee motivation based on two separate categories of factors: Motivational and Hygiene. Motivational factors are intrinsic to the job, such as achievements, rewards and recognitions; when these are present in the company, they result in satisfaction. However, their absence leads to a neutral state, and not dissatisfaction. Herzberg thought about it as crucial for enhancing job satisfaction and described their effect as strong. In contrast, Hygiene factors are extrinsic to the job, such as company policies, working conditions and salary. Employees experience dissatisfaction when these are absent. But when they are present, they only avert dissatisfaction and do not result in satisfaction. The influence of extrinsic factors is considered limited in terms of motivating employees, although they are essential in preventing discontent. Herzberg's Two-

Factor Theory model helps explain how both types of factors must be managed to achieve both employee satisfaction and workplace stability.

The FM Radio industry thrives on creative content and innovation, proving an intrinsically important factor. By enriching jobs such as allowing radio jockeys and production teams the freedom to experiment with CLB, unique content handling, and audience recall, FM radio stations can increase job satisfaction and retention (Bevins, 2018). A study conducted by Kwarteng Owusu and Gregar (2021) indicates that training satisfaction, benefits and incentives have a positive impact on an employee's turnover intentions.

In this thesis, the researcher examined whether the motivation-hygiene theory can help in analysing HRM strategies that balance hygiene and motivation factors in addressing unique industry-specific challenges, such as limited revenue, creative burnout, and the constant upgrading among employees in FM radio (Alshmemri, Maude and Akl, 2017).

This research has also explored that most FM radio employees working on the creative front have entered the industry because they find job satisfaction here. Herzberg's two-factor theory is one of the most significant theories related to job satisfaction (Miner, 2015). Importantly, this theory enables dealing with talents on an individual level.

### **2.2.5 Lifelong Learning Theory of Training.**

Lifelong learning theory is an important aspect of working life of employees as well it is important for employers for organisational development, investing in improving working skills through formal and non-formal training helps in enhancing creativity, flexibility productivity of talents, while for businesses investing in these skills helps them to face the challenges of competition in their field (Beqiri and Mazreku, 2020).

The FM Radio industry is one of those industries where On-the-job training, Vocational training, Continuous professional development (CPM) and upgrading own skill set are considered the fundamentals of a good talent (London, 2011). Creative professionals in the FM radio industry need to upskill, especially on the verge of new digital trends and the evolution of digital apps and software.

These concepts are procured through the lifelong learning theory of training, which highlights that learning the latest skills and updating existing skills and knowledge is a lifelong process that expands even in after-school life (Beqiri and Mazreku, 2020).

In this thesis, the researcher has examined the factors that FM radio industry personnel pursue or demand from their employer for specialized training activities or programmes to upskill themselves to survive in the dynamic media market as a part of their professional requirement. Good professionals are those who keep up with the latest in their market to keep evolving, even after securing a job position (Lewis, 1998).

### **2.2.6 Media Convergence Theory.**

The FM radio industry in India is sailing in a transformative wave characterized by the forces of media convergence, defined by the interconnectivity of digital technologies with traditional transmission modalities (Putranto and Rustanta, 2025). This merger allows radio stations to reach an audience through web streaming, mobile applications and social media, other than their local broadcasting radius, expanding their reach to more diverse audiences (Akwa Ibom State University et al., 2023).

Media convergence theory provides a critical structure to understand these transformations and the upcoming operational adjustments needed by radio stations (Paradhita

and Oktavia, 2025). The rise of digital technologies in media not only developed event updates, news production but also significantly influenced journalistic practices, demonstrating the fundamental role of technology in the redefinition of traditional media paradigms. This statement is backed by Putranto and Rustanta (2025), who emphasize the globalization of media management practices that are rousing relevant to the Indian context, where radio stations should adapt to an ever-evolving media ecosystem.

The FM Radio industry in India is exclusively situated at the intersection of conventional transmission formats and digital innovations, which is equal to a double-edged sword (Raketić, 2022). As the expansion of digital platforms has unlocked new ways for content dissemination, it also requires a reassessment of public involvement strategies to support the listener's commitment in a competitive environment. Digitalisation introduces new requirements such as the need for multimedia content production, improved interactivity through social media platforms and real-time dissemination of information through live channels, which require radio stations to adapt their operational structures according to the changes (Turner, 2023).

By adopting complete convergence strategies, FM radio businesses can expand their market, attract new customers who are also advertisers and maintain relevance in the digital age of new media. For example, incorporating streaming services, podcasts, and social media engagement has helped stations like Radio Ardan and PTPN Radio, solo in Indonesia, increase their audience and advertising revenue (Paradhita and Oktavia, 2025).

### **2.2.7 New Media Theory.**

The New media theory concentrates on the shift from traditional mass media to interactive, mass networking digital platforms. It highlights the participatory nature of digital

media, where audiences are not just consumers but also critics, content creators and distributors (Lievrouw, 2009). Successful navigation of the challenges presented by digitalization may also lean on the other media sectors. In the FM Radio context, the traditional passive listening model has evolved into an interactive user experience, attracting radio stations to rethink critically on their programming strategies to incorporate feedback and public participation (Gissani, Sanusi and Yulianti, 2024).

A noticeable framework within this discussion is the convergence of social networking sites, which has become increasingly integral to the way in which radio stations are evolving with their audiences (Bonini, 2014). Magnaye and Tarusan (2023), provide information on this phenomenon, arguing that social networks act as a critical conduit for the dissemination of radio content, which allows the stations to reach broader audiences while promoting a deep listener's commitment.

The potential of the convergence of social networks goes beyond the mere distribution of content; It works as a catalyst to bridge the gap between traditional radio and the digital ecosystem. FM Radio stations can use social media analysis to better understand audience preferences, their likes and dislikes, and adapt to the content that resonates with listeners in traditional transmissions and digital platforms (Ajetunmobi and Lasisi, 2022). By integrating the content generated by the user and promoting the participation of the list now through contest or interactions in life, social networks, FM radio stations can cultivate a community atmosphere that keeps the public returning for more (Ajetunmobi and Lasisi, 2022).

The role of expert ideas and perspectives discussed by Jauert, Ala-Fossi, Follmer, Lax and Murphy (2017) can provide radio stations with a valuable forecast of the Evolutionary

inclination of the media environment. The authors highlight that by embracing the feedback of experts on the implications of digitalisation, radio stations can anticipate complications and evolve accordingly. This enterprising adaptation is crucial to maintain the fidelity of the listener and guarantee profitability in a climate where media consumption habits are increasingly fragmented. When embracing the convergence of the media, the FM radio station cannot only improve its diversity of content but also position itself as a key cultural cornerstone within its demographics. Despite the major challenges of digitalisation, the growth and reinvention capacity remains.

Onyango (2016) Clarified this point by examining urban radio stations in Kenya, stressing that digital disturbances give rise to income compromises, a reality that the Indian FM radio industry cannot afford to ignore. This underlines the imperative for radio stations in India to look out for new commercial and diversified models of revenue generation anchored in media convergence.

### **2.2.8 Contingency Theory**

Contingency Theory plays a fundamental role in informing adaptive management practices within organizations by highlighting the interaction between contextual factors and operational effectiveness. Postulate that there is no universally applicable management strategy; Rather, the effectiveness of an approach depends on external and internal variables, including the characteristics of the industry, the size of the organization and environmental unpredictability (Donaldson, 1987). Contingency theory suggests that the company size effects are relevant for many operational management practices (Taylor and Taylor, 2014). Which stands valid in case of centralization of content and management by many FM Radio operators in India as a measure

for better operations management, but this turns out not in favour of the basic nature of FM Radio, which is missing local content.

The importance of adaptive management is particularly pronounced in the face of rapid change and uncertainty in media industries such as the FM Radio industry. Organizations that operate within dynamic environments must continually evaluate their operational capacities concerning contextual factors such as market conditions, technological advances and competition, thus optimizing their productivity to overcome operational challenges in the FM Radio industry (Donaldson, 1987).

The FM Radio industry should maintain quality standards amid variable contextual pressures. For these organizations, adopting an adaptive management philosophy that considers both strategic alignment and the unique problem-solving of the challenges presented by external factors is crucial to gain control over operational challenges (McAdam, Miller and McSorley, 2019). However, effective management requires not only anticipatory measures but also receptive actions that allow organizations to pivot according to changing circumstances. As in media convergence, it is crucial to know how the change has been adapted to regulate revenue streams using digital platforms; if not done so, the social media content creators will always overpower the digital content making RJs.

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

Elavarthi and Chitrapu (2021) suggest that a solid understanding of the media economy can enable the FM radio industry to navigate the challenges of the digital market. Their research gives an overview of how economic theories can be applied to optimise pricing models and react to the ruffled way in market demand.

In this context, radio stations can benefit from the use of data analysis to know more about program strategies and the targeting of audiences, making sure that their operations are both productive and aligned with current audience preferences.

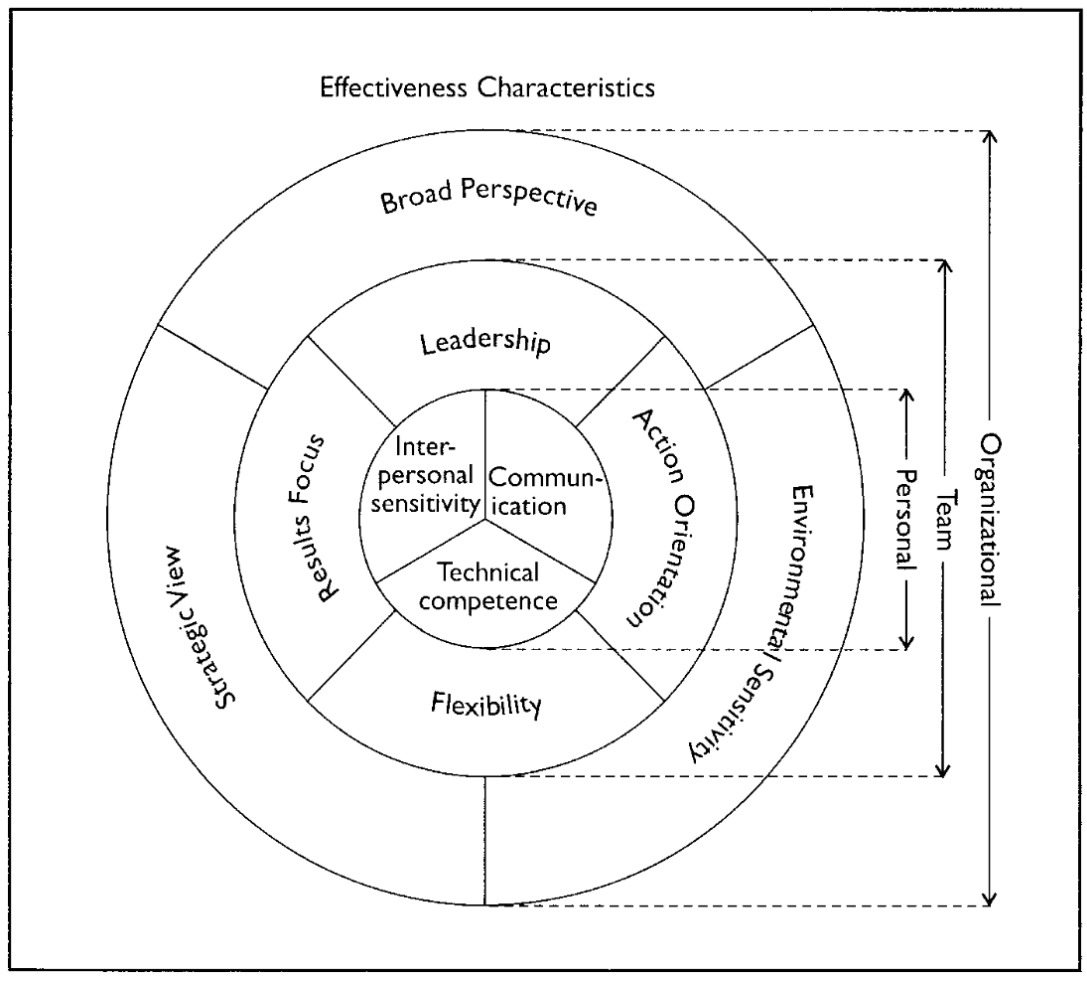


Figure 2.2: Three-Level Circle of the Characteristics of Effectiveness: Flanders and Utterback, 1985.

Figure 2.2 encapsulates a three-level model of effectiveness characteristics identifying the necessary key personal and professional qualities for success at three levels being individual, team and organizational levels. At the innermost level are important personal traits

such as communication, interpersonal sensitivity and technical competence are highlighted as primary qualities that enable individuals to function effectively within their professional roles. The second level emphasizes team-based capabilities, such as leadership, action orientation and flexibility, which contribute to collaboration and the success of the team. Lastly, the outermost layer encompasses broader organisational competencies, including a broad company perspective, strategic collective vision, and work environmental sensitivity, which are crucial while navigating through complex and dynamic work environments, such as FM Radio station offices. This three-layered model reinforces that effectiveness is not limited to individual skill set but also extends to team dynamics and organizational consciousness.

Denhardt, Denhardt and Aristigueta (2016) In their book interpret that effective public managers must motivate and lead others within and outside their organizations, work in groups, communicate with clear guidance, think out-of-the-box, navigate through change successfully, and manage any dispute effectively.

This idea of leadership is apt for FM Radio industry too, where the FM Radio Programming heads have to manage people from outside the organization, such as Fans, advertisers, city authorities etc; communicate in different scenarios daily with their team members as well as sales heads, come up with innovative yet workable ideas, manage ways through creative differences and navigate through changes like digitalization, different technological evolutions, convergences of various media and still meet the listener's and advertiser's expectations is a serious job. The art of managing a creative group is to make sure that the conditions are favourable to work, as much as they can be, and only then, the rules of efficiency are to be applied (Fletcher, 1990). In his article, Fletcher (1990) he talks about an

unbridgeable gap between the dialectics of business management and the codes of the creative world. However, the Programming division of FM Radio still relies on human creativity, given the nature of non-digital radio, unless too much formalisation reduces it to a mechanical process, and the listeners have no variety to choose from.

Just like how Television Rating Point (TRP) is used to rate TV shows, Radio Audience Measurement (RAM) and Indian Readership Survey (IRS) are used to measure radio listenership. Traffic jams bring radio shows a lot of listenership, as shared by RJ Shriram of Fever FM (Rakshith V, 2023, p.3). With Media converging with each other, experiments are done with the length of content, integration of promotional content, collaborations, etc, to get all the added viewers and listeners possible with the convergence, and give them an authentic experience with different platforms. However, RJ Simran Kohli has a different angle to look at it. She writes in her blog post, “In the digital medium, it is difficult to curb ‘fake news’. It is often observed that in the TRP race to grab eyeballs, even TV channels tend to exaggerate and repeat themselves. Whereas on the radio, information is crisp, straightforward and informative” (Kohli, 2020, p.2). Whereas there is no exact count, there are only limited private surveys to know the recall value of a program, show, or RJ to have an idea about their popularity. This information about how many listeners listen to a radio station is useful for advertisers and media companies looking to understand the Radio Market in India, develop targeted advertising campaigns, and remains a valuable source of information for those interested in understanding media consumption patterns in India (Amir, 2024).

A Study on Strategic Human Resource Management (S-HRM) discussed the growing recognition of employee well-being as a critical component of SHRM (Agaba, Turtasingura and

Kabagambe, 2023). Innovative practices in this area include fostering work-life balance, providing mental health support, and cultivating inclusive workplace cultures. Organizations now recognize that prioritizing employee well-being boosts morale and productivity while also ensuring long-term organizational sustainability (Andrew Ifesinachi Daraojimba et al., 2024). Nurturing creativity in HR practices not only boosts organizational agility but also attracts and retains top talent. This strategic focus ensures sustainable growth and a competitive edge in evolving markets such as tier II and tier III cities.

Changing the nature of Radio to digital without a critical study of its purpose and power may not result in its success, both as a medium as well as a business. Thus, this shift towards a participatory media scenario needs a deeper understanding of public analysis, enabling radio stations to customize content and drive the listener's involvement (Lievrouw, 2009). Srinivas (2014) Extends this discussion in the field of media management trends, indicating that effective leadership and strategic decision-making are essential for radio stations in the current digital paradigm. The ability to manage resources and embrace technological changes will determine the sustainability of the FM radio stations while they step into an increasingly competitive landscape. As media convergence takes place, Radio operators and managers must cultivate adaptive strategies that prioritise content and operational Innovation.

Successful navigation of the challenges presented by digitalization may also depend on the development of partnerships and strategic collaboration in the media sector (Avilés and Carvajal, 2008). Cross-platform synergies, where radio stations can get involved in collaborative projects with digital media platforms to broaden their reach and strengthen brand presence. Such

partnerships can improve resource-sharing features, enabling radio stations to adopt innovative and creative content delivery mechanisms and grow their overall productivity (Lollini, 2019).

#### **2.4 Synopsis of the Theories.**

The Intersection of Resource-Based View, Two-Factor Theory, Contingency Theory, Service Operations Management, and Talent Management in the FM Radio media landscape represents how these theories can collectively model the operational capacity of the Radio Industry in India. It also highlights the need for a strategic approach that combines the optimization of resources, the excellence of the service and the cultivation of talents, a critically essential approach to navigate in the complexity of a competitive media environment and secure sustainable success (Riaz and Qureshi, 2017). The adoption of a motivational approach to talent management is crucial in aligning individual abilities with organizational goals, thus refining overall operational performance (Schleicher et al., 2018). This Orientation ensures that Employees are not only suitable for their job roles but also are inspired to contribute to the organization's strategic objectives, particularly critical in the FM radio industry, where the technology is dynamic and changes in audience preferences need an adaptable and innovative human resource (Schleicher et al., 2018).

Studies on FM stations in India highlight the challenges faced in the implementation of talent management initiatives, highlighting exceptional gaps in existing strategies that can significantly improve organisational performance (Padmakumar, 2014), which are included in this study. These challenges generally result from a reactive and non-proactive posture regarding talent management, namely- following a format to confine creativity, making the innovations in

strict and frequent deadlines, having team leader from non-creative background and not having enough time or resources to upskill, which can make it difficult for FM stations to take advantage of the full potential of their workforce (Taher, 2012). Specifically, the lack of structured talent development programmes and scarce performance management systems can lead to high turnover rates, which interrupt continuity and throttle innovation (Bevins, 2018).

Collectively, these theories highlight the need for the FM radio industry in India to actively adopt the fundamentals of media convergence. By adapting to the implications of convergence theories and leveraging the potential of digital tools, the FM radio industry can improve productivity and establish a more resilient base in the midst of digitalization challenges (Lowe and Brown, 2016). Understanding these dynamics is crucial as the industry continues to evolve, influenced by technological boost. When analyzing the use of media convergence theories within the FM radio industry in India, it is salient to recognize the dynamic interaction between traditional radio transmission and emerging digital avatars of radio (Aitken, 2014). By taking advantage of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Telegram and Instagram, radio stations can create interactive environments that invite the participation and comments of the followers, thus transforming passive listeners into active followers (Baym et al., 2012).

Understanding the connotations of media convergence also needs an examination of the operations framework that allows these integrations to flourish. The FM Radio industry in India must address internal challenges, like the allocation of resources and training, to effectively navigate the complexities of this transformation (Gissani et al., 2024).

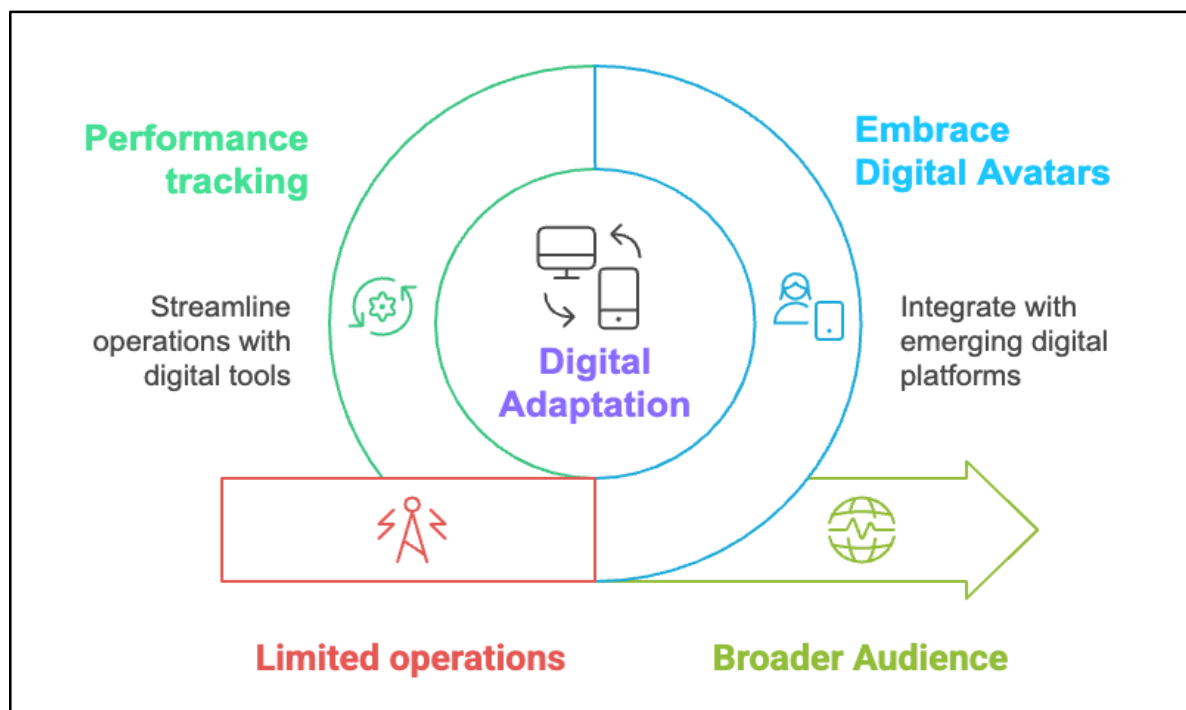


Figure 2.3: Leveraging Traditional FM Radio with Digital Tools: Author's Own May 2025.

The pictorial representation in [Figure 2.3](#) illustrates how FM radio stations can inflate their reach and operations efficiency by adopting digital tools. With digital adaptation being the core, use of technologies such as computers, digital interfaces mobile platforms is involved. On the operations side, digital tools provide a feature of performance tracking and the ability to streamline workflows, enabling FM radio stations to move beyond the limited traditional operations. In the audience engagement side, combining with emerging digital platforms and adopting digital avatars opens new ways to establish an interactive connection with listeners. This shift from conventional audio-only broadcasting to digitally enhanced interactive audio-visual systems supports broader audience engagement and improved performance to remain competitive and relevant in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

Through reallocating resources to train staff in creating digital content and social media management, FM radio stations can construct an expert workforce in using traditional and digital media together. As a result, this holistic approach for the convergence of media positions the FM radio industry in a stronger spot to innovate and condition on the middle of the rapidly evolving technological breakthrough (Gissani et al., 2024).

Continuing this exploration, the convergence of audio and visual media presents an approach for radio stations to reform their content offers, such as podcasting, live streaming, interactive shows, and on-demand radio apps (Asy'ari and Luthfi, 2019). This diversification refines not only the commitment of listeners but also positions the FM radio stations to invite collaborations with content creators and influencers, thus expanding their business scope on digital platforms (Asy'ari, 2019).

## **2.5 Background of the FM Radio Medium in India.**

The FM Radio in India, before taking a commercial avatar, was a part of the national integration mission, at a time when only public radio existed in the country (Duggal and Hoene, 2022). It used to function on shortwave, AM and FM (Aitken, 2014), each coming with its set of advantages and disadvantages. To date, Public radio is a major part of the public broadcasting spectrum, for its credibility, wide, remote reach and free-to-use nature. When Private Radio came into the picture in the early 2000s, it was introduced as FM only (Srivastava, 2007). The following [Table 2.2](#) discusses the key areas of difference between Public and Private FM Radio in India.

**Table 2.2:***Distinction Between Public and Private FM Radios in India.*

<b>Public FM Radio (All India Radio- AIR)</b>	<b>Private FM Radio Stations</b>
<p>Owned by Government's autonomous body: Prasar Bharati, established in 1990. And came into being in 1997.</p> <p>Operational station count: 501</p>	<p>Owned by Private media companies (e.g., The Times group, The Jaagran group, the Bhaskar group etc). Initiated in 2001.</p> <p>Operational station count: 388</p>
<p>Primarily funded by Government grants, public service mandates and limited advertising revenue from Public Outreach Service (POS).</p> <p>Non-profit-oriented; focused to social service policies.</p>	<p>Primarily funded by revenue coming from commercial advertisements, sponsorships and media investors.</p> <p>Profit-driven; highly focused on ad-sales metrics and increasing listener base.</p>
<p>Operations managed centrally by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) and Prasar Bharati.</p> <p>Not governed by license bidding; AIR stations are set up by government policy directives.</p> <p>Subject to bureaucratic processes, lengthy and slower technology upgrades, and implementation.</p>	<p>Operations Managed independently by the media operators, under licences issued by MIB.</p> <p>Operate under a Phase-wise licensing system, involving bidding and compliance with MIB.</p> <p>Agile working with flexible hiring, brand-based decisions, advanced technological implementations.</p>

<p>Programming content consists of:</p> <p>Information- news, awareness, educational, entertainment, cultural, health, developmental, agricultural and public interest content.</p> <p>Authorized to produce and broadcast news content under the News Services Division (NSD)</p>	<p>Programming content consists of:</p> <p>Entertainment-driven, music, fun elements, celebrity interviews, contests, city updates, collaboration shows, listener participation activities, etc.</p> <p>Not Permitted to broadcast self-produce news, must rely and reproduce AIR news bulletins only, without any changes limited to 10 minutes in an hour.</p>
<p>Reach: Audible in all urban and rural areas including remote residential villages of India, Claiming 99% coverage. Broadcasts in 23 Indian languages and 179 regional dialects.</p> <p>Has an inclusive programming model- Serves rural, underprivileged and minority population.</p>	<p>Reach: Primarily broadcasted in metro cities, urban and semi-urban markets in focus, with linguistic variety limited to a state's language, Hindi and English.</p> <p>With a Target group-oriented programming model - Targets earning class, youth and urban middle class demographics for commercial engagement.</p>

Source: Compiled from TRAI (TRAI, 2024), BECIL (BECIL, 2025) and Prasar Bharati's Annual Reports (This is All India Radio, 2022).

Table 2.2 ~~Table 2.2~~ Shows the differentiation of public and private radio stations in India, highlighting fundamental differences in their ownership, structure or operations management, objectives and functioning. All India Radio (AIR), run by Prasar Bharati, is a government-owned

public broadcaster (Bhawan, 2024). It is government-funded, centrally regulated, and covers a broad linguistic and demographic base, primarily rural populations (This is All India Radio, 2022). On the contrary, private FM radio stations owned by private media houses are commercial entities, and driven by market-based revenue models focused on entertainment and advertising (Bhawan, 2024). These radio stations have more creative freedom, faster technological adoption and they are oriented towards urban, youth-centred listeners (Varsha, 2020). While the public radio is restricted to public service mandates and regulated news content, the private radio stations are limited in their ability to broadcast news on their own (Business Standard, 2024). Thus, the two sectors represent varied approaches to radio broadcasting, each playing a distinct role in India's diverse media market.

## **2.6 Challenges of FM Radio in India.**

- Declining listenership.
- Declining ad revenue and profits in the private FM Industry.
- Conventional recruitment and talent management practices.
- An aggressive, continuous and rapid digital disruption.

While the major challenge for AIR FM stations appears to be reducing listenership, it still has a loyal listener base due to the credibility it holds (De Mello, 1938).

As a state-funded body, ad revenue generation is not on its list of priorities. It generates revenue from several streams, such as renting out space to private broadcasters on its infrastructure, selling its archived content to other content creators, etc (Bharati, 2020). But that is not the case with private broadcasters; they have too many expenses compared to their income

(Communications today, 2024). Private FM Radio is only 20 years old, and this medium is still young with a lot of potential, and needs more competent hands to join, which is a recruitment fiasco (KPMG, 2013). The two primary issues in the FM radio industry are fragmentation of the number of listeners and decreasing profit due to internal competition, leading to a drop in advertising revenue (Nagar, 2024).

However, operational dynamics within the private radio stations have adapted to the media convergence scenario to meet new-age requirements on organisational levels, but significant evolution in human resource practices (HRM) towards talent management needs more specialized work, as suggested in RBV theory (Rustiawan et al., 2023). Unlike ordinary corporate settings, radio stations thrive on creativity, which requires a supportive, pressure-free environment (McAdam et al., 2019).

With digitalization and changing audience listening habits, expanding the roles of radio content creators, management, and HR teams is a need of the hour for the FM radio business to sustain itself further.

## **2.7 Impact of FM Radio in India**

- Stands tall as a credible source of information.
- It's a free-to-consume, local medium of infotainment.
- Capable of playing a critical role in disaster communication.
- Capable of influencing urban youth and reaching remote areas.
- Creates employment across various media domains.
- Serves as an advertising platform for SMEs to reach local customers.

- Serves as a promotional platform of social awareness, cultural activities, indie artists, and regional arts.

The FM Radio in India has had a significant impact across social, cultural, and economic sectors (Frost, 2010). Radio continues to be one of the most trusted sources of news and information worldwide (Stevenson, 2014). As of 2024, Broadcast regulator TRAI has recommended private FM radio stations to broadcast news for 10 minutes every hour.

Additionally, the government is looking to keep FM radio features active on all mobile phones, and that the deactivation or disabling feature to be absent for users (Business Standard, 2024).

In India, however, with its hyper-local reach, radio can disseminate real-time, up-to-the-minute news coverage, giving stations a competitive edge and attracting new advertisers, thereby benefiting the entire business ecosystem (Saleem, 2024). Its wide local reach makes it possible to cater to region-specific languages, issues and cultural nuances, making it especially relevant in rural and semi-urban areas.

As a free-to-use, cost-effective medium, it ensures widespread access without the need for electricity, internet, particularly benefiting lower-earning social groups (Lasar, 2016).

FM radio also plays a significant role in emergencies, natural calamities and disasters, offering timely alerts, rescue and relief information to affected regions (Kanchan, 2024). With its entertainment-driven content and interactive formats used by RJs, it is highly popular among urban youth, forming trends and public discourse (Wadekar, 2024).

Economically, it also creates employment for content producers, creative writers, music lovers, marketing professionals, technology players and broadcasters (KPMG, 2013, p. 46). It is

a valuable advertising platform for small and medium-sized business enterprises (SMEs), supporting the local economy (Puente, 2010).

Moreover, FM Radio stations often support social awareness campaigns, promoting local indie music, culture, art, and act as a platform for fresh emerging talent (HT City Daily News Wrap, 2024). Being the facilitator of audience interaction, Radio in India, as a mass communication medium, has had a prominent impact on the Indian public.

## **2.8 Research Gap**

FM Radio is a medium of the subconscious mind and needs a step forward in thinking to create an audio programme for radio. In the continually rapidly changing competitive media business landscape, effective human resource management is vital for success, focusing on creativity and innovation other than the standard set of rules of conduct (Rustiawan, Amory and Kristanti, 2023). In the business domain, "creativity" is often employed by managers and scholars to signify an organization's ability to innovate, adapt, and maintain emancipation. These creative attributes have increasingly supplanted operational efficiency and strategic planning as the key drivers of competitive advantage in modern enterprises such as the FM Radio (Bilton and Leary, 2002). In terms of Creativity, Companies look for action plans to confront the increasingly aggressive global environment; they are calling for a new set of proficiencies and behaviours from employees (Gundry, Kickul and Prather, 1994). In the FM Radio Industry, creativity is looked down upon as a risk rather than an opportunity, and the management often expects a creative idea to have been tried, tested and worked wonders before. Such as Reality shows on the Radio, when it comes to new ideas for Radio shows, they want to play it safe and stay assured that the programming doesn't take away from the music (indiantelevision.com,

2007). Thus, Radio stations often end up with ideas similar to those of TV shows in an audio format.

Recently Taylor and Taylor (2014) suggested that the effectiveness of performance measurement systems depends on several situational factors. They explored how small and medium enterprises (SME) and large companies vary in their implementation of performance measurement, illustrating that the size and complexity of an organization influence the adaptability of management practices while studying 349 UK-based manufacturing firms. Similar situational factors, or the internal factors, are not studied in the context of the Indian FM Radio Industry in the existing literature.

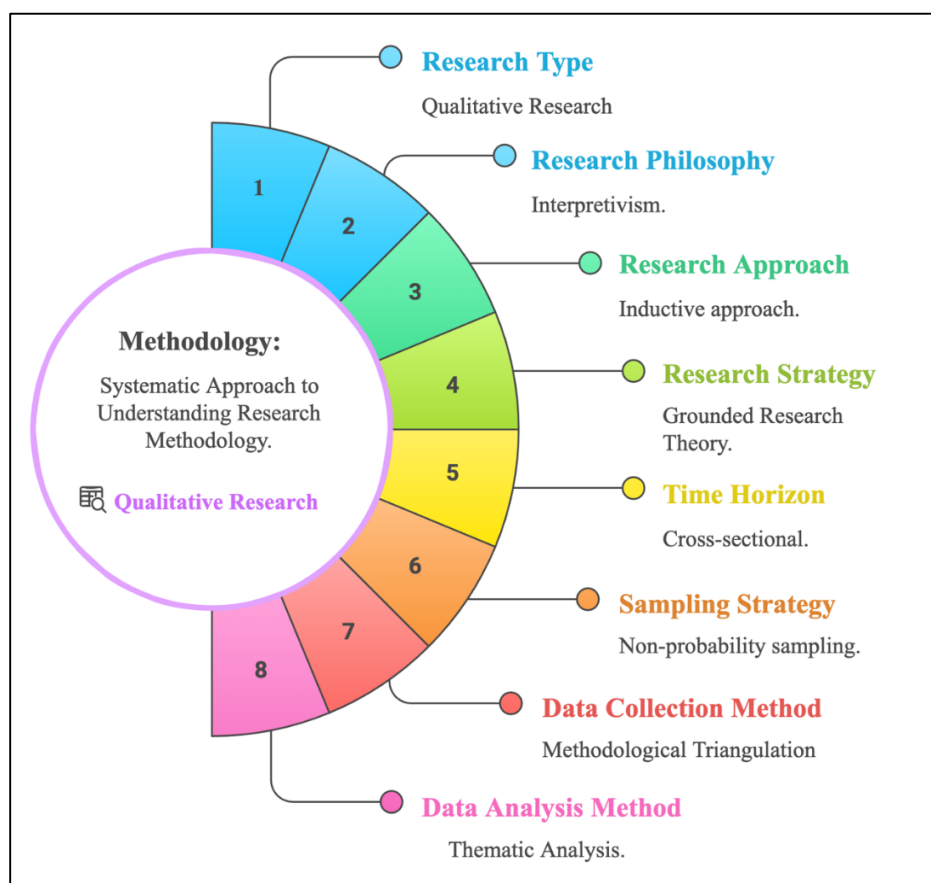
Risk management is essential to business success, yet corporate failures highlight significant gaps in understanding and managing risks. Effective risk management requires explicit systems, tailored arrangements, going out the set way to retain outstanding talent, and integration across corporate functions. However, encouraging a culture where managers consider both risks and returns remains underexplored (Buehler and Pritsch, 2003). This research gap points out a need for strategies to develop risk-adjusted, creative freedom-enabled performance measures for supreme productivity in FM Radio Programming teams, define corporate versus unit-level responsibilities, and enhance dialogue between management and boards, welcoming new ideas to the table, ultimately keeping the FM Radio Industry relevant and profitable. Despite the potential benefits, many FM Radio stations remain cautious due to the fear of audience backlash or advertiser withdrawal (Tandoc et al., 2018). This hesitation highlights a critical research gap: understanding how creative risks can be systematically integrated into FM Radio programming without threatening brand equity. However, there is a need to find out if there are

any measures that Radio operators incorporate on the human resource management level to hire and retain talented resources to keep up with other competitive stations in the industry, navigating through the requirements of its convergence with new media.

Other industries that thrive on creativity, such as fashion, films and music, demonstrate how embracing risk can bring success. For example, indie filmmakers often explore unconventional storytelling, achieving cult status and critical acclaim (HT City Daily News Wrap, 2024). In the music industry, surprise album drops or cross-genre collaborations have disrupted traditional marketing strategies and captured global attention (Kulkarni, Namjoshi and Kalamkar, 2024). These changes need to be taken from a collective decision of the sales and programming departments of any FM Radio. While a few like Radio City are taking innovative risks, others are in a wait-and-watch position (Nirjuli, Sorum, and Singh, 2018). This means it is possible to make changes that would benefit the industry, but the decision has not been made. The previous researchers have discussed the new terms AROI and MIB have been agreed on, but no reasoning has been done, pointing at a knowledge gap in terms of exactly 'what' the challenges are on the decision-making level of management and AROI in taking the effective steps to implement those decisions that are still on paper.

### 2.3. CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The Methodology chapter in any research work acts as a fundamental pillar of the study, outlining the systematic approach used to study the proposed research problems (Dawadi, 2020). There is a varied meaning of this chapter; it guides through the research process, the methods, circumstances and practices undertaken by the researcher during the study to investigate the research questions, thus contributing to the validity and reliability of the study (Mishra, 2017). This chapter provides information on the theoretical and practical aspects behind the chosen approach for research.



*Figure 3.1:* Graphical Presentation of Methodology used in This Study - Author's Own June 2025.

Figure 3.1 ~~Figure 3.1~~, provides a brief graphical representation of the Research Methodology employed by the researcher for this study. It is a framework of a systematic approach to qualitative research methodology, outlined in sequential sections. Under the umbrella of the Qualitative type, the lived experiences of the participants are studied with the philosophy of interpretivism (Ryan, 2018).

There were no pre-assumptions about the study; hence, an inductive approach was used to build a theory from the collected data. As a strategy of this study, a grounded research theory was employed to direct data collection. The study sought a cross-sectional time horizon for data collection; however, the data offer longitudinal insights from the participants reflecting over a decade of their experiences. Non-probability sampling approach was followed, in which purposive, convenience and snowball sampling were integrated. Being a study based on an industry that does not have many different job roles, to obtain wholesome and diverse data, methodological triangulation was incorporated (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used a combination of in-depth interviews and published literature as primary and secondary data collection tools, respectively.

Finally, Thematic analysis was conducted to recognize, analyze and interpret similar patterns in the collected data, and develop themes out of them (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This methodological framework ensures a rigorous, logical and interwoven process, helping the discovery of authentic insights from FM radio industry professionals' experiential data in this study.

The researcher has adopted rational research ethics, allowing a multi-versing approach that combines various approaches that complement each other within a qualitative type of

research methodology. Thus, improving the agility of the results and enabling a complete understanding of complex organizational challenges (Ononiwu, Onwuzulike and Kazeem, 2024).

### **3.1 Overview of The Research Problem**

The Indian FM Radio industry is standing at a critical intersection marked by digitalization and media convergence, resulting in a shift in audience behaviour and rising demands for amalgamated media professionals (Jensen, 2022). Apart from the pre-digitalization era when traditional strengths of FM Radio were local reach, regional tone and infotainment value, these are now merged with evolving operational needs and expectations from converging media professionals. However, the medium continues to be culturally relevant, but the industry faces challenges in talent management, revenue generation and adaptability. The researcher attempted to explore how these shifts influence professionals working within the FM Radio industry through the methods discussed in this chapter.

More specifically, The Research problem that the researcher sought is that it is crucial to understand how the FM radio industry has adapted to new media trends within its workforce. This understanding helped find out whether the decline can be reversed and whether advertising revenue can be increased. The advertisers always seek to reach a larger audience, but due to the fragmented audience, advertisers are not sure if their advertisement is reaching as many people as before (Rechie B. Pabelona and Lausa, 2022). Listeners are moving towards digital platforms for audio content (Ajisafe and Dada, 2023). And because the programming content is primarily responsible for attracting listeners, it drew attention towards FM radio programs.

Anchored in qualitative research methods, and based on the principles of grounded theory of research, the researcher has presented a structured methodology focusing on developing

contextual comprehension from the lived experiences of the FM radio industry professionals in India, to update the pool of knowledge about the FM radio industry's evolving operational and talent management challenges as brought up in the research questions.

### **3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs**

In this study, the researcher investigated a few core constructs derived from previous literature and contextual field realities. Every construct was interpreted into researchable proportions. The theoretical constructs covered in the study mention Operations planning, Talent management, Technological upskilling, Audience engagement, Creative advertising, and Convergence of media.

**Operations Planning:** This construct involves internal working processes, such as income and expenditure, cost management, and strategic planning for new changes (KPMG, 2013). Operational planning aspects are operationalized through interview questions about workflow, integration of various revenue-generating means, the infrastructure and adaptation to collaboration with different platforms.

**Talent Management:** This is about the decisions applied to get the best productivity out of creative job holders, addressed as talent in this study, who specifically work in Programming and marketing teams (Rustiawan et al., 2023). These factors were investigated through participants' experiences of their HR rounds and their day-to-day workload vitals through interview questions discussing recruitment, training, upskilling practices and retention strategies.

**Technological Upskilling:** FM Radio media is a dynamic medium; the technology used to run the studios and the network has changed on various levels since its inception, and keeps upgrading with new inventions in the communications and connectivity world, which the Radio personnel have to keep up with (Frost, 2010). It is studied by examining how organizations make adjustments to new media platforms and online streaming tools by exploring answers on how individual professionals are supported by their employers to gain new skills to keep up with technological transformation.

**Audience Engagement:** FM Radio is a listener's medium more than anything else (Sabherwal and King, 1991). To stay in this business, it is of utmost importance to have listeners, who are the audio-audience (Wadekar, 2024). It is conceptualized through asking participants about their use of listener interaction strategies, feedback systems and the process of mapping programs for the target audience.

**Creative Advertising:** While advertising is an important creative job across all industries, it is crucial in radio due to the time constraints it has to face, because time loss is directly equal to potential revenue loss in the FM radio business (Rechie B. Pabelona and Lausa, 2022). It reflects a subjective experience of production teams regarding creative freedom, motivation, urgency, pressure, and management support at work (Legg, 2004). It is conceptualized by knowing the advertisement, aka 'spot' production process, from participants who were copywriters and promo producers, knowing about productions according to on-air time limitations, and management's assistance in inter-departmental communications.

**Convergence of Media:** The Commercial FM Radio Industry in India is 25 years old, unlike its beginning, it now has a digital avatar as well and works together with different media platforms (Asy'ari, 2019). The FM radio industry has had to develop new methods of keeping the FM radio relevant to a continuously changing audience. This was studied by collecting answers from participants regarding their adaptation journey, along with the medium in terms of their audience study and steps taken with respect to their findings.

These theoretical constructs were not forced but emerged with a conversation flow through semi-structured interviews. They assisted in grounding the study in theoretical applicability while staying open to contextual and emergent themes.

### **3.3 Research Purpose and Questions**

The purpose of this study was to explore if there were any potential challenges in the Operations and Management of the radio station functions in the FM radio industry in India, which could lead the industry further into unsustainable situations when dealing with losing listenership and decreasing advertising revenue.

The research sought to unveil whether operational strategies, talent management practices and innovative training modules influence creative performance and longevity of the FM Radio industry. For this purpose, the following research questions were investigated:

- What are the recruitment criteria adopted by the FM radio industry for programming roles, to meet the demands of media convergence?

- What innovative training and skill development practices are arranged for creative programming teams in the FM Radio industry to stay relevant in the era of online streaming?
- What is the management's approach and operational strategy to help FM Radio stations remain competitive and commercially sustainable amid the digital upset?

These research questions directed the qualitative exploration of the researcher and assisted further in framing a thematic study that followed to fulfil the following objectives of the study:

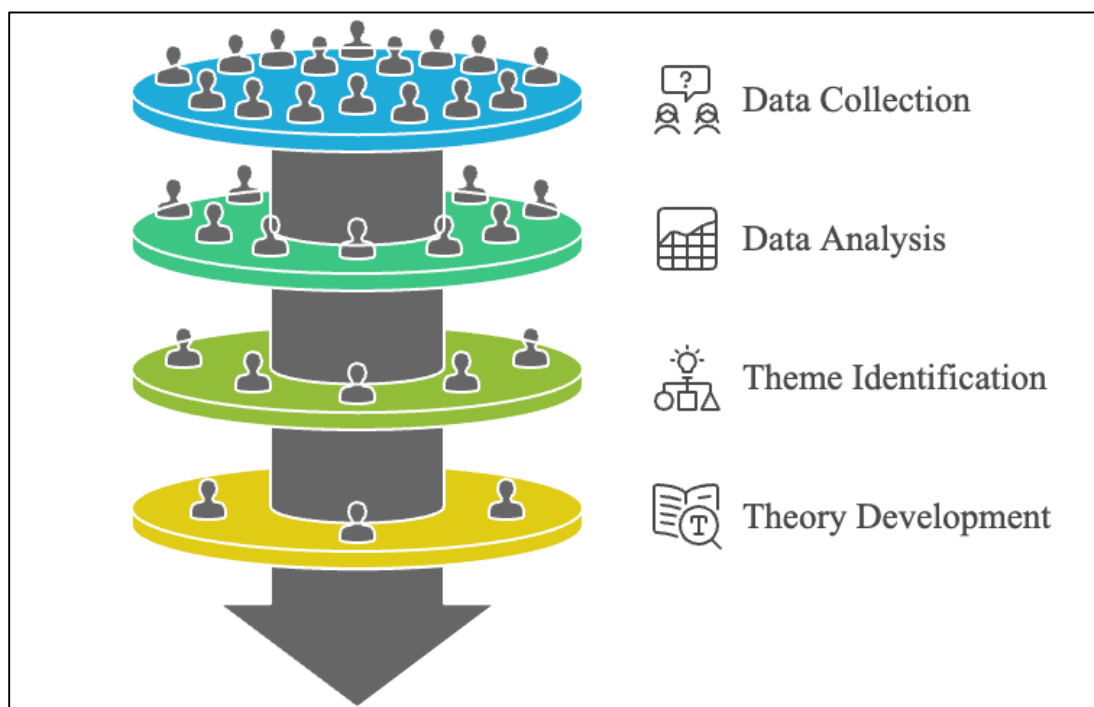
- To know about the novel recruitment criteria adopted by the FM radio Industry in India for programming roles, to meet the demands of media convergence.
- To examine whether innovative training and skill development practices are arranged for creative programming personnel in the FM Radio industry to help them maintain their relevance in the era of online streaming.
- To study the management approaches and operational strategies used by selected FM Radio stations to stay competitive and commercially viable.

These research objectives helped frame interview questions that offered valuable insights into existing challenges and assisted the researcher in identifying possibilities of solutions for the research problem.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The researcher took a qualitative explorative research design and employed a foundation of grounded theory principles. This approach was appropriate for finding out variation, subjective experiences and hidden emerging patterns in the data collected for the study (White

and Cooper, 2022). In studies that are driven by a hypothesis, the data are used to prove or test if the hypothesis presented at the beginning of the study about the topic under research is true or false (Creswell, 2014). However, unlike those studies, this methodology does not depend on pre-existing themes, allowing the researcher to generate patterns and themes after the data is collected and analyzed during the research.



*Figure 3.2: Graphical Representation of Grounded Theory of Research. - Author's own June 2025.*

[Figure 3.2](#) shows a graphical representation of how the grounded theory works. It goes through multiple stages of data handling, where the first and most basic stage has the complete data, which can be an excess of information at times, because the data collection method. During this study, the researcher did not collect any closed-ended or number-based primary data; rather, it is word-based; in this case, Interviews (Khan, 2014). This stage of data

collection was then followed by analyzing the data, in this study, which consisted of transcribing the audio-recorded data obtained from interviews. This documentation of data was further examined for similar patterns, which were further classified into themes (Dawadi, 2020). Upon studying these themes, with thematic analysis, a theory was developed to finally fulfil the objectives of the research.

Grounded theory of research makes it possible to study a people-centric topic with flexibility, keeping the methodology meticulous and profound without leaving any loopholes for bias (Charmaz, 2006). Moreover, this type of methodology enables the researcher to point out patterns in shared experiences, common expectations and behaviours of FM radio professionals without any previous assumptions. The research has followed the research philosophy of interpretivism because the primary data of this study are collected from the participants' lived experiences (William, 2024). This method helped the researcher anchor with the researchable interpretations persistently throughout the data collection phase. Nonetheless, the semi-structured in-depth interviews were the core of the data collection as well as the study, ensuring that the participants expressed themselves freely, giving valuable insights while addressing them in the carefully woven interview.

### **3.5 Population and Sample**

The term Population is the number of people, phenomena, or things that have common characteristics relevant to a particular study's objectives undertaken for research (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative research, the population is generally the entire group of individuals, things, events or phenomena that a researcher finds captivating enough to serve as the study data (Cochran, 1999). However, studying an entire population can not be possible under one study,

often due to limitations of monetary resources, accessibility, and time. As a solution to this, researchers select a sample that represents the entire population. This sample is a smaller and manageable group of participants.

A sample is a subset of the relevant population (Hossan et al., 2023). A typical approach is to find an evenly spread sample that can represent a larger population, broadly described as a vertical piece cut out of a cake, that contains only a part of the cake but all layers present in the entire cake. In qualitative research, where in-depth understanding is preferred over a numerically generalized verdict, a sample enables the researcher to explore more, collect focused insights, and come up with meaningful interpretations (Aveling et al., 2015).

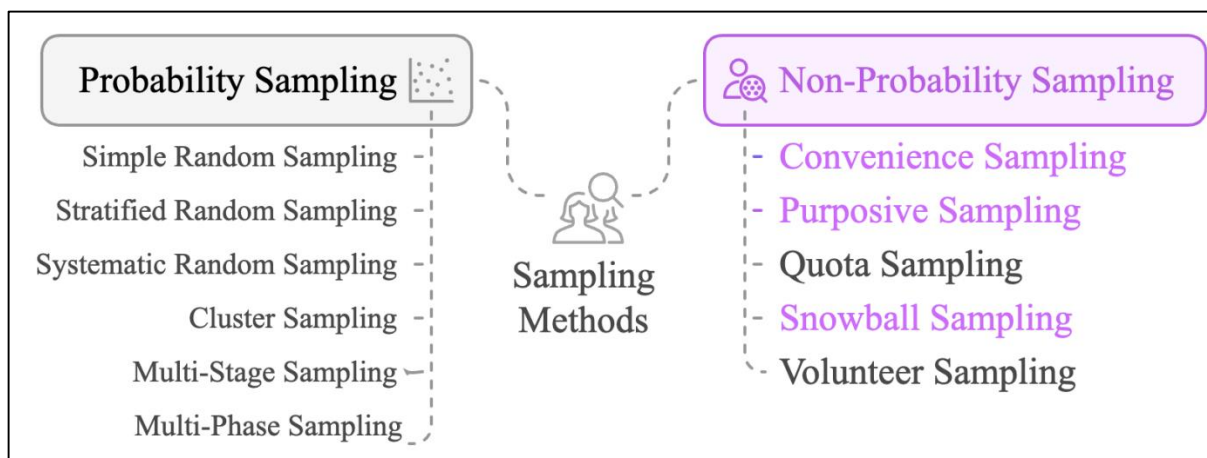


Figure 3.3: Methods of Sampling- IJBT (Hossan et al., 2023, p.214)

Figure 3.3 presents various methods in which a sample can be selected for a study. While this study is qualitative in style, in this study, a careful selection of the sample was employed to deep dive into the lived experiences and expectations of participants through non-probability sampling methods, including purposive, convenience and snowball sampling.

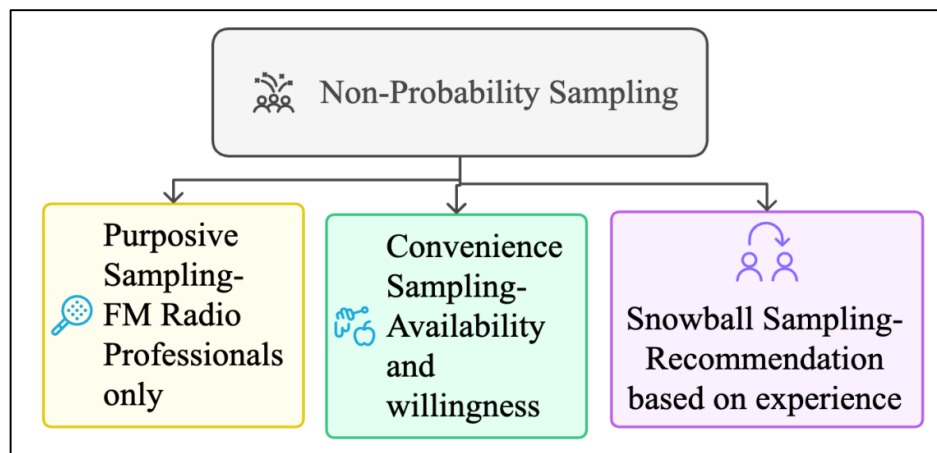
The population under study in this research is the entire FM Radio Industry in India, primarily focusing on the Programming division and the decision-making authorities concerned. The total number of functional FM radio stations in India is 388. However, there is no exact data on the number of employees working in the FM Radio Industry across India; roughly 11000-12000 employees work in this industry, including those who are contract-based and outsourced. Out of which 2100 work in Programming teams. The sample population of this study had professionals working in the following roles:

- Radio Jockeys (RJs)
- Copy and Content writer (CWs)
- Promo producers or Sound engineers (PPs)
- Programming Heads (PHs)
- Human Resource Managers (HRMs)
- Administrators and Business Heads.

Initially, a sample of 24 radio professionals was selected from well-known radio stations across media houses in India, out of which 19 took part in the study conducted. The joined participants operate on different functional levels of presentation, creativity, management, planning and organizational roles in the industry.

### **3.6 Participant Selection**

The Participants for this study were selected using a non-probability sampling technique, which involved purposive sampling, convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods.



*Figure 3.4: Non-Probability Sampling Methods Employed in This Study- Author's Own June 2025*

As shown in [Figure 3.4](#) Non-probability sampling can be carried out in various methods; out of them, three methods were used by the researcher while conducting this study. Purposive sampling is based on some judgment of specific traits and qualities of someone chosen to participate (Wolf et al., 2016). This method is recommended where there are no general conclusions about the entire population. In Convenience sampling researcher focuses on people who can be approached easily or without any delay, which can stretch the time frame of the study (Wolf et al., 2016). Even though this method is often used in studies with large groups of people, it is used in this study due to time constraints. Snowball sampling is also known as network sampling, and as its name suggests, the initial participants act as a seed, which sequentially leads to other relevant participants (Nelson and Potrac, 2014). Because these leads are from the previous contact, it acts like a mutual contact, and the participant has more trust in the researcher; as a result, they don't hold back while sharing their experience, which otherwise they might not have.

### 3.7 Instrumentation

Since this study is driven by Grounded theory, the primary instrument for collecting data was a set of three semi-structured interview questionnaires guides, specially designed according to the participants' role in a specific department or the nature of work. It is often possible with interview-based data collection in research that the researcher thinks their question is clear, but it can be misunderstood by someone who is not following the subject as closely, and that can lead to misalignment in data (Wolf et al., 2016). To avoid any mistakes in contextual relevance, these tools were unpretentiously pre-tested with peers to make sure that the questions are clear and understandable, and there is no loss of context. The received feedback was embodied in the questionnaire before the actual study interviews were conducted.

The participants were categorised into three main categories as shown in [Table 3.1](#)

**Table 3.1:**

*Categorization of Participants.*

Category	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
<b>Department</b>	Programming	Management	Business and Organization
<b>Roles Covered</b>	Radio Jockeys, Show Producers, Copy Writers, Promo Producers.	Programming Heads, Human Resource Managers	Sales Executives, Technical Heads and Business Heads

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<b>Questions focusing on:</b>	Creativity, Work Environment, Audience Interaction, Content, Competition, Upskilling and Digital Integration	Talent Management, Performance Focuses, Business needs, Measures of Degitalization, and Training.	Revenue Streams, Rules and Regulatory Frameworks, Digital Shift, and Competition.
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*Source: Author's Own July 2025.*

Table 3.1 shows the categorization of participants, on the basis of which three questionnaires were constructed in alignment with the objectives of this study. The participants were engaged via an In-depth semi-structured interview through a physical meeting, video calling or over the telephone. At the same time, the researcher also noted situational details and their working conditions as primary data collection tools, while strengthening it with secondary data coming from government reports, industry watchers and media experts' literature published in the public domain, enabling the researcher to get rich, qualitative data.

### 3.8 Data Collection Procedures

A Cross-sectional time horizon was followed for the Interview data, which is the primary data for this study, and was collected over a time duration of four months, starting from February 2025 to May 2025. And the secondary data was collected from recently published annual reports, articles and videos, precisely data not older than 2023.

A Methodological Triangulation was undertaken for data collection, which helped in validating data, confirming participants' claims and expanding thematic interpretations during this study (Flick, 2013).

Data collection that is driven by Grounded theory research can get more elaborate than asked for (Carmichael and Cunningham, 2017). Thus, the researcher employed more role-specific questions to get more study-focused data than to get large life stories. Here, getting anchored data was important because large data can be misleading, time-consuming and also irrelevant at times (Charmaz, 2006).

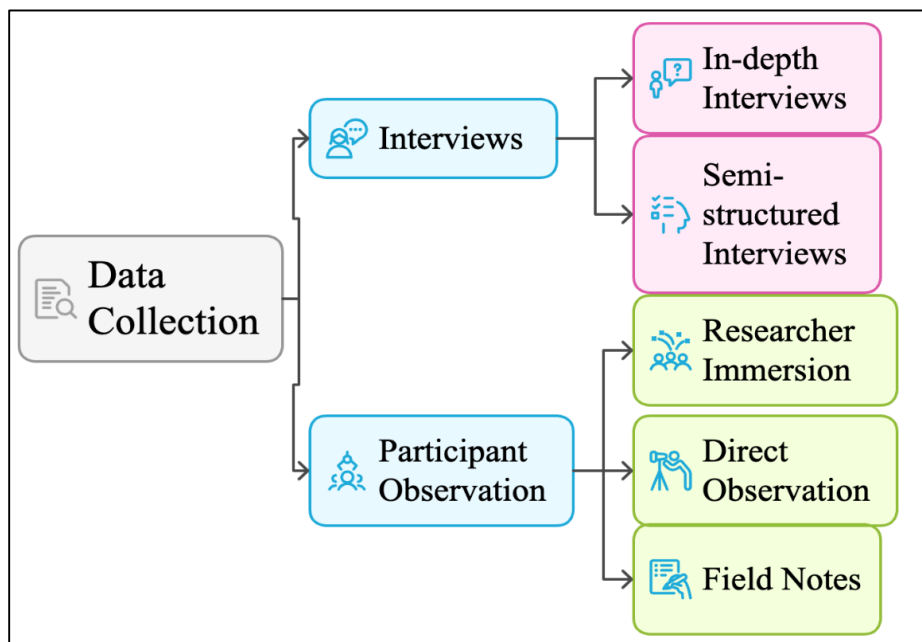


Figure 3.5: Tools Used for Primary Data Collection- Author's own July 2025

As shown in [Figure 3.5](#), there are various tools for data collection in qualitative research. Here, the Primary data was collected using semi-structured interviews, ranging from 45 to 120 minutes in length, separately, with 19 professionals working in the FM Radio Industry in India. Initially, the researcher also considered conducting group interviews due to time and location constraints, but did not actually implement them because of the possibility that one participant might influence others' responses. Thus, the interviews were conducted separately

with each participant and audio recorded with their consent, using a recording device and saved securely.

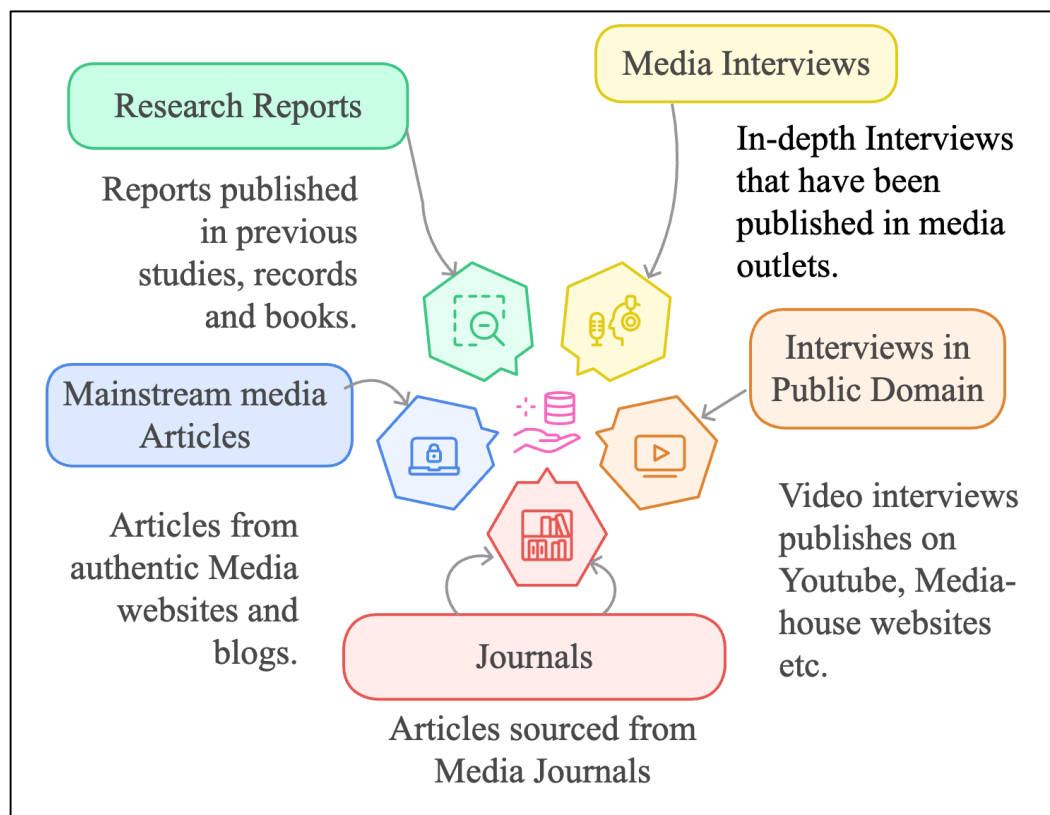


Figure 3.6: Secondary Data Sources- Author's Own July 2025

Additionally, as shown in [Figure 3.6](#), the Secondary Data was collected from a few different sources; this data also consists of six interviews and official statements published on the government website of TRAI, Prasar Bharati, media journal articles, official industry reports and annual summary pages. It was studied to draw information aligning with the study objectives to strengthen the credibility and authenticity of the data collected from primary as well as secondary sources.

### 3.9 Data Analysis

The researcher used Thematic analysis to analyse the collected data. The combination of Grounded theory with Thematic analysis demonstrates the idea of *methodological bricolage*, which is a combination of multiple methods and tools to enable interpretation and representation in the research (Freathy et al., 2017).

The first step of data analysis was transcribing the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The tools used to achieve transcripts from audios were AI-powered apps, Audicate and Notebook LM. These transcripts were then cross-checked manually for any mistakes and to ensure that complete conversations are carefully reflected in the writing. Moreover, the direct quotes were only from the researchers' notes taken on the spot, to avoid any misinterpretation.

Each Transcript was then put through coding, which is a process that implies the identification of significant thoughts or elements within the text that helped sort the relevant topics to the objectives of the study to form patterns (Dawadi, 2020). For Coding, the methods of selective coding and line-by-line coding were employed to get codes that are in the context of the conversations in a spontaneous manner, which outlines the emergence of *in vivo codes* (Freathy et al., 2017, p.150). Thematic analysis enables the researcher to use a wide variety of information, such as thought samples from life experiences, or open-ended essays, video interviews, transcripts of conversations, audio tapes, behavioural samples from interviews, historical documents and more (Winter, 1992).

The researcher interpreted the information and themes in a manner that facilitates the development of some novel information about the conceptual framework the study follows. Thematic analysis from qualitative data can be performed using the four stages mentioned below:

**Table 3.2:***The Stages of Performing Thematic Analysis*

Stage	Purpose
1- Sensing/ Identifying themes	Realizing the codable moment
2- Doing it reliably	Recognizing the codable moment and encoding it consistently
3- Developing codes	Developing it into relevant themes
4- Interpreting the data and themes in the context of conceptual framework	Contributing to the development of novel knowledge.

*Source:* Thematic Analysis and Code Development: Transforming Qualitative Information (Boyatzis, 1998).

As shown in [Table 3.2](#) Thematic data analysis is about finding similar patterns and converting them to codes, broadly divided in steps. To facilitate this function, tools like MS Word, MS Excel, and Mindomo were used to organise codes and come up with conceptual maps.

### 3.10 Research Design Limitations

Humans can have endless experiences and expectations, all different from one another, and qualitative studies can have some limitations despite careful planning of methodology (Lawrence and Tar, 2013). This study also had the following design limitations.

**Access to Participants:** Despite prior planning and arranging for timely appointments, a few participants couldn't participate due to a sudden call to work, and others were reluctant due to organizational policies and fear of being recorded. The initial design had 24 participants on the

list, whereas only 19 could participate. Later, six most relevant interviews were taken from secondary sources.

**Potential Researcher Bias:** The researcher has closely worked with the FM Radio Industry in the past, and the subjective nature of the interpretation of qualitative data poses a risk. Even though this was addressed through instinctive field notes and triangulating primary data with secondary data to maintain fact-based authenticity.

**Qualitative Research was New for the Industry:** There are very few qualitative studies in the Industry of FM Radio, especially unbiased or those driven by academics. The industry is not familiar with the findings of such studies, due to which organizations were not sure about letting employees participate on record, even after they had the option of anonymity.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study in a detailed overview of each step followed for data collection to data analysis via a combination of qualitative inquiry, grounded theory and thematic analysis capturing the experiences of the FM radio Industry professionals in India.

Although the researcher applied the methodology successfully, the study had some limitations as well, which were discussed in this chapter, so that other researchers interested in further studies on the FM Radio industry can take necessary steps to avoid them.

The chosen research framework ensures that the collected data, its analysis and interpretation helped in exploring the current factual situation of the industry on a ground level, and also to address the research problem mentioned by the researcher, in the beginning of the study can be given a possible solution; which were the challenges observed in Talent

Management and Revenue Degeneration. The process was rigorous, flexible, and aligned to the exploratory study. The process ensures a systematic methodological approach followed throughout this study.

### 3.4. CHAPTER IV: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the results obtained during this research and discusses them with regard to the three research questions asked at the beginning of this study. Using thematic analysis, the researcher has generated codes in three stages, to boil it down to the themes presented and discussed in this chapter, providing applicable insights for the academic community in the business and industrial field.

The study results are focused on the proposed problem statement, which stated that it was essential to understand the working of how the FM Radio industry is adapting to new media trends within its limited workforce. The data obtained through this study can help determine whether the declining listenership and advertising revenue can be revived. The fragmentation of audio-only listeners attracted the researcher's focus towards the product, i.e. the programs on FM radio, and so this study was conducted to explore any possible challenges in programming practices with the help of the following research questions:

- What are the recruitment criteria adopted by the FM radio industry for programming roles, to meet the demands of media convergence?
- What innovative training and skill development practices are arranged for creative programming teams, in the FM Radio industry to stay relevant in the era of online streaming?
- What is the management's approach and operational strategy, to help FM Radio stations remain competitive and commercially sustainable amid the digital upset?

The three research questions and the findings related to them are discussed individually in detail below.

The core purpose of this study was to explore the possible operational and management challenges that FM Radio employees deal with to meet the pace of the rapid evolution that the medium is going through, and to find what techniques does FM radio industry uses to ride the wave of converging markets. The focus of this study was the professionals from the programming division of the FM radio industry, namely the roles of RJs, Production teams, and people responsible for helping and managing them.

This chapter gives detailed results for each research question and an explanation of each emerging theme within that question. Followed by a summary of all findings from the 25 interviews in this qualitative study.

**Table 4.1:**

*Categorization of Participant Numbers by Department*

Category	Participants Category 1	Participants Category 2	Participants Category 3
<b>Department</b>	Programming	Management	Business and Organization
<b>Roles</b>	Radio Jockeys, Copy Writers, Promo Producers.	Programming Heads, Human Resource Managers	Sales Executives, Technical heads and Business Heads
<b>Participant Numbers</b>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.	18, 19, 20, 21.	22, 23, 24, 25.
<b>Questionnaire Followed</b>	Questionnaire A	Questionnaire B	Questionnaire C

Source: Author's Own August 2025

As shown in [Table 4.1](#) above, Category 1 had 17 participants, Category 2 had four participants, and Category 3 had four participants. The centre-focused sample for this study

was of Category 1 participants. And Category 2 and 3 participants provide proximate information related to understanding Category 1 roles. The names of participants are numbered to conceal the identity of respondents as it concerns their employers.

**Table 4.2:**

*Data of Study Participants.*

Participant No.	Professional Role of the Participant	Department	Experience (in Yrs.)	Source
P1	Show Producer	Programming	12	Primary
P2	Show Producer	Programming	9	Primary
P3	Copy Writer - Productions	Programming	7	Primary
P4	Copy Writer - Productions	Programming	14	Primary
P5	Copy Writer - Productions	Programming	6	Primary
P6	Promo Producer - Musical Productions	Programming	8	Primary
P7	Promo Producer - Musical Productions	Programming	6	Primary
P8	Promo Producer - Spot Productions	Programming	10	Primary
P9	Promo Producer - Spot Productions	Programming	5	Primary
P10	Radio Jockey	Programming	13	Primary
P11	Radio Jockey + Social Media Influencer	Programming	9	Primary
P12	Radio Jockey + Social Media Influencer	Programming	8	Primary
P13	Radio Jockey	Programming	4	Primary

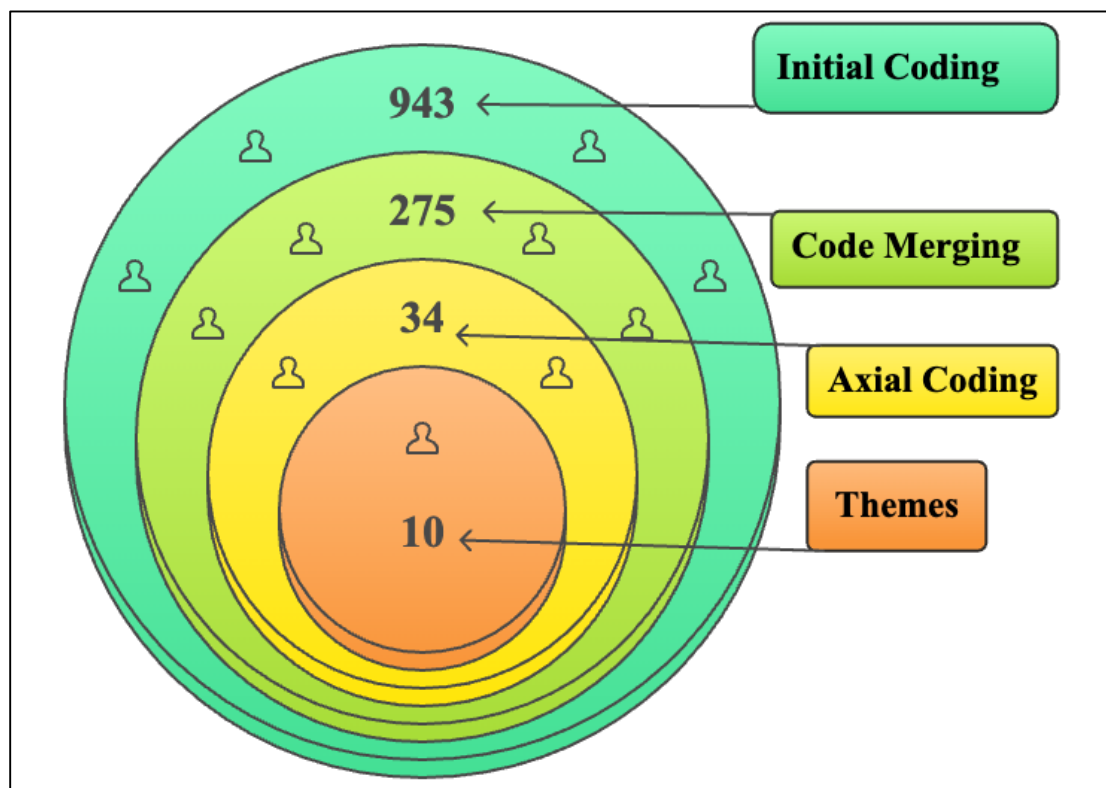
P14	Radio Jockey + Social Media Influencer	Programming	6	Primary
P15	Radio Jockey + Social Media Influencer	Programming	11	Primary
P16	Radio Jockey	Programming	12	Secondary
P17	Radio Jockey + Social Media Influencer	Programming	18	Secondary
P18	Manager - Programming Head	Programming	16	Secondary
P19	Manager - Programming Head	Programming	14	Primary
P20	Human Resource Manager	Human Resource	5	Primary
P21	Human Resource Manager	Human Resource	8	Primary
P22	Technical Head	Organization	17	Primary
P23	Chief Operating Officer	Business	23	Secondary
P24	Chief Operating Officer	Business	24	Secondary
P25	Chief Executive Officer	Business	22	Secondary

Source: Author's Own August 2025

Table 4.2 ~~Table 4.2~~, shows the Professional Roles of each participant, their department of work, the years of experience they have in the FM radio industry and the data source from which the most relevant answers were extracted for the study, making it easier to understand the points of view of participants in any specifically mentioned quotes in the study findings. Participants 1 to 17 (marked in green) are the sources to which the study's research questions concern, and participants 18 to 25 (marked in pink) are the key roles who can influence the former's work experiences.

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*Figure 4.1:* Representation of the Coding Reduction Data – Author’s Own August 2025

In Qualitative research, Grounded Theory coding is a process of defining the data. It requires sorting data portions with short names that simultaneously summarise the data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 111). The researcher started with the transcription of all 19 audio recordings from the semi-structured interviews and interviews taken from secondary data published in the public domain. Although the researcher had already noted down time stamps of important parts in the conversations during the in-person interviews, an AI app- Notebook LM was employed for full-length transcriptions. A rigorous process of rechecking the transcripts with audios and manually correcting quotes, wherever required, in all 25 interviews was administered. Once this was done, the interview transcripts were marked line by line to form initial codes, which also had

lines irrelevant to research questions, that were filtered during this initial process of noting the lines.

This transcribed data was line-wise organized using Ms Excel sheets. Three sub-sheets were created to group relevant lines for the 3 research questions. There were 943 codes collected during initial line-to-line coding. Implementing the interpretive approach, codes that meant similar in context but were spoken in different words according to each participant's conversational language, were merged. However, only the original quotes were used in the thesis. Out of the 943, after cancelling overlapping codes and merging codes, 275 codes were found unique; which means they all were different from each other, but were in context within the research objectives, thus, they were included for further focused coding.

The 275 codes were grouped based on similarity and their relevance to answer the research questions. All those codes which contributed to a discussion based on any of the 3 research objectives were categorised under that objective. These were marked with frequently used terms by the participants while answering. E.g. Axial code 1 was Unconventional Interview questions, and the merged codes grouped under this axial code were "I didn't expect such questions", "It was not a usual interview", "I didn't realise, I was being interviewed; The questions were such, no one would believe...", "My certificate file seemed useless, they never asked for it", "She said Sorry, you are too formal dude" etc. Similarly, grouping the 275 merged codes further gave 34 axial codes.

The 34 axial codes were reduced to 10 themes by following a similar process that was used for grouping the 275 merged codes into 34 axial codes. However, these 10 themes are essential to cover all angles of the objectives of the study, thus they were not reduced any further

to ensure the calibre of this qualitative study. The 34 axial codes, proven to be the foundation of the 10 themes, are discussed in detail under each research question in this chapter.

#### **4.1 Research Question One - What are the Recruitment Criteria adopted by the FM Radio industry for Programming Roles to meet the demands of Media Convergence?**

The Objective of the study was to know about the novel recruitment criteria adopted by the FM radio Industry in India for programming roles, to meet the demands of media convergence. Three Themes relevant to the research question one emerged from the axial codes.

- Theme 1: Recruitment.
- Theme 2: Academic Background.
- Theme 3: Social Media Following.

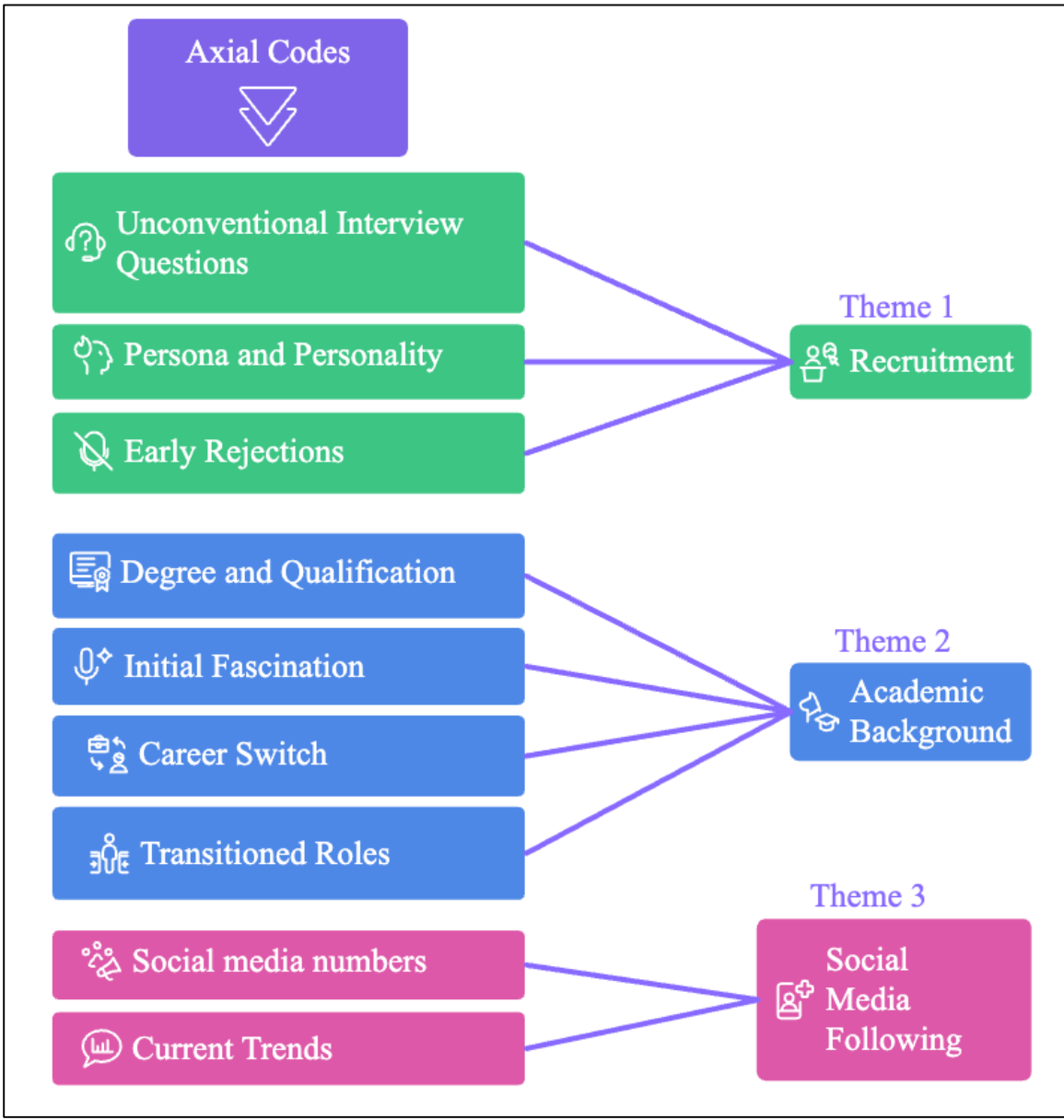


Figure 4.2: Themes Emerging from Axial Codes, Relevant to Research Question 1: Author’s Own August 2025

**Theme 1: Recruitment.**

Axial Codes:

- Unconventional Interview questions,

- Having a persona is very important,
- Early Rejections.

The recruitment process is a critical step for any organization, as it allows an in-depth and objective verification of applicants in terms of meeting the company's requirements, expectations, and also leads to employment (Sołek-Borowska and Wilczewska, 2018). However, Recruitment in the FM Radio industry, often from the beginning, goes beyond reviewing resumes and academic qualification documents. HR only needs to make sure that the applicant is a graduate of a recognized Indian university.

Employers assess personality traits, such as the persona, thought process, creativity, and presence of mind, through spontaneous and unconventional, rather unpredictable interview activities, when it comes to the selection of candidates, here, Talents. This has been established from the semi-structured interviews conducted during this study.

P11: "... they asked me what my favourite things to listen to on the FM were? Things more than just songs, genre or programs or even ads may be. ...I think they were trying to gauge what kind of listener I was, before knowing how well I can speak."

P12: "...then he called for everybody present in the office at that time, and asked me to perform anything that I could right there in front of the whole office, and to make sure no one leaves, being bored."

P15: "We were 12 people sitting in a conference room, around a table, waiting to be called in for an interview. Two people walk in and say, *Let's do a group*

*discussion*, A hypothetical political situation was given, and we were asked to start. After 10 minutes, they both left, and someone came in with four shortlisted names. In the next round, we were discussing salaries with HR.”

P9: “I was given an hour and 4 scripts. The task was to produce 4 ads, which we call spots in radio language. I did that in around 40 minutes, and I was selected. They asked me to go and complete the joining process.”

P5: “He gave me scenes of three iconic Hindi movies and 3 actors who were not part of these movies, and asked me to write the scene, if those were the actors and the scene had to be audio comedy. ...I mean, it’s not easy to write within a word count, and still make sense, while writing comedy.”

P3: “The lady who interviewed me asked her colleague as I entered the room, *when will I get to hire someone who looks like a writer?* And I asked her what she meant by “Looking like a writer”, to which she said, *I am looking for someone who lives in their mind, wearing simple clothes, holding a side bag, a notepad, a pen, and chewing on something. We don’t want polished corporate writers.*”

P1: “I said *I won’t be able to perform like this; I am a shy person.* ... I had made up my mind that this person would ask me to leave. But he thought for a while, asked everyone else to leave the room, and left me alone for half an hour. Then he asked me to record myself, ...I am glad he gave me that chance. He knew creativity needs to be handled differently.”

P10: “She said, *Sorry, you are on the wrong floor.* ...Because I was wearing a pressed, tucked-in shirt and pants, with my folder of documents with me. ... knowing I came for RJ auditions, she laughed hard, and said, *Please, it’s not allowed here like this, wear something comfortable from tomorrow.*”

P14: “I messaged back sarcastically, and it got me the job. On the number given in their Facebook post, I messaged, “Found your RJ? How would you? I haven’t applied yet, bro!” And I got a call for an audition.”

P20: “As HR, we do a lot of hard work on getting the right filtered candidates up to the auditions phase. Because it is different from other industries, where we can pick candidates from LinkedIn, or Naukri or placement interviews.”

These quotes reflect on the idea of an unconventional and unpredictable way of selecting and recruiting talent in the FM Radio Industry. It is a norm across the industry, among both new and old employees, that hiring is performance-based, and no course can teach someone to become an RJ or a copywriter. One needs to know and be able to define the x-factor they might have in them, which makes them stand out. A study also states that applicants with unique names are often selected for creative jobs (Bao, Lu and Luo, 2023). Similarly, there is no structure or set of questions that one can recommend to get hired for a creative job at an FM Radio station. This practice hasn’t changed since the beginning of Private FM Radio in India.

## **Theme 2: Academic Background.**

Axial Codes:

- Degree and qualification in some other background,

- Initial fascination attracted me to this medium,
- Switched careers for this job,
- Transitioned from one role to another.

While higher educational academic qualifications are usually considered the foundation of a career, there isn't any particular academic degree that a majority of FM Radio professionals' hold. Rather, there is a consistent pattern of engineers from various streams quitting their engineering careers to secure a job that they believe can provide an outlet to their creativity, and due to various backstories, they get into the FM Radio industry. On the other hand, students graduating from media studies courses also have no claims of securing a creative job in FM Radio, with a plan.

An Australian study states that many graduates of creative industries courses were having a hard time making a successful transition from education to profession (Haukka, 2011). However, 100 per cent of the FM radio professionals, participated in this study mentioned an aspiration for a job that was creative and non-mechanical; the only problem was that they never knew exactly what would answer their quest.

P12: "...I was awestruck by how a performer could captivate an audience of hundreds; this was like magic. And I wished to be able to do that as well."

P7: "... I was called as a musician, we were jamming at this radio station on the occasion of World Radio Day, I remember vividly. I loved the environment of this place, I mean, what kind of workplace has so much chaotic fun? It was like

having fun was their job. So, I enquired if they would want a sound engineer on the floor...”

P4: “Frankly, I went in for that audition because I had nothing else to do with my MA English degree, I was kind of a nerd, a weird chatterbox, ...but my girlfriend had proposed to me, I had to find work, man! It was a crazy situation”

P2: “I didn’t chase Radio, I worked as a language expert in the Voice industry, I started working in Radio because my fellow artists suggested my name for the movie mania show at this radio station. I was new in Mumbai, and it wasn’t a full-time job. They liked my voice, and I got to see free movies with some extra money. Why would I have denied?”

P5: “I am an MBA and I used to work with an automobile company, selling cars as an automobile executive before joining FM Radio. I had a pretty long career there, but I always had a fascination with my other friends who were a part of the Radio industry. ...one day my friend asked, *We have an opening, would you like to apply?*”

P10: “We didn’t have multimedia mobile phones back in the days, that was such a blessing. I was doing my 9 to 5 job as an IT engineer, and listening to FM radio, with earphones on, inside my helmet while in transit, was the only cheerful thing in my entire day. ...and one day I leapt, and went in for an RJ Hunt organized by Mirchi”

P3: “I have done a full-time Radio-Jockey course, but I never became one. I did learn about other things in the FM Radio industry and got attracted to writing instead of presenting. But I think it wasn’t the course, it was the listening to the radio that I did since my early childhood, alongside my grandpa, that elevated my writing.”

P14: “RJ was never a plan. I was in my engineering third year, I did that for my parents’ wish, but I always wanted to be an actor. I was told by someone that getting into the entertainment industry would require contacts. And the closest people in my knowledge, who had contacts with actors and directors, were RJs, so I started finding a way in...”

P11: “Yes, I had a good Chartered Accountant’s career before, but I wanted to explore something which will give me everyday satisfaction to do something or other creative, but at the same time, it should give me a good financial stability, ...I got to know about RJ because I was a Radio Listener, and heard about an RJ hunt on FM only.”

P19: “I was 16, but admired the fame that RJs had so much that I couldn’t wait to be one. ... I was not a graduate yet, and Private FMs need people who had completed at least a graduation in some or the other subjects. I was rejected at first. Then I used my time to work on my oratory skills, to be ready for the second time, while I worked part-time at a community radio station.”

P21: “We never know where we can find a good RJ material, like not in any specific college, right. So, RJ “hunts” are usually called via public announcements, or we take the college fests, and everybody who is fond of talking thinks they can get selected, but I don’t think it’s that easy. ...but as HR, we make sure we reach the announcement to the maximum young crowds.”

The above quotes suggest that landing a creative role in talent talent-based industry, such as the FM radio industry, is not bound to any specific academic degree. Additionally, educational degrees offering vocational courses also do not help in placements. Radio is said to be a subconscious medium (Kohli, 2020). It can be seen as a pattern among participants that they were FM listeners and admirers of the medium as kids or while growing up.

The researcher also found that the participants who failed their first or second attempts to get a Programming role in FM radio identified the personality traits they needed to work on, under supervision, they worked on themselves and made it in the industry eventually. This also suggests that one can be trained to do these creative jobs if it is driven by a strong personal observation and willpower.

### **Theme 3: Social Media Following.**

Axial Codes:

- Social media following plays a major role in hiring nowadays.
- Current trends in social media content.

In various forms of digital communications, Social media are a bunch of websites and apps that enable internet users to create and share multimedia content and interact with other

users worldwide (Paljug, 2025). Thus, being in the media business without utilizing social networking sites is not recommendable in today's age, and it is an important aspect that is looked into while placing professionals, especially as an RJ in the FM Radio industry.

P14: "He was chosen over me because he had more social media numbers back then. Had I had more followers, I would have been in Mumbai today. ...It is harsh, but that's the truth."

P9: "Content or followers are not expected from me as a PP..."

P13: "I was having good Instagram followers, and the likes were hitting thousands within a couple of days... other RJs were new...I was so burdened with all those on-ground activities, I can't imagine today."

P10: "...This is ridiculous. I don't enjoy posing and posting for people to judge me based on my looks, but it's sad that I have to. This social media has ruined the magic of being known for your voice... why can't I have a choice? I know people love my voice, my on-air presence. I have my loyal listeners. But every time I post on social media, my followers drop. What's my fault? These are two different sets of audiences. Honestly, I feel helpless."

P18: "It's only the RJs who get all the fame of all the people working behind the stage for the station, right? ...You got to sacrifice something to gain something."

P4: “I transitioned from my RJ role to being a copywriter because I didn’t want to do those monkey activities on Insta, I feel sorry for RJs who have to do it... It should not be a compulsion.”

P19: “We do work on every RJ’s social media profile. It’s a team effort, and a lot of money goes into it. We groom RJs, train them. ...everybody cannot have an instant online persona, they also need to work on it, ...and we expect that because RJs are the face of our brand, and they have to be sellable.”

P12: “Audience doesn’t one hundred per cent like you for your looks, they like you for the content too, and I started getting likes only after trying half a dozen different content ideas, one has to go from this trial-and-error process, ...It’s not a part of your job, it is your job. As an RJ, I have signed up for this life.”

P2: “I am not really an influencer kind of person, but I understand it needs to be done, and I do the bare minimum, like a daily post, no stress”

P21: “A candidate coming with their organic social media numbers is preferred over someone who is just starting...”

Social media is growing exponentially; globally, the number of social network users increased from 970 million in 2010 to 5.24 billion as of January 2025 (DataReportal, 2025). That means these platforms have grown approximately 440% in a decade and a half. India is home to 491 million individual social media users, which is equal to 35% of the total Indian population, i.e. 1.46 billion (Meltwater, 2025).

**Table 4.3:**

*Active Social Media Users Data for Commonly Used Social Networking Platforms by Indian FM Radio Industry Professionals.*

<b>Platform</b>	<b>Active Platform Users</b>	<b>Per cent of India's Population.</b>	<b>Percentage of Reach in Indian Internet Users</b>
YouTube	491 million	35.07%	100%
Instagram	414 million	29.57%	84.4%
Facebook	384 million	27.43%	78.3%
X (Twitter)	24.1 million	1.72%	5%

*Source:* Compiled by The Author from Digital 2025: India (DataReportal, 2025)

Table 4.3 demonstrates the number of social networking site users in India and the segregation of users according to commonly used social networking platforms. The numbers clearly show the potential of reaching a majority of the population. These numbers are presentable and can attract advertisers. Also, it adds to the FM radio stations' brand recall and popularity in the expanding world of digitalization. This is why the skill of using social media is now a decisive factor while hiring talent in the FM radio industry.

The Researcher also found that the number of social media followers not only influences entry-level RJs but is also a key aspect of climbing the career ladder, even if one has been a part of the industry for decades. It was also observed that Radio stations track the social media numbers of top-performing RJs from the competitor brands. And there is a constant clicks war between RJs of the same time band shows. However, there is an equal number of RJs who still want to go back to the pre-camera period and work only for audio radio. Even if this is vicious

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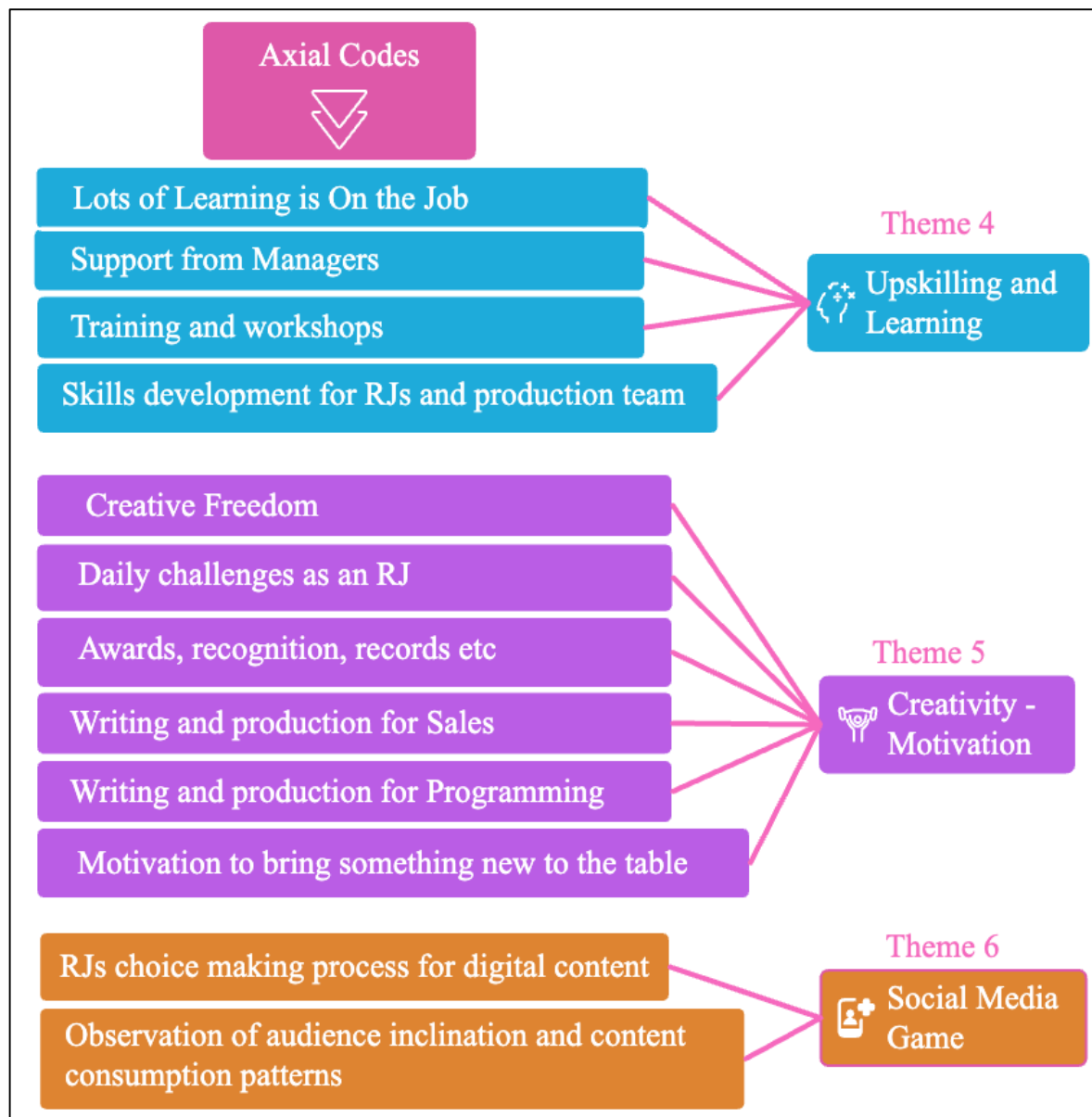
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and the FM radio stations have their reasons for it, it is one of the salient factors affecting the on-air performance of RJs. There are also cases like P3, P4, and P13, who changed the course of their career to dodge the camera compulsion. Participants who have made peace with the multiple role requirement also face everyday work management issues, especially in sales-driven companies.

#### **4.2 Research Question Two - What Innovative Training and Skill Development Practices are arranged for Creative Programming Teams in the FM Radio Industry to Stay Relevant in the Era of Online Streaming?**

The Objective of the study was to examine whether innovative training and skill development practices are arranged for creative programming personnel in the FM Radio industry to help them maintain their relevance in the era of online streaming. Three Themes relevant to the research question two emerged from the axial codes.

- Theme 4: Upskilling and Learning.
- Theme 5: Creativity – Motivation.
- Theme 6: Social Media Game.



*Figure 4.3: Themes Emerging from Axial Codes, Relevant to Research Question 2: Author's Own August 2025*

#### **Theme 4: Upskilling and Learning.**

Axial Codes:

- Lots of Learning is on the Job,

- Support from Managers,
- Training and Workshops,
- Skills development for RJs and the Production team.

In a fast-paced and ever-evolving world, performance-based industries such as the FM Radio industry need to rely on experience-based learning, in which experience is the focus of the learning process (Beard and Wilson, 2018). In the FM Radio industry, similar to all corporate offices, a new joining employee is given an induction, which is a short training and introduction course about the company policies and work culture. Apart from a corporate induction, in the programming team, new employees need to learn a few software, tools and machine systems that they would have to handle as a part of their job.

The word skill is used to describe any systematic action that an organism possesses the capacity to produce within particular conditions (Kaye, 1979). The FM Radio industry, being closely working with technology, it is evident that there are new technological advancements every now and then, and the employees need to be trained to upskill with the technology that a Radio station adopts. Nonetheless, the changes are also seen on a human level, and so there should be certain refresher trainings, workshops, and guidance sessions for renewing the old techniques of working. This theme has notably emerged through the primary data.

P11: "...We were sent for training to the regional office, but we were on our own, recording dummy shows, everyone was new, it was more of a practice week than training, I would say."

P9: "I was sent to Nashik for a 4-day training period before joining my office. I reached there and found the person who was supposed to train me is on leave. So

technically yes, I had a training but wasn't trained, ...I hung around in the office, which was no fun."

P13: "Our company *My FM*, was launching 9 stations at that time, and we were a bunch of new RJs. "They organized a 2-month training at the *Aurangabad* office, we all stayed and trained together; we had a good time. We were asked to do activities to think differently, write our links and record them. We used to quarrel over studio time, but we figured it out. There were experienced professionals from the industry who reviewed our links and suggested corrections. ...That was a golden period; there was no such training after that. Maybe because it was that grand launch time in *Maharashtra*. Later, we only had a few 2-day online workshops."

P15: "Oh, Training was so much fun. I was asked to go to Pune for a 7-day training. There were 4 more RJs joining from different locations, and I was so impressed with the Pune *Radio Mirchi* Office. There were actors walking in the office, RJs were interviewing them. No one else cared, for them it was an everyday affair! ...Actually, *Mirchi's* trainings are *dhamal*, there's no limit to how much you can explore yourself, they help you know more about yourself only, For first couple of days, we sat with one RJ each, just watching them handle the consol, how they answered calls, how they played the hotkeys and the entire process of putting on a show, they also guided us in between, as to why they were doing certain things. Then we were asked to do our links. At first, I was confused

with the consol keys and editing thing, but slowly, slowly I got it. ... I left as an evolved person after the training”

P14: “I was not trained, I was scammed (laughs), I started with Tomato FM in Kolhapur as an intern, and they said that was my 3-month training period. I was supposed to do all the show prep and collection of updates for the RJ and all the extra work. From the second month onwards, I started recording my links after the RJ left the studio. That was the time I also worked on my diction. I used to ask a lot of questions, I remember, the PH was getting irritated with me at times, I learned a lot ...But they didn’t take me on payroll even after 6 months, so I left the station.”

P5: “No, I didn’t get to go for training when I first joined, because supposedly the copywriter I was a replacement for left the office without serving notice period. But it was organized after a year of my joining. Meanwhile, it was my Promo Producer and another copywriter who guided me wherever I needed a push.”

P4: “Yes, a training was organized at our station itself; they called somebody to train us from outside, but I was not new to FM; I was just transitioning from being an RJ to a Copywriter. ...I think I knew way better than that guy who was sent as a trainer”

P18: “Every new talent goes through a training process, ...sometimes there might be nobody holding their hand and teaching all the time, because it’s more of doing and improving scenarios. We want to know the RJs’ level first by letting them do

a couple of full-fledged shows. Then their links are heard on many levels, and then we suggest the RJ make improvements; they are taught the what, why and how. Once that is done, it's the RJ who has to practice it until they get a hold of their studio equipment, multitasking, and doing it all in time. It's like learning to drive. Just knowing how to drive doesn't make you a good driver on the road, you know. Time is precious here; the more time they spend practicing, the less time they waste during a show. ... We also set up training on a requirement basis, even after probation or after 5 years of joining, but if they need an update, there's no end to upgrading."

P20: "Training for Programming roles is organized on the regional level, usually an experienced person holding the same role is sent as a trainer. The number of trainers depends on the role and the number of trainees. And we try to put all recruits who are on the same level of experience in one training, so they are on the same page. Normally, recruitments happen twice a year, if there are no exceptions. ... And workshops for existing employees are organized yearly, during less busy days of the year, as the calendar permits. Sometimes extra workshops are also organized in between if we get a request from team managers and we have enough employees attending them. ... In the FM industry, backups have to be arranged beforehand because the daily work never stops."

Training and workshops are an essential part of the FM radio industry; the above data states different scenarios of arrangements of training and workshops for newly joined creative role employees. Even though there is a difference in personal expectations of RJs and production

teams from training, the Radio stations do not fail to provide training to recruits. Most of the employers get what they are training the employees for, and they limit the sessions accordingly. For instance, in some cases, like P4, P11, P14, and P5, the employees feel it's not enough, but the managers are the decision makers here.

However, upskilling and learning are also requirements for existing talents. Most of the FM radio stations arrange for 2 to 7-day workshops as refreshers for creativity for existing and senior talents.

P23: "I feel training is required for everybody every day, it's a changing world. The way technology is changing, the environment is changing. We need to keep ourselves updated to new things that are happening." (TheSellSide, 2024).

P5: "...But I thoroughly enjoyed and felt a shift in my writing after the 3-day workshop that I attended after a year in Noida. These workshops stir our sometimes-stagnant ideas"

P12: "Yes, my employer arranges for learning courses by default as well as on request, but I believe it is more of a self-journey. When I meet different variety of people every day, I learn new things and I also use those in my shows."

P19: "There are times when we have to cancel or postpone offline workshops, or conduct them online, because everybody can't go together, the work has to go on, it is still manageable with RJs, but not that easy for production teams, because clients can't be kept waiting. To solve this issue, we either divide the team into two groups and one group works for both while one group is in a workshop, or we

extend the number of days and keep it a half-day activity. Nowadays, online workshops save time as well as money.”

P8: Fever FM has a tie-up with an online learning platform where we can find all useful courses that help us gain more skills, polish our present skills and learn about new software, increase our digital competence and do everything to uplift our efficiency. We can also ask our employer to add certain courses.

...Everything is available, but where is the time? We already work beyond working hours, and the spots never end. So occasionally we do scroll through a course but have no time to practice it.”

P3: “Workshops are fun, when a bunch of creative minds come together, that becomes memorable. In the last one, I was happy to share my thought process and know others’ ideas, I mean, there are simple things that can help you break a pattern, and with regular and fast work, copywriters often start forming a pattern of writing. ... we are taught how to think differently in similar situations, or how to apply one unused idea to another product to save time and effort. In workshops, they even give us some exercises, which we can do on our desk or in breaks to refresh our minds.”

P22: “When small updates come for any software or tool, we as the technical team often go desk to desk to just give a heads-up about the update and how it can be used. It’s only when the Radio station replaces some technology with another, like the scheduling software or mixing consoles, that we need to conduct training.

...If we talk about the technical team's training, then that's a difficult spot, we are often on the run, fixing connections, this line is down, that system is down, and we are only 2 people for an office of 45 people, imagine the workload. So we try to learn from trial and error sometimes, and other than that, we get an explainer email like a user manual, or video modules for new technology, that we can refer to when we get some time. We can't leave the station unattended.”

As the data mentions, the FM Radio employers organize training and development workshops regularly, and there is a difference between the employees' expectations and employers' arrangements, which differs from brand to brand. However, the study reveals a persistent issue with all FM stations, which is time management. Developing skills takes time, and the FM Radio industry has no time. It is observed that the skills are introduced to a beginner with much ease, but once you get a show, it is more of a learning-on-the-job situation. Thus, it emerges as a challenge on a human level. Apart from time management in creativity skills, the challenge also goes on to technical advancements. A study conducted on the impact of ICT on learning-on-the-job states that too much technology can be as destructive as too little, to dynamic industries like the FM Radio industry, which often practices on-the-job learning (Hortovanyi and Ferincz, 2015). Managers encourage upgrading, but workload pressures often set back participation in structured courses.

### **Theme 5: Creativity - Motivation.**

Axial Codes:

- Creative Freedom,
- Daily Challenges as an RJ,

- Awards, recognition, records, etc.
- Writing and production for spots/ sales,
- Writing and production for programming
- Motivation to bring something new to the table.

A study conducted by Hennessey (2001, p.47) states that there is a clear connection between an individual's motivational orientation towards a task and the creativity they show in performing it. And that a large part of motivation is strongly influenced by the environmental conditions, in this case, the office environment. Certain environmental factors can kill intrinsic motivation and hinder creative performance, which include expected reward, competitive pressure, constant surveillance, harsh deadlines and most critically, the prospect of evaluation.

The Programming division of the FM radio industry precisely works on creativity, whether that is for traditional on-air programs or the newly evolving aspect of digital content. It is as important for RJs as it is for Production teams. This theme emerged out of the participants' descriptions of what their office day looks like.

P4: "after 14 years of experience, out of which 8 years working as a copy writer, now I have come to the point where I don't even give it a thought, if the sales guy says the client want it according to some given reference, I just go ahead and give a similar script, because now I know my creativity is going to be wasted with that client. ...When a client asks for a creative spot, I give them something that will stand out to the listeners, because there it is valued. And clients who understand creativity also give time."

P1: “I enjoy making programming elements, especially audio stories, it’s only where I can experiment and use all my creative thoughts.”

P9: “With my previous employers, that is My FM, and Orange FM, I used to have 10 underlays ready on my Sony Vegas, as soon as the script came, we recorded a voice, stick that on one of the ready underlays and render. ...because everything was an urgent requirement there, and they rarely cared if I ever put in some efforts to create a different BGM (background music).”

P6: “You are asking about creativity, we have clients who bring in 20 minutes of audio and they want it fitted in 20 seconds, how on earth do I think of something creative there, no chance! It’s not even practical.”

P5: “I try not to give any vanilla ads, but don’t stick to creativity as I used to before. Because, I used to get very discouraged when I would put 2 hours of my time and write something very creative, even the client liked it, those spots were capable of winning recognitions and then it turned out that the client has limited budget, and they want the spot to be reduced from 20 seconds to 12 seconds or even 10 seconds. And we had no choice but to remove the creative part only. Or there is a popular statement in the FM industry, “*maja nahi aaya*” (*I didn’t enjoy it*). Dude, what exactly do you want? It’s sad sometimes, clients should know what they are looking for.”

P10: “I am very creative with sarcasm, and it’s actually very entertaining if taken sportily, and it’s not easy to create good sarcastic links. But unfortunately, in today’s age, people get offended; often, they do not understand sarcasm...”

P15: “Sometimes, I am exhausted, there can be something not so good going on in my life, in the office or just not feeling well, it can be anything. And being creative needs me to be in a good mood and motivated, but life is not always cheerful, still, we have to do the show, with the same energy and spark. So yeah, I skip on creativity then, I do have a plane, regular shows on such days.”

P17: “I must have something in me that I survived this career for 18 years, right? I can be funny, serious, sarcastic, and entertaining. I can put the content in an engaging manner, and it becomes easy to do that with time. Given that you have the freedom to practice creativity. It can’t flourish if you have tight boundaries or if you are only doing a show according to a CLB regularly.”

P14: “I don’t know exactly how many people like my show, or exactly how much revenue is generated by my show; we only have a rough idea. But the only certain thing that I can get is recognition, when I don’t get a star of the month or a reward or even a simple tap on my shoulder for going an extra mile from my manager, I am surely not putting in any extra efforts that I would have otherwise or have any willingness to work creatively. That happens naturally.”

P7: “I am always motivated to do creative stuff, because I usually manage work for myself, I have set a few professional boundaries on who and how much work

can be assigned to me, and I complete my tasks with complete zeal towards my work. My manager is very supportive, Mirchi has a healthy work environment, and we maintain it.”

P12: “With my loyalty towards my company, I have gained their trust, and that trust gives me the freedom to work on my conditions, in my way. My manager keeps me posted via email if any new RJ mentions, or interview or an on-ground is lined up in my show. So, if I wake up at noon, and start my work at 1 pm, I only have to read all my e-mails, and I get things going, nobody is sitting on my head to get the status of my work, they know I will do what is assigned. In fact, it’s the trust that makes me do things without fail.”

P19: “To keep teams motivated, we practice team bonding exercises, we keep the office environment healthy and resolve any conflicts, plus we have weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual distributions of awards, rewards and recognitions. And as far as creativity is concerned, to break the possibility of pattern formation, we conduct workshops and refresher activities. ...No matter how much we try, someone will still be unhappy. We call them creative differences, and even some business decisions take a toll on production teams as well as RJ sometimes.”

P3: “I cannot practice my creativity if it’s not sellable, it’s that simple and miserable. If I have a sparkler that can bring a sponsor, it can replace any unsponsored element in the log, no matter how creative that was. It won’t be

wrong if I say, creativity doesn't take calls in the FM Radio industry, revenue does.”

It is distinct in the quotes above that the word “creativity” matters deeply to programming professionals, and they do practice most of the things within their reach to keep the motivation in place to put out creative work. From the management's perspective, creativity is periodically refreshed through targeted workshops, and to keep motivation high, recognition and appreciation are provided. But practical constraints such as the client's decision, time limit, urgency, unclear briefs, and work pressure do impact the creativity in production teams. Whereas in a strictly monitored environment, lack of appreciation and lack of creative freedom impact the overall Programming workforce.

Hence, the study finds talent, creativity and motivation management to be a challenge in the FM Radio Industry. However, FM Radio operators such as Radio City and Radio Mirchi are practicing healthy departmental boundaries and supportive managers to overcome these challenges.

### **Theme 6: Social Media Game.**

Axial Codes:

- RJ's choice-making process for digital content,
- Observation of audience inclination and content consumption patterns.

A similar theme is discussed under research question one, about the importance of social media following numbers in the recruitment process of RJs. However, often the social media following numbers are never enough; it is expected to show continuous growth to match and eventually surpass the top influential RJs and other social media content creators in competition.

P12: “The process of finding your content takes consistent effort and time. I tried half a dozen content creation ideas, and then found my crowd among anime lovers.”

P15: “We can never know which content will work for whom, and most importantly, when. A video that I created first when Instagram introduced video; previously, it was only photos and posts. I recorded myself doing a link in the studio; it was general content. I didn’t get any likes. Years later, when TikTok was banned in India and Instagram hyped, that old video started getting likes. ...but I am glad I didn’t leave making videos. Because when any of your videos surfaces like this, the audience wants to watch more of your content. So you need to have that kind of data on your account.”

P4: “It’s not true that people don’t like good content; they do. They just prefer a better presentation, so if you have good content, take some more efforts to make it look better, on screen, put enough lights, make sure your sound is recorded, your background is clean, these things make a difference.”

P10: “I was making life lessons content in the beginning, that wasn’t working. ...later I started asking my PH, we tried a few things, but I don’t think social media is my place, now I only put the client’s posts, our on-ground pictures and activity announcements. ... because I believe that social media should be used by RJ to promote their On-air show, the Station activities, etc, not the other way around.”

P21: “When a show is assigned to any RJ, we define his or her personality and everything is designed around it. Similarly with social media, we do photoshoots for their posts, their display profile pictures, their banners, etc. It’s a team effort, the production team, interns, marketing and office staff help RJ with brainstorming, visualization, writing content, filming videos and editing them. Some RJs handle it on their own, but the team works together every time any assistance is required. Especially around On-grounds, events and festival period.”

P11: “I make sure I post every Tuesday and Thursday, and Saturday, consistency has to be there. If I don’t give out some content for my followers, they will move on somewhere else.”

P14: “People like watching my *Kolhapuri* content, I do make other regional content also, but I feel *Kolhapuri* very personal, I enjoy making it, I don’t even have to search for content for that, as it comes naturally to me...I can make videos on the go, after all, I am a good actor.”

P13: “Even if I have a good number of followers, whenever I think of starting a new series on YouTube or Instagram, I make sure I have at least 40 videos ready before I post the first one. Kudos to those who make video when they have to post it, but I think as an RJ I can get busy anytime, and that can disrupt my video posting schedule.”

P8: “The prefix RJ has a lot of weight, you know. I see hundreds of accounts on social media, where they use RJ in their name, whereas that person is not even

working in the FM industry; maybe they have worked before, but not right now. And makes people look down on those who work in FM Radio? The respect and credibility that comes with FM Radio is unmatched; you can't have that even if you are among the top content creators. And they know it. They can't drop that RJ in the name because they know that will make them stand out from the crowd."

P17: "I have seen the pre-social media FM Radio fame, it was something else, it had substance to it. I miss that time. Now I have to be presentable and all prepped all the time, because there are clients, guests, contest winners or fans walking in the office, and I have to be ever-ready to click a picture or make a video. It's too much work."

P4: "Radio City is cost-cutting; they are doing a mass layoff in multiple stages this year. And the criteria are fat-salaried employees and zero-performing employees. But if an employee like me was well performing for 8 years, how can I become zero performing in the last 1 year? That doesn't make any sense. But I believe it's not performance related to FM Radio, but performance related to social media. People who don't fit in their *Radigitalization* vision."

P9: "From what I have observed, the public on social media is not looking for *gyan*, they want entertainment only, they want something that will give a break from daily hustle, for the matter of fact, most cringiest content has more followers than the saints and scientists, tell me if it's not true. Cat and dog videos have millions of views and likes, and people even subscribe to these channels.

Whenever an RJ ask me for a content idea, I always tell them not to put too much brain into it. Keep it easy.”

P1: “It’s very important to answer the question – Why? Like, what is the reason you want to run this social media page before thinking about content really. If you have something that you do in your life and you want that work to reach to other people, that’s one case. Then your work is your content, simple! Here, your work is your primary thing, and social media is a second thing...But if you are doing something just to make videos out of it, where your social media is primary and what you do is secondary, then I think that should be kept as easy as possible, because it may not work and you would not want to make losses.”

Social media has indeed taken considerable space in the FM radio industry; 100% of the participants had a say on what the strategy could be while working with the new medium, but none of them were sure. While a few have successfully established themselves on the Social networking platforms, they testified that the success came from trial and error. If not all, some suggestions can be derived from the interviews for a better social media performance, such as consistency, regularity, simplicity, efforts in preparing content, and owning it.

Radio Jockeys and the marketing team, more than the Production team, integrate social media into their professional identity as a promotional tool and as an interaction and engagement platform with the audience. This contributes to the personal brand development of RJs, promotes FM radio visibility and creates a brand recall among listeners. The use of social media for FM Radio proves beneficial, but not all participants agreed that it is essential or easy for them to practice it with their daily duties as an RJ. The schedule to prepare and put on a show on-air is

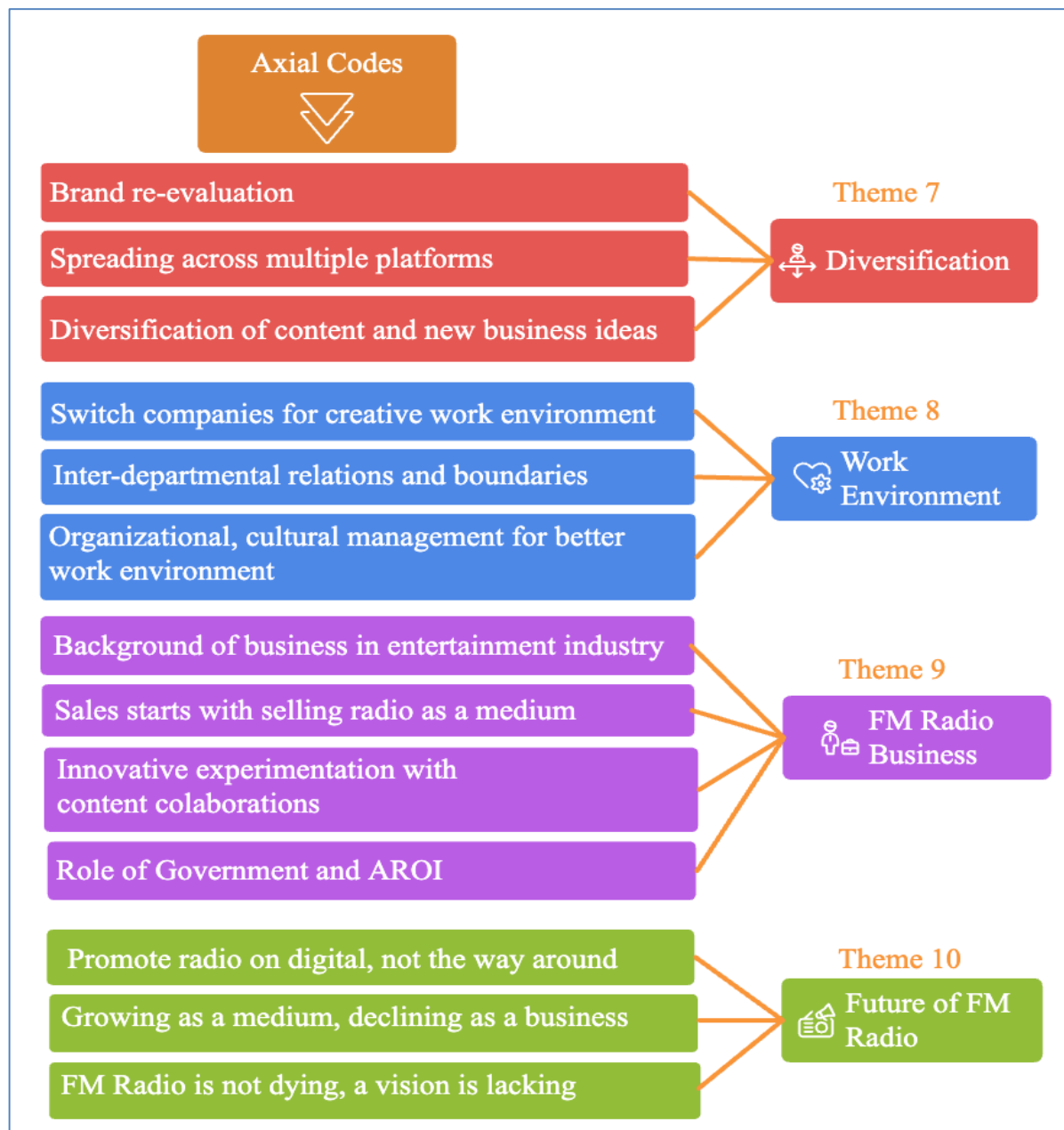
already busy, and adding content creation does contribute to distraction, exertion, running out of ideas, and exhaustion of creativity in RJs.

Thus, RJs being content creators is like having two creative jobs at the same time, and managing both single-handedly can drain creativity; that is no work satisfaction. leaving no time for a personal life, piling up stress and imbalance, leading to a drop in motivation, and emerging as a reason for talent dropouts.

#### **4.3 Research Question Three – What is the Management’s Approach and Operational Strategy to help FM Radio Stations remain Competitive and Commercially Sustainable amid the Digital upset?**

The Objective was to study the management approaches and operational strategies used by FM Radio stations in India to stay competitive and commercially viable. Four relevant Themes to the research question number 3 emerged from the axial codes, providing an insight into the business angle of the FM Radio industry, particularly influencing the professionals working in the programming department of the FM radio stations.

- Theme 7: Diversification.
- Theme 8: Work Environment.
- Theme 9: FM Radio Business.
- Theme 10: Future of FM Radio.



*Figure 4.4: Themes Emerging from Axial Codes, Relevant to Research Question 3: Author's Own August 2025*

### **Theme 7: Diversification.**

Axial Codes:

- Brand re-evaluation,
- Spreading across multiple platforms,
- Diversification of content and new business ideas.

In the Indian Media and Entertainment industry, not just finances are growing, but also the number of audiences is growing exponentially, as the stats suggest an adult Indian spends 4.8 hours on average per day on their mobile devices (DataReportal, 2025). The Media Convergence phenomenon occurring in the FM radio industry is the result of diversification in the FM Radio industry.

FM Radio Operators are spreading the business to digital platforms, new media and even into AI-generated content. However, the study attempted to find, how the adaptation is taking place, while the FM radio industry is reinvesting huge shares of its revenue back in new media platforms.

P23: "...We're not dropping radio; radio remains our core business. it is a cash cow for us, two-thirds of our revenue comes from radio and although the other businesses are growing faster but it doesn't mean that we are not focused on radio, right? So, *radio* from the name we dropped because as *Mirchi* over more than a decade, actually, for the last 15 years we expanded ourselves into doing far more than radio. ...We expanded into event businesses back in 2008-09, we have a streaming platform like *Gaana*, and the audience looks at us as an entertainment brand. We are not purely radio, we are there in event space, we are there in the digital space, *Mirchi* is way beyond radio... And I would give credit to Mr. AP Parigi and Mr. Prashant Pandey for their vision...All our major shows, like

Kareena Kapoor's show, are designed to be multi-platform, optimized content for multiple consumption ways, including video clips for social media." (Kanabar, 2023).

P25: "In this exciting juncture of innovation and expansion, I am thrilled to announce the launch of our pioneering channel, RC Studio, on JioTV and JioTV+. The launch marks a historic point in our journey, reflecting our brand's evolution and commitment to 'Radigitalization'. Our RC Studio's tagline, 'Mast Raho', encapsulates our dedication to crafting a comprehensive digital experience that caters to our existing and new audiences. Radio City has always been a frontrunner when it comes to innovative concepts, and with this launch on JioTV, we are forging the future of entertainment by providing a platform that ignites excitement and engages viewers and brands alike in ways like never before!" (Dwivedi, 2023).

P24: "The shift to digital radio presents both challenges and also opportunities, particularly in India. Broadcasters are not just competing with each other, but also with social media and gaming for the audience's screen time. We are riding the waves of change, and they resonate with the promise of digitally fulfilling a listening experience for a new audience." (Sharma, 2023).

P24: "Events have become a key revenue pulling stream for radio stations, Our goal is a 50:50 revenue sharing between traditional advertising and new streams.

We are working hard to reach 50% of non-radio revenue from 30% now through IP, digital initiatives and influencer marketing.” (Chakraborty, 2025).

It has been observed that FM radio stations sustain competitiveness by diversifying revenue streams. On one hand, Mirchi claims that they diversified to invest in other media; not many other stations agree with it, rather they state that they diversified to decrease dependence on traditional ad sales. Research from Boston University found that firms diversifying into unrelated areas have been able to generate superior performance over those with predominantly related businesses (Michel and Shaked, 1984).

### **Theme 8: Work Environment.**

Axial Codes:

- Switch companies for a creative work environment,
- Inter-departmental relations and boundaries,
- Organizational, cultural management for a better work environment.

The researcher has mentioned the importance of a healthy work environment for creativity-based industries in Chapter 2 within 2.2.4 Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory of Motivation.

The physical workplace environment can be utilized to help shape a company’s organizational culture and enable communication, teamwork and creativity that are essential for performance, to retain talents and company image in small industries such as the FM radio industry (Earle, 2003). Word of mouth has great importance in building perception of a company, as work is evident, but talents are more interested in working with companies that value them.

P19: “When best of my team members say, they want to resign, I can only request them not to, because I was an RJ too, I know what they are craving for, and that they do not have that in this company, so as a manager I try my best to retain, we can offer a hike or a change of position but as a human I understand them.”

P11: “We have a chill ambience here. I can take a coffee break, have my noodles in the cafeteria, which is right here, I can just sit and chill in the lobby before or after my show, and most importantly, I can give my opinions as a team member. ...I would not switch back even for a higher salary. No, sorry, I am very happy with *Mirchi*.”

P4: “To be honest, my marriage was falling apart due to my work stress. I was willing to, but I never had any time or energy to spend with my family... The minute I got to know about the vacancy, I decided to switch. I was ready to switch even on the same package, but I did get a 15% hike, and that was the correct decision I have made in my life. ...Sales-driven companies are of no good for writers...”

P9: “When the sales guys used to jump the line, not follow the requesting process, or even ask for working on the client’s personal requests like birthday mashups, or anniversary AV, so that he can maintain his relationship and get business sometime down the line, there was no use in involving my manager in any case. He would always be on the sales side, and involving him would mean I am asking

him to monitor me, if I have done the extra work on time as per the sales' wish. Because at *MY FM* we all used to only serve the sales."

P12: "I switch when I start realizing, this is getting easy for me, I am getting comfortable here, I don't like to do routine work."

P5: "Other than the festival period, which is our peak work time, everything is okay, nobody loses their temper, and there is an understanding. While being fun and creative, we keep it professional. I feel like the team in *Fever*; I am currently working with is mature...I would only think of leaving if someone offers me my home location."

P15: "We have a mandate kind of thing in our office. Everybody has to wish greetings of the time of the day, for example, if it's noon, I will say "*Good Afternoon Shamal*", and you will do the same, with a smile. It is funny to have such a mandate, you know, like it's basic, but still I feel, it makes a difference, I feel welcomed and happy all day."

P23: "Motivation comes from the hunger within, and I think, Passion translates to sales, that's why I always encourage my sales teams to do at least two things that interest them, it can be a hobby, we have games, we have no boundaries for lending a voice for spots, so they can record too, we have art session and much more, it keeps their mood uplifted and brings the best out of them...They are as important as my programming teams; we take the office environment seriously. As a team leader, I need to make sure my team has enough arms and ammunition

to perform. Also, we don't believe in Micromanaging. There's no counting of hours; the trust level we have in a person is what comes first for us... We have a growth mindset." (Kanabar, 2023; TheSellSide, 2024).

P18: "We give attention to how seniors deal with the newbies. It has to be a playful environment. Because I feel that can be a deal breaker with creative people. If some wants to know something, they must feel comfortable asking it to anybody in the office without any inhibitions; if that doesn't happen, we are not growing."

P14: "It was very ugly with my previous employer, as if I were not a human. But with *City*, if I am seen in the office working extra time for even 10 minutes, I get a call from HR, asking *if everything is alright*. I feel I am taken care of; everything is reasonable and makes more sense."

P7: "Annually, we receive a team letter from our CEO, which sets a tone. Like we all know what the company policies, goals, expectations or working standards are. We are all on the same page that way... We are all equally respected, I am called by my name, and so is everyone else; there is no sir or madam, or boss, elder or younger, simply call by their first name."

Preserving a lightly monitored, creativity-friendly and culturally supportive workplace is necessary for retaining talent in the FM Radio Industry. The study finds that all the FM radio stations are trying flexible management styles, with no rigid hierarchy, open communication between departments, and enabling space for free expression helps reduce harassment. A positive

environment attracts skilled professionals, even from competing stations. Money, location, job description and miscellaneous perks remain secondary.

Managers are an important connecting thread here in maintaining a hygienic workplace environment. A manager's overall experience in the FM Radio industry plays a significant role in understanding these nuances. Managers coming from a non-radio background, non-local, or culturally non-inclusive and without prior programming experience, fail to understand the aim, creating a disturbance in the system.

### **Theme 9: FM Radio Business.**

Axial Codes:

- Background of the business in the entertainment industry,
- Sales start with selling radio as a medium,
- Innovative experimentation with content collaborations,
- Role of Government and AROI.

The FM Radio business has evolved from being a purely infotainment-driven medium to a regulated industry that is struggling to be recognized as a serious business venture. The researcher herself has experienced during this study that FM Radio is not looked up to as a business by other businesses, as well as the general public. It is considered more of a side hustle of a bigger media house in the business realm and purely an entertainment stream by the consumers. The FM Radio industry has come a long way since it initially started off as a totally new concept, simultaneously for all, the industry professionals, advertisers and audience.

P23: “*Mirchi* has always been a visionary in the Radio Industry. We have educated clients on how the medium works, and I have always encouraged my sales teams to be solution-oriented for the client, who is the advertiser. Because if they get a benefit, it will benefit us in total. We have our own Brewery cell, which works for branding and helping our top clients to utilize the strength of the medium. And Sales in the FM Radio industry need us to be patient; it takes at least 2 months to crack a new client, so yeah, it is a challenging job. At the end of the day, what are we selling? Just air! We don’t have a physical product or particular service to sell...65% of our revenue comes from advertising that we do, and 35% of our revenue comes from other things that we do... We have also acquired *Gaana*, the music streaming platform. Talking about new media, *Mirchi*, under ENIL, has made a remarkable strategic shift into video content, increasing from 9000 videos a year in 2020 to over 30,000 videos annually today. Distributed across all *Mirchi*’s platforms, on social media handles and YouTube, giving us an average of 418 million views per month. Our content on Social media boasts an approx. 2.5 times higher engagement rate than other entertainment companies...One of our latest businesses is that we are one of the largest digital audio inventory aggregators. It’s an advertising product, it’s called M Ping! The digital-audio space is a small industry and a difficult space, similar to FM radio, 20 years ago, so we are still educating clients on that front... I would say we are not competing with any other radio company. We don’t go and sell seconds. We do a multimedia solution approach. And most of the media are

available within the Times group and ENIL.” (Kanabar, 2023; TheSellSide, 2024).

P8: “I think the Radio Operators are not pushing the government enough, they are not putting enough pressure, and we lack willpower to do so, I mean, why are we trying to survive in given circumstances? Why can’t we put forward our demands and stick to them? After chasing for 15 years, it’s only now that we are talking about revising ALF and extension of license period, it’s only now that the TRAI has permitted broadcasting news on FM Radio under conditions. But the mandate of the FM Radio app in every handset is only on paper. How can companies like Apple, Oppo, Vivo, sell a phone in the Indian Market if they don’t abide by our government regulations? And then we say the industry is dying... FM radio stations are competing with each other on advertising rates, and in that process, we are lowering in rates to attract clients; we are doing our own harm. Why can’t AROI, like the CREDAI, give one minimum rate, and every radio station agrees not to fall below that minimum rate? Sometimes, it seems like people running radio stations do not want to take the effort for the FM radio to live beyond their careers. There are solutions if we try to find, but there is not enough will in the industry itself...And there is no solid reason to be really so impressed with new media. On FM Radio, I know each evening there is a crowd of at least 5 to 7 lakh people, if not more, listening to FM radio in their cars, and we at least have a fair idea of which audience is listening during which hour of the day, which helps in

reaching the target groups. But we don't have those proofs if an ad is reaching its target audience on digital? Who tracks the clicks?"

P24: "*Red* is aggressive. We call ourselves a provocative entertainer; we take challenges very boldly, and our risk-taking is something that sets us apart. The radio industry is very very regulated, unlike the new media... We invest in a good team, train them, and build them to be leaders of the future. We are not just Radio, *Red* is a Brand, and radio is one of the many things we do, as *Red FM*, for instance, we've branched out to on-ground, events, concerts, in the music space, comedy space. We've also branched out to the digital and online space. Radio is not just entertainment as it is perceived; it is a serious medium that works when no other medium does, and therefore, I think easing out certain regulations for radio is very critical. For example, news on FM Radio or sports commentary will help new players to come in, and it will help the industry to grow, as it just allows more variety to come in programming, and the more content, the more likely to grow... It's not that people don't want to listen to ads, but an excess of anything is bad, so yes! In an hour when the spots do increase more than a stipulated time, it gets a little irritating. But having said that, just to ease that out, I come back to the whole regulatory aspect, for instance, we have a frequency in Mumbai, in the form of *Magic FM*, we paid some 123 odd crores for a 15 year licence, or in Delhi another station taken for some 170 odd crores, now to make it into a profitable venture, one needs to play the ads... I don't see any radio stations competing with each other really; we are competing with the fast-changing technology. And

adapting to these technical changes is a challenge for the whole industry...From the content point of view for the online media, we've got it, programming is not the issue; but I think from the business point of view, copyright is a very very big issue, the royalty is so high, that it is unaffordable, and I will have to pay it twice for using the song on both, FM and the audio OTT. It is the reason why most radio players are not coming up with online radio stations, so there's a huge entry barrier." (WCRCLeaders, 2018).

P25: "...Radio City's debut on JioTV. Radio City will be the first-ever radio station in the country to introduce a 24x7 video channel under the banner of RC Studio...This will not only extend the reach of Radio City but it will also provide advertisers with endless opportunities to engage with a mass audience. Through this associate, we will be able to reach out to 1000 channels in more than 16 languages and 12 genres through JioTV mobile apps."

Industry professionals described radio sales as an intangible exercise of "selling air". Industry giants are transitioning into revenue generation by diversification into digital platforms, events, collaborations with other media, and other businesses. Despite these innovations, the sector continues to face challenges of heavy regulation, high licensing costs, and a lack of a unified industry strategy threaten the industry's financial sustainability.

Hence, despite its proven reach and cultural relevance in India, without a strategic vision, the risk remains that radio as a business will be sidelined as a secondary business of conglomerate media houses and largely sustain itself only in metro markets.

## Theme 10: Future of FM Radio.

Axial Codes:

- Promote radio on digital, not the way around.
- Growing as a medium, declining as a business.
- FM Radio is not dying; a vision is lacking.

The FM Radio has been a robust medium for communication because of its qualities such as accessibility, affordability, local engagement and immediacy in transmission (Ajisafe and Dada, 2023). These features enable its exclusive connections with the masses, often incomparable by digital platforms. However, FM radio faces significant challenges that threaten its viability if considered in a modern context of a business evolving with media convergence.

P10: “See, I understand promoting my radio show on my social media, which brings more listeners to my show and my FM Radio station, it increases our brand recall, and we are in sight. What I don’t get is the excessive promotion of my social media handles on FM Radio. And then we put most of our activities in our posts. We have bumpers, sweepers, promos, and then I have to also mention my social media handles with an appeal to *follow me there*, in my on-air link sign-off. Doing that for at least 4 RJs daily is an insane wastage of on-air time. We need to think, if we are going the wrong way.”

P23: “I should hire people smarter than me, not less smart, fearing that a smarter one may outgrow me. I mean, that’s the way you grow. Otherwise, how else will you bring smartness in the organization? If you are hiring your replicas, you’ll be stagnant, not growing.” (TheSellSide, 2024).

P24: “There has been a huge listenership increase that has been happening during the last two to three years, particularly during COVID times. These are our internal research reports, and that increase is mainly from tier 2, tier 3 towns outside the metros. That being said, there are some particularly new experiences coming up, one is the whole audio experience, so it’s not about radio anymore, it’s about audio. Which includes the whole emergence of Twitter Spaces, chatrooms, audio experiences, and podcasts, I mean, I remember two years back, the podcast listenership went up to 67% within one year, which is a huge jump. The way we produce audio programming has also changed, so now there is so much more focus on sound scaping, storytelling, and the audio experience. Today, 40-45% of our music is independent music, under Red Indies. Indie music is created for the love of music, and that reflects in it. I believe the platforms will come and go, but the brand remains. The brand has to grow. Over the last few years, I have seen the FM radio industry as a whole has developed and worked towards a social responsibility. The FM Radio medium has great potential, not only on the business front but as a mass medium. We are advocating for FM Radio media with the government authorities, so that we can use the full potential of the medium. Currently, the proposition is to allow radio not just on mobile handsets, but also on Bluetooth speakers, wireless devices, headphones and other gadgets, because you want to buy, you don’t really have a radio set in stores nowadays. It has to be beyond cars, to reach most of the general public.” (afaqs, 2023).

P4: “I don’t think that radio needs to worry to this extent about digital. I believe the FM Radio as a medium is doing fine. I am not sure about the business part, though. If it’s for increasing revenue streams, that’s a different story. But the listeners are not shifting. It’s just the FOMO that is being created around new media, I feel. See, if I am somebody who is just a silent listener of FM Radio, or TV or any traditional media, and I am fine with these media doing their work, keeping me informed and entertained. If at all, I want to reach out to them, raise any requests or concerns, there are still emails and phone calls that we can do. My point is, everything does not need to be interactive communication all the time. And I know for a fact that at least 30% of Indians are still offline, and even if we use the internet, we are simply spectators; we don’t raise our voice or have any productive opinion or comment to make. People who do that is a different crowd; they are the digital audience. FM listeners are a different crowd, and will always exist. We are a growing population and a growing economy. I don’t understand what the confusion is and why this narrative is being sold that the entire world is shifting to digital. Look out of those screen, for once.”

P22: “Sometimes, as a technical person, we are not involved in every programming or change”

According to industry leaders and participants of this study, the future of FM radio is bright regarding its relevance as a medium, but concerning about its viability as a business. They also underlined the importance of vision-driven leadership and smarter talent management to keep Radio stations innovative and future-oriented. Hence, the debate is not about radio dying,

because, at least in India, it is not. It is about the strategic adaptation of technology and marking its rightful place in the converging media landscape. Participants from the programming division insist that FM should digitally leverage its live, local and mass engagement strengths, carefully not losing its local touch.

Hence, even if radio is not dying in India according to industry professionals, it still needs a visionary approach and integrated efforts to move beyond the survival narrative and embrace a growth mindset together, to establish itself as a fruitful business along with its credible image as a medium in the digital age.

#### 4.4 Findings

In this qualitative study, the researcher attempted to explore the working dynamics within the FM Radio Industry in India through 25 in-depth semi-structured interviews, under the grounded theory of research, out of which 19 interviews from primary data and 6 interviews taken from secondary relevant sources were analyzed thematically using line to line coding, and the initial 943 codes were further developed into 10 themes (T1 to T10) as shown in [Figure 4.1](#) [Figure 4.1](#), aligned with three research questions of the study.

**Table 4.4:**

*Participant-wise Response to The Degree of Persistence of Challenge in Given Themes.*

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10
P1	5	5	1	5	1	1	1	5	5	5
P2	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	5
P3	5	5	1	2	1	4	4	1	1	5

<b>P4</b>	5	5	5	5	1	1	4	5	1	5
<b>P5</b>	5	5	1	2	1	4	4	4	1	5
<b>P6</b>	5	5	1	5	1	5	5	1	1	5
<b>P7</b>	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
<b>P8</b>	5	5	1	1	1	1	5	2	1	4
<b>P9</b>	5	5	5	5	1	4	5	2	1	4
<b>P10</b>	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	4
<b>P11</b>	1	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>P12</b>	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>P13</b>	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	5
<b>P14</b>	5	5	4	4	5	4	2	2	5	5
<b>P15</b>	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	4
<b>P19</b>	5	2	5	5	1	1	5	2	1	4
<b>P20</b>	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
<b>P21</b>	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
<b>P22</b>	1	5	1	1	1	5	2	1	1	1

Source: Author's own (Primary Data) August 2025.

Table 4.4 presents each participant's rating, on a five-point scale (1 = Absolutely Yes, 2 = Yes, 3 = Neutral, 4 = No, and 5 = Absolutely No), indicating the degree of persistence of challenge/s they have experienced first-hand or observed in the FM Radio Industry. These ratings are derived from the researcher's initial coding of the participants' responses (P1 to P15, P19 to P22) related to the respective themes (T1 to T10), to provide a brief

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understanding of the study's findings. The Table is colour-coded to enhance the reader's comprehension of data, where Purple specifies *absolutely yes, the challenge persists*, Orange specifies *yes*, Blue is *Neutral*, Yellow specifies *no*, and Green specifies *absolutely not a challenge for the industry*.

The following data presents the number of participants, rating on the extent to which they see a challenge within each theme, in percentage. It is compiled from the responses related to the intensity of agreement expressed during the semi-structured interviews from the primary data, referring to whether a challenge persists or not.

**Table 4.5:**

*Percentage of Participants, Scaling the Presence of Challenges Related to Each Theme.*

Theme Vs Rating For N=19	Absolutely Yes (%)	Yes (%)	Neutral (%)	No (%)	Absolutely No (%)
T1- Recruitment	10.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	89.47
T2- Academic Background	0.0	5.26	0.00	0.00	94.74
T3-Social Media Following	42.11	0.0%	0.00	26.32	31.58
T4- Upskilling and learning	21.05	10.53	0.00	15.79	52.63
T5- Creativity Motivation	57.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	42.11
T6- Social Media Game	31.58	0.00	0.00	31.58	36.84
T7- Diversification	15.79	10.53	0.00	26.32	47.37
T8- Work Environment	15.79	26.32	0.00	15.79	42.11
T9- FM Radio Business	47.37	0.00	0.00	10.53	42.11
T10- Future of FM Radio	5.26	0.00	0.00	42.11	52.63

Source: Author's Own August 2025.

Table 4.5 shows how the 19 participants from the primary source perceived the persistence of challenges across the ten themes that emerged from the qualitative data, on a five-point scale. For T1, a majority of 17 participants rated *Absolutely No*, advocating that recruitment is not perceived as a challenge. Only two participants agreed that it is, given the early multiple rejections that they faced. For T2, 18 rated *Absolutely No*, acknowledging that academic qualifications are not considered a challenge in the industry, while one respondent who rated its relevance was rejected in the early days for being underage and an undergraduate, which is a necessary employability clause. For T3, eight participants rated *Absolutely Yes*, stipulating the recognition of social media following numbers as a potential risk in the long run. However, 11 respondents (5 *No* and 6 *Absolutely No*) think it is as necessary as all other parameters on the verge of converging media. For T4, showed mixed responses; six participants considered upskilling a challenge, while the other 13 did not agree with it. This highlights an uneven access to and/or prioritization of skill development at different Radio stations due to underlying time management challenges. For T5, 11 participants rated *absolutely yes*, while 8 rated *absolutely no*. This polarity was observed with a contrasting difference in managerial support and intrinsic drive between the two. T6, with 6 saying *absolutely yes*, another 6 saying *no*, and the rest 7 disagreeing, signifies that the FM Radio industry is not moving in one direction, and even at the same pace. The differences in opinions here were accompanied by differences in the level of adaptation to new media across the industry. For T7, five participants perceived diversification as a challenge with *absolutely yes*, whereas the majority, with 14 respondents, did not agree. The results indicated that diversification is not a challenge on the business front, but an adaptation

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issue for Programming. Because every platform has a slightly different way of presenting content, and that many variations that need to be put out while the team size remains the same. For T8, Responses were biased with personal expectations of participants, irrespective of the pros or cons of those expectations for the FM Radio industry, where 8 respondents accepted it as a challenge and 11 did not. This suggests that work environment challenges do not exist in some of the top radio stations in India, but do exist in the rest of the industry, which mainly refers to implementation issues. For T9, nine participants rated absolutely yes, concerning business sustainability, yet 10 others responded that it is not the case, and they looked at business decline as a transitional phase. But as per the revenue numbers, it is indicated as a business challenge. And for T10, A majority of 18 programming and business professionals disagreed with the narrative of a *dying medium*, with complete confidence in the medium's relevance. Only one participant agreed, reasoning that it's uncertain and the FM Radio industry has a poor hold on the changing scenario.

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of the qualitative data, the following interpretation is summarised for each research question.

- **For Research Question One:** The objective was to know about the novel recruitment criteria adopted by the FM radio Industry in India for programming roles, to meet the demands of media convergence. Thematic analysis of qualitative data emerged with three themes being Recruitment, Academic background, and Social media following numbers. The practices of recruitment, including unconventional interview formats, testing personality traits, and understanding the thought process of a candidate, are relevant for the programming roles. The belief about academic background, which includes minimal

impact of formal degrees in the hiring process of programming roles. Both are indicated as not a challenge for the FM Radio Industry. As per the findings of the study, there is only one risk in the current hiring process, which is the weightage of social media follower numbers. Trying to train a social media content creator to fit the requirements of RJ can become an irreversible investment mistake for a radio station, knowing the speed of the medium.

- **For Research Question Two:** The objective was to examine whether innovative training and skill development practices are arranged for creative programming personnel in the FM Radio industry to help them maintain their relevance in the era of online streaming. Thematic analysis of qualitative data emerged with three themes being Upskilling and Learning, Creativity - Motivation and Social Media Game. Training for RJ recruits is a regularly followed norm across the industry. At the same time, four of the six participants from production roles disclosed that production teams are often occupied, even if trainings are arranged, the trainer has limited time to guide freshmen, they received no formal role-specific training other than induction training upon joining, and it was an urgent appointment. This pointed towards a more presumptuous attitude towards technical and writing roles in the FM Radio industry. The Results underline that much of the learning is on-the-job, supported by once in a while workshops and online guidance sessions for production teams. Other than the traditional methods, innovative upskilling opportunities are made available in the form of online learning platforms, but participants reported a lack of time to benefit fully. This time management issue indicates an implementation challenge. Periodic rewards and recognitions foster motivation, but

repetitive favouritism from managers backfires on creativity affected by demotivation.

Apart from the employer's endeavour it is observed that RJs who are also digitally strong content creators often invest personal efforts in finding their ground in the new media field, demonstrating a shift towards self-directed adaptation towards digital media convergence.

- For Research Question Three:** The objective was to study the management approaches and operational strategies used by selected FM Radio stations to stay competitive and commercially viable. Thematic analysis of qualitative data emerged with four themes being Diversification, Work Environment, FM Radio Business and Future of FM Radio. The findings mention that FM operators have branched into events, music concerts, video content, podcasts, advertising solutions, and also other media platform collaborations to increase revenue generation streams. However, due to regulatory constraints and fragmented adaptation choices, challenges persist, increasing performance pressure on RJs. About workplace management, maintaining a creative and healthy inter-departmental work environment appears as an implementation challenge in sales-oriented FM stations, but verdicts from top management direct towards having a motivated, stressless workplace to retain talent and promote creativity. Findings of the study do not align with the narrative of a “Dying medium or Decline of FM Radio”; instead, participants reframed it as a business challenge only.

## 4.5 Summary

This chapter investigated the operational and management challenges faced by the FM Radio industry's programming professionals in India, amidst the pressure of digital media convergence and changing content consumption habits of audiences. During this study, the researcher also found other challenges that grapple with the FM radio industry, namely time management, implementation and business-only challenges in the participants' responses related to the research questions of the study.

The Study followed grounded theory of research with thematic analysis of qualitative data collected from 25 in-depth semi-structured interviews. The sample primarily consisted of FM Radio programming division professionals in the roles of RJs, Prom Producers, and Copywriters, along with management, HR, technical, organizational and business representatives. Participants' responses provided insights into recruitment, skill sets, adaptation to new media, work culture, and the sustainability of the FM Radio business in India.

### **Key Findings:**

- 89.47% of respondents aligned with the current recruitment process. The Industry has not altered the candidate finalisation method, involving unconventional interviewing practices employed to find the “right person” for the role, irrespective of their academic background, which has been exercised since the beginning. However, 42.11% do not align with the addition to the existing recruitment process, which is the consideration of Social media following numbers of the candidate.
- 68.42% employers are making arrangements for training programs and recruits, as RJs benefit from it. This is not the case for 21.05% Production team recruits, though. However, refresher trainings and workshops for all are not regularly scheduled due to

- a lack of time and resource management. Once in a while, In-house online and in-person workshops are useful, and 10.53% participants agreed to the fact that such workshops help them break their repetitive patterns and writer's blocks. RJs are often guided by Programming heads and other senior RJs on the job; on the other hand, in some cases, inadequate managerial support hampers motivation and creativity in talents. FM Radio operators have come up with online courses that can help talents upskill themselves. This alternative is not coming out as a productive help for programming personnel, due to work pressure and the unavailability of time to visit the learning site. As for Social media skills, RJs who are doing well on new media often personally practice self-inspection, trial and error for choosing content and watching the trends of the media closely.
- While Radio Mirchi, Radio City and Red FM are the top Radio stations where talents are most satisfied and retained, 42.11% respondents reported that work culture and care treatment given to talents by the management and HR hold a place in every talent's conscientious loyalty to give their best productive work out for the station. Productivity is powered by creative freedom, non-hierarchical structure, healthy inter-departmental boundaries monitored by team leaders, and informed functioning are some of the intentional practices followed at peaceful FM Radio offices with high retention and low dropouts of talent.
  - On one hand, 47.37% FM Radio operators are positive about the idea of diversification of content for diversification of revenue streams, and expansion of business to other entertainment media platforms, and programming not being an

- issue. Execution is a challenge here. Because the more diversification, the more platform-relevant skills and time are required to be put in by the RJs to execute it, they, being the face of the Radio stations, have to play multiple roles in a single day. 57.90% of respondents testified that it is leading to exhaustion and mediocre work. This is resulting in an increasing volume of work done that is not converted into revenue or recall.
- FM Radio Operators of the FM Radio Industry show a lack of resemblance in dealing with new-media platforms. 52.64% of FM owners have set up other businesses, and they are different from each other. 89.48% Radio station leaders suggested that they are not competing with each other as Radio brands; but they are competing with rapidly changing technology as a medium every day. Keeping up with the audience's changing media consumption is a challenge; 94.74% of respondents pointed towards the need for a unified effort, as AROI is lacking in overcoming these challenges. Despite the non-synchronicity, FM Radio is a popular medium among listeners and advertisers, as they pursue it as a variety of on-air content. The only challenge that persists is adaptation to new media. FM Radio operators are applying the changes faster than their understanding of the change.

Comprehensively, this study presents insights into the FM Radio industry in India while it navigates through a complex merging landscape of different media. Where adaptability, digital upskilling and organizational culture are becoming central for longer sustainability.

#### **4.6 Implication of Findings:**

##### **Theoretical Implications**

The study provides new, multi-directional insights into the FM Radio industry's operational and talent management practices, using grounded theory and thematic analysis, which suggest that operational inefficiencies and talent management gaps are linked to motivation for creativity, audience recall capacity, and sustainability in the long run (Bevins, 2018; Miner, 2015; William, 2024).

This study contributes to the literature on media management and creative talent workforce dynamics in the Indian FM radio industry, which has been unexplored by the academic world (Adithi, 2018; Rustiawan et al., 2023). Furthermore, the study findings shed light on the media convergence by placing FM radio within India's evolving digital ecosystem. The findings also strengthen the relevance of interpretivist approaches in recording the professionally lived experiences, offering future researchers a methodological pathway for similar creativity-based cultural industries (Charmaz, 2006).

### **Practical and Organizational Implications**

The research uncovers that motivation for creativity, talent retention, upskilling and technological adaptation are focal to FM Radio's sustainability. For Management and organizations, this implies:

- The practice of recruitment that is based on performance (audition) and in-person spontaneous activities helps the FM stations to identify talent that aligns with their brand values, and that they discover to be able to be trained further.
- The relaxation of academic qualifications in the talent selection process benefits FM stations by widening the talent pool and adding flexibility.

- Media convergence has raised expectations and created additional workload pressure on RJs to handle both on-air and online duties, which complicated talent management. Employers arranging for enough training and skill development programs for RJs does not benefit them, because becomes equal to managing two demanding roles simultaneously, if not more.
- Time and Resource Management is a challenge in Upskilling and learning processes, despite the arrangement of training, development workshops and online courses by FM Radio employers.
- Diversification, not only in digital and new media but also in other businesses such as events and On-grounds, proves to be of benefit for the FM Radio Industry from a business and revenue point of view, but the adaptation process has been burdening the RJs, for the sole responsibility of being physically available for all other-than-on-air presence remains on RJs.
- Practising healthy departmental boundaries and supportive managerial interventions is effective in talent's higher work satisfaction and motivation levels.
- Implementation of the head office's designs for work environment augmentation, throughout the ground level, is limited to only a few organizations.
- The FM Radio medium is in demand from active listeners, and engagement of passive listeners with the medium remains high.

### **Future Research Implications**

The FM Radio Industry calls for an updated regulatory structure that supports the FM radio broadcasters in surviving traditional media competition, adopting digitalization and coping

with technological changes without suffering from exorbitant compliance pressures. The Association of Radio Operators for India (AROI) can utilize the study's findings to recommend policies that foster talent development, localized content, solution-based advertising, reduced expenses, and effective technological adoption.

The FM Radio operators are already working on innovative digitalization concepts such as Radigitalization and 360-degree advertising solutions, etc., starting with AI RJs and writing assistance. It also intends to use AI actively for repetitive tasks and use the creativity of its talented workforce on innovative productions. Moreover, aligning FM Radio with the broader new-media vision can place it as a strong interdependent platform rather than a misunderstood fading medium.

#### 4.5. CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

In this Chapter, the researcher has summarised the key findings of the study, distilling and putting them together without repeating the details presented earlier in previous chapters. Reflecting on their comprehensive and broader significance, while maintaining a flow with the research questions of the study. This chapter presents an overview of research findings related to the problem statement, highlighting their possible practical applications in the FM Radio industry and contributions they make to the existing body of knowledge. Thereby, it provides recommendations for both future research and a practical industrial approach, while presenting the findings within the wider frame of the Indian media landscape, as well as indicating viable future directions for further research.

Nonetheless, the researcher has also taken the opportunity to shed some light on new allied areas to the study. These are intended to be closely associated with the industry during further digital upheaval, but were not covered in-depth during this study. In this chapter, the researcher has included her concluding thoughts on the study's core concerns as suggestions: the operational and talent management challenges of the FM Radio Industry in India amid the digital upset caused by media convergence.

### **5.1 Summary**

This thesis explores the evolving operational and talent management challenges in the FM Radio industry in India, with the advent of new media mergers and digitalization in the FM Radio Stations, both as a business and as a media platform. A particular focus was made on the effects of media convergence on the personnel in the programming division of FM Radio stations

and how that influences the audience engagement and ultimately revenue generation. The researcher was motivated to take up this topic by her first-hand experience and professional background being in the FM Radio industry, that while FM radio continues to be an impactful medium in India, it is undergoing a rapid digital transformation which is a result of pressures building from online streaming platforms, changing audience behaviour, and the need for radio professionals with hybrid set of skills, enabling them to multitask for various platforms at once (Alston, 2021; KPMG, 2013; TRAI, 2024).

A Qualitative and Exploratory research methodology was adopted, with an interpretivist philosophy and using Grounded Theory as the primary research strategy (Charmaz, 2006). The primary data collected from the 25 semi-structured interviews gave this study an extensive and sagacious set of data. This was analyzed using a thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). 943 initial codes were derived from the transcripts, further merged to 275 codes, boiling down to the final 34 axial codes, wherein 10 themes were developed, which helped the researcher get to the findings of the study.

The Findings confirmed that there are multiple underlying challenges that the programming personnel in the FM radio industry face during the rapidly occurring media convergence in the industry, which affect the business.

This explorative study was guided by three research questions for investigating the challenges in the FM radio industry, and the following are the concluding remarks based on the findings related to each of the research objectives:

- 1) To know about the novel recruitment criteria adopted by the FM radio industry in India for programming roles, to meet the demands of media convergence.

- In addition to the creativity, spontaneity and presentability, the weightage to social media followers' numbers in the hiring process is being pointed out as concerning by professionals who have witnessed the emergence of the social media tide in the FM radio industry around the late 2010s.
  - Although it calls for a separate skill set from the Programming team, it is of great importance for FM radio operators, whilst they look at social media's potential as another source of revenue generation, from several streams, and for creating an audience, showcasing activities, and a good platform for numerically presenting their RJs' popularity to advertisers.
- 2) To examine whether innovative training and skill development practices are arranged for creative programming personnel in the FM Radio industry to help them maintain their relevance in the era of online streaming.
- Practices based on popular theories in creativity, Workshops that help break any patterns or duplication in work, training for producing new ideas when talent meets a dead end, regular brainstorming sessions with different resource persons, and the latest is industry tie-ups with e-learning platforms, are the different modes used by different radio stations for training and skill development. The industry is doing fairly well with innovation in training and workshops for RJs as well as for the production team, but the challenge lies in execution. Limited manpower for backup and compressed time doesn't allow the employees to reap the benefits from it.

- Although the self-motivated employees do well on their own, with the help of online learning platform access provided by employers, the challenge here is with talent management. On one hand, talents demand freedom of presentation of content and enough time; On the other hand, managers want social media posts, more like factory production, serving every talent with one single command. However, managers who have served formerly in a programming role themselves tend to be more productive and capable of handling each talent individually (Mumford, 2000).
- 3) To study the management approaches and operational strategy used by selected FM Radio stations to stay competitive and commercially viable.
- All the radio stations in this study try to adopt a flexible, non-rigidly hierarchical, open management style in fitting with their company policies. Every corporate office of FM Radio stations deploys new practices or reconstructs the faulty ones for better performance to build a healthy work environment at regular intervals. With a vision to increase transparency, traceability, productivity, retention of talent and bring more business. However, in a top-to-bottom setup, the challenge lies in the effectiveness of implementation.
  - Diversifying into digital, which is supposed to help radio stations outspread revenue streams, is wavering them when it comes to tracking other radio station profiles. The consequence of constantly rushing into unfamiliar experiments, without letting the previous practice seep in, hampers the quality of work and station recall. Ultimately resulting in a high volume of unproductive work done,

exhausted talents, confused listeners, high investments, repelling advertisers and overall loss in business for the FM Radio Station.

- Despite all the diversification endeavours, heavy regulations, high licence costs and paucity of a united industry, it adds to the risks of financial sustainability of the FM Radio Industry.

The research questions and objectives provided a structural lens for the study, through which the thematic codes were grouped. They also helped in focusing steadily on the study throughout the extensive qualitative research process.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study's findings can help in bringing policy change for the FM Radio Industry in India, it can encourage media houses to form a strong united FM radio industry and reveal to FM Radio Operators regarding the overlooked challenges discussed in this study, and improve the talent management and operations execution, by working on the conditional loops in Hiring, Training and Implementation in programming departments. Along with adapting to the media convergence and diversification, fruitfully.

This study concludes that the working conditions in FM Radio stations amid the digital upheaval are leaving programming talents exhausted. And they are apathetic about the repetitive and non-productive heaps of work they put in daily to match the internal competitions of the industry, while fighting the digital giant and adapting to new media. As a result, programming talents are not able to work at their best creative capacity, not making optimal use of their creative potential (Rustiawan et al., 2023). Consequently, decreasing the number of recallable

FM Radio programs that the listeners would come back to, thus reducing the number of returning listeners. While the Advertisers see this as listeners turning away from the platform, a decline in ad revenue is observed (Rechie B. Pabelona and Lausa, 2022). Thereupon, an investment vs profit depression is created, which is continuing to drift apart, making the FM Radio business non-profitable, calling for mass layoffs and Station shutdown (ET Online, 2025). It is all interconnected and interdependent; if Programming suffers, it affects sales and revenue generation directly.

The Radio operators look forward to matching the speed of changing technology (Sari and Sya'adah, 2024). But the nature of FM Radio, which is very dynamic in itself, and requires everybody working in FM Radio to be on their toes all the time, is not allowing the programming talents to upgrade themselves at the same pace. Moreover, laying off experienced staff in cost-cutting is making it worse (Kaur, 2015). Simulating the FM Radio industry, trying to catch its breath continuously, without really getting its strokes right. Saddled with the pressure of keeping up with the changing media landscape and business demands at the same time.

Furthermore, declining ad revenue, high investments, unattainable government regulations, dispersed FM Operators, and a distant approach of AROI continue to curb operational adaptability and profitability in running an FM Radio station in India. Overall, is FM Radio already a dying medium in India? The answer is No. Not as a medium, but there are signs of a business structure collapsing.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The FM Radio industry should consider adopting a slower pace in the implementation of new technology and the redesigning of older methods of content creation at Radio stations. The

idea of *Digital for Radio* is getting dissolved with *Radio for Digital*, with excessive exposure of RJ and FM Radio activities on social media. FM Radio needs to sound like itself, and get back the X-factor that RJs have, which RJs turning influencers lack.

Here, based on the feedback from the study participants, the researcher is making this recommendation: to develop two wings within each radio station, one that is pure FM Radio, where the RJ have great audio presenter skills, command of language and authenticity and is not compelled to have an online or on-ground presence for the sake of online presence. And the other one is for the RJs who willingly or talent-wise have the capacity to present themselves in video content or on-ground activities. This will help Radio stations to have their presence on every platform with the right talent and great content without exhausting the talent. It can contribute to increasing listener recall, have better numbers on social media and thus bring back the advertisers in addition to diversification of revenue streams.

It is due to the urgent nature of the FM radio industry that oftentimes employees want to get the work done first rather than follow a tedious process. Management should focus on developing easier processes, especially when simpler technology is also a part of daily work-life. For Instance, WhatsApp is a common example of a multimedia app used for sharing spots with sales and clients, whereas every FM Radio station has developed a system-based software for the production and sharing of files, other than other formal routes such as Email. This practice might have a deeper impact on the company's performance than just the iteration of work to fit into system requirements.

Radio in India, overall, be that Public Radio, Private Radio, or Community Radio, is still a listener's medium and an integral part of the common man's life (Sharma and Gupta, 2024).

These listeners may not be rallying on social media because it's not their medium. Just because social media can make a buzz, and others cannot, it does not mean the entire population is on it (An et al., 2018). Radio listeners were not always interactive, and they continue to appreciate radio, just as always, and businesses need to understand this occurrence.

Radio's digitalization, aka *radigitalization*, bringing in AI RJs, syndicating of shows remotely or a complete transformation into some other hybrid medium, without addressing fundamental challenges, can be catastrophic. We are witnessing popular examples with Brands like Radio City, Big FM being hit by deep financial cuts this year (Wagon, 2025).

FM Radio stations do have advertisements, but despite the ad volume, falling rates of ads project at the declining ad revenue. Internal ad rates competition within the FM Radio industry should have a dignified bottom line set by AROI, and all FM Radio Operators need to abide by the lowest rates of Ads to stop dropping ad rates to dust.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Future Research**

It's not just the availability of content; it is also about the infrastructure underneath making it all possible (Nieborg and Poell, 2018). Connectivity is the undeniable engine that is driving new media up. A study can be conducted on the driving forces from other industries that shape phenomena such as media convergence between FM radio and other industries. This thesis mentions about effects of diversifying FM radio into social media and digitalization while it is also spreading equally in Events, Online streaming platforms, Lifestyle, Artificial Intelligence, etc. These other niches can be further studied.

Newly evolving concepts, such as working with AI, rather than being replaced by AI, can be studied further. One of the study participants, P25, touched upon this topic. It is being

considered by the FM radio industry now to cut time and cost on repetitive tasks of writing or announcements, ideally leaving creative copy-writers, producers and RJs with more time for human creativity. This is being regarded to drive efficiency across their valued creative talents, optimising 30% costs, and enhancing content creation. But there are some operational risks involved in sharing client data with AI, which can raise concerns for fairness, accountability, and responsibility. This is yet another area that can be researched further in terms of the use of AI in the FM Radio Industry.

There is always a possibility of conducting research using some other research methodology; the researcher would recommend conducting a quantitative study to probe into the fluctuating growth of the industry. However, this can also be conducted as a comparative study while comparing numbers from private data sources and government data sources. Or the same study can be conducted in a survey method using a larger sample size.

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**APPENDIX A.**

An Informed Consent was signed by each primary data source while appearing for the In-depth semi-structured interviews. The consent form has all the terms and information about the study that the researcher is conducting, and also the necessary facts that the participants need to know as FM Radio Industry professionals while being a part of this study. With this consent signing process, the researcher assisted the participants if they had any doubts regarding this study.



### Informed Consent for Research

Research title: Exploring Operations and Talent Management Challenges of FM Radio in India.

Researcher: Shamal Ingle, Swiss School of Business and Management (SSBM), Geneva.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Participant,

I am pleased to invite you to participate in a research study **exploring operations and talent management challenges in India's FM radio industry**. This study is being conducted as a part of the researcher's doctoral study at the Swiss School of Business Management (SSBM), Geneva.

The interview will take 45-50 minutes, but your participation is completely voluntary and you are entitled to withdraw from the interview or the study at any point in time, without any consequences. No compensation will be provided to you for doing this interview. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions in a one-on-one setting, either in person or via video call.

If you accept my request to be interviewed as part of the above research project. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will be audio-recorded and a transcript will be produced. The transcript of the interview will be analysed by Shamal Ingle as research investigator

- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to the researcher and her academic colleagues with whom she might collaborate as part of the research process
- The actual recording will be securely stored for three years from the date of the interview with the researcher.
- Please let the researcher know if you wish to be anonymous.
- A summary of the findings will be available upon request.
- You will be able to ask any questions you might have and will be free to contact the researcher, even after the interview.

**Participant's Name:**

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**Participant's Signature:**

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If you have any questions regarding the research and its conduct, you are welcome to contact me at the following information:

Researcher's Name: Shamal Ingle; Contact no.: +91 9096296974

E-mail: [shamal@ssbm.ch](mailto:shamal@ssbm.ch); [shamalinge0@gmail.com](mailto:shamalinge0@gmail.com)



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Researcher's Signature

**Thank you very much for your participation.**

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES/ INTERVIEW GUIDE.

“Greetings! Thank you for taking the time to share your insights.

This interview is all about your journey in radio, your experiences, and your thoughts on how the industry is evolving. There are no right or wrong answers - just your honest perspective.

This questionnaire is a part of the study being conducted by Ms Shamal Ingle, exploring challenges in operations and talent management in India’s FM radio industry. Once the interview is done, you will be requested to sign an informed consent. Feel free to ask any queries you might have. Let’s dive in!”

#### **Questionnaire For the Programming Personnel.**

Q1. How did you land a job in FM Radio? What was your first job profile? How were you informed about the vacancy, and what was the recruitment process?

- Educational Qualification.
- Planned or unplanned?
- What did they ask in the interview?

Q2. What was the training period like at the time of joining?

- Formal Training workshops?
- Handheld Learning on the job or thrown into water?
- Any major learning that you remember and follow even today?

Q3. What is your job profile now? What does your workday look like?

- Do you enjoy it?

- What's the most precious/ lovable thing you like about your job? That makes it special for you.

Q4. Do you think your leadership is influencing your work performance? In what ways?

- Creative freedom
- Are new ideas welcomed in all senses?
- Do you bring enough to the table?
- Are there any boundaries set?
- How do you keep your creativity ignited?
- What about days when you are not in the right mind space, maybe due to personal reasons?

Q5. Talk a little about CLB (Content Link Break-up). What is it like for you?

- Do you think it is a necessity? Yes / No in what sense?
- Should it be a criterion for appraisal?

Q6. What do you expect or would like to suggest management to ease or help you reach your true potential if you haven't reached it already? (In your Program/ Show)

- Any possible changes in working style.
- Suggestions on implementing something new or mending something existing.
- Changes that are happening with generations - content, language, community.

Q7. What are your views about merging media trends? You are the face of your Radio station.

Are you enjoying the new media/ social media/ digital presence online alongside being on-air?

- Pros and Cons of it, for your On-air show.
- Does it help or drain you?

- Are you in favour of the idea that the digital wing should be a separate entity altogether, and FM Radio should be different (than having the same RJ on all platforms)
- Fragmentation of Audio-audience. Not screens, but is internal competition the actual culprit?

Q8. Talk about the strategies that you use to keep yourself relevant and likeable in the Online following race?

- Algorithms
- Selection of content
- Planning a reel-shoot
- Learning new Audio-visual and editing skills
- Managing help.

Q9. Does your job require you to learn new skills or trends? If so, what are they? Does your employer support you in acquiring them?

- Organising Workshops or enrolling in courses
- Time for learning and training yourself.

Q10. Do you have an idea to share? That might help FM radio perform better for the audience as well as the market.

- Listenership
- Business - Sponsorships, or maybe something new
- Any say in advertisement rates?

Q11. What are your thoughts on having programming team managers with some radio background/ first-hand experience?

- Would you accept a managerial position (If offered) in the FM Radio industry?

Q12. Your concluding thoughts on where the FM Radio Industry is heading?

### **Questionnaire For Managers:**

Q1. How did you land a job in FM Radio? What was your first job profile? How were you informed about the vacancy, and what was the recruitment process?

- Educational Qualification
- Planned or unplanned?
- What did they ask in the interview?

Q2. What was the training period like at the time of joining?

- Formal Training workshops?
- Handheld Learning on the job or thrown into water?
- Any major learning that you remember and follow even today?

Q3. What is your job profile now? What does your workday look like?

- Do you work when you are out of the office?
- What's the most precious/ lovable thing you like about your job? That makes it special for you.

Q4. How do you influence the work performance of your team? What is your stand in times of conflict between your team and your company management?

- Creative freedom - how much is up to your decision?
- Trying out on tested paths

- Are there any boundaries set? How much can you share with your team?  
Sometimes being the bad guy
- What about days when you are not in the right mind space, maybe due to personal reasons?

Q5. Talk a little about CLB (Content Link Break-up). What is it like for you?

- Do you think it is a necessity? Yes / No in what sense?
- Should it be a criterion for appraisal?

Q6. What do you expect or would like to suggest management do to ease or help you reach your true potential if you haven't reached it already? (In Programming)

- Any possible changes in working style.
- Suggestions on implementing something new or mending something existing.
- Changes that are happening with generations - content, language, community.
- Local vs national content

Q7. What are your views about merging media trends? Are you enjoying the new media/ social media/ digital radio?

- Pros and Cons of it.
- What does it demand you know as a team leader?
- Tracking competition, posts, audience engagement, numbers, etc?
- Are you in favour of the idea that the digital wing should be a separate entity altogether, and FM Radio should be different (than having the same RJ on all platforms)

- Fragmentation of Audio-audience. Not screens, but is internal competition the actual culprit?

Q8. Talk about the strategies that you use to keep your RJs relevant and likeable in the Online following race?

- Algorithms
- Selection of content
- Planning a reel-shoot
- Learning new Audio-visual and editing skills
- Managing help.

Q9. Does your job require you to learn new skills or trends? If so, what are they? Does your employer support you in acquiring them?

- Organising Workshops or enrolling in courses
- Time for learning and training yourself.

Q10. Do you have an idea to share? That might help FM radio perform better for the audience as well as the market.

- Listenership
- Business - Sponsorships, or maybe something new
- Any say in advertisement rates?

Q11. How do you keep your team's morale intact amid all the competition they constantly run for?

- How do you deal with non-performing candidates?
- Edu Qualification vs Industry Gap

- When do you know this person is an asset? How do you cherish them?

Q12. Your concluding thoughts on where the FM Radio Industry is heading?

### **Questionnaire For Business Heads and Management:**

Q1. How did you land a job in FM Radio?

- What keeps you going in your current job?
- What's exciting about radio?

Q2. Is the Revenue Department deciding programs on FM Radio?

Q3. Why does FM Radio want to be available in all the other forms of media, too?

- With the same Workforce, training them or hiring?
- New requirement - new job positions? (Edu qualification - industry gap)
- Local content relevance
- Moving into digital channels.

Q4. What is your product? And how do you study it before selling?

Q5. Do you have any suggestions for the program creation team, which might be a good idea for better business?

- Collaborations
- Activities, etc.

Q6. Is ad revenue declining? If yes, in which markets?

- Why are the ad rates dropping?

Q7. What are the challenges? Expenses Vs Earnings.

- Within the company, meeting targets,
- In the market?

- With the government taxation?

Q8. What are your views on the new 730 stations announced by the government?

- Is your company looking forward to getting any stations in the proposed locations?
- What's the plan? To be profitable?
- Any suggestions/ requests on it?





Q9. Is your company implementing cost-cutting? If yes, what are you cutting on?

- Is it helping or straining the remaining members?
- Do you see any other alternative?

Q10. Your concluding thoughts on where the FM Radio Industry is heading?

- How is the business with digital streams?

## APPENDIX C

 सत्यमेव जयते	<b>भारतीय दूरसंचार विनियामक प्राधिकरण</b> <b>TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA</b> <b>भारत सरकार / Government of India</b>	
F.N. No.: R-11/3/(4)/2021-B AND CS(1 AND 3)		Dated: 05 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
To, Shri Apurva Chandra, Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 'A' Wing, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi - 110001		
<b>Subject : Recommendations on "Issues related to FM Radio Broadcasting"</b>		
The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, vide its DO letter No. 38032/43/2021-FM/329 dated 11 <sup>th</sup> May 2022 had requested TRAI to furnish recommendations of the Authority, under section 11(1)(a) of the TRAI Act, 1997 on the following issues:		
(i) Remove the linkage to Non-Refundable One Time Entry Fee (NOTEF) in the formula for annual fee as prescribed in the FM Phase-III Policy Guidelines dated 25.07.2011. (ii) Extend the existing FM license period of 15 years by 3 years		
3. In this connection, TRAI had issued a consultation paper on 'Issues related to FM Radio Broadcasting' on 09 <sup>th</sup> February 2023, seeking comments from the stakeholders. Subsequently, TRAI held an Open House Discussion on 26 <sup>th</sup> April 2023 through online mode.		
4. Based on the comments of the stakeholders received during the above-mentioned consultation process and its own analysis, the Authority has finalized its recommendations which are enclosed herewith.		
5. As per the practice, a copy of this letter, along with recommendations, is being placed on the website of TRAI <a href="http://www.trai.gov.in">www.trai.gov.in</a> .		
This letter is issued with the approval of the Authority.		
<b>Encl: as above</b>		
		 <b>(V. Raghunandan)</b> <b>Secretary, TRAI</b>
महानगर दूरसंचार भवन, जवाहरलाल नेहरू मार्ग / Mahanagar Doorsanchar Bhawan, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg (ओल्ड मिनटो रोड), नई दिल्ली-110002 / (Old Minto Road), New Delhi-110002 फैक्स /Fax : +91-11-23213294, ईपीबीएक्स नं. /EPBX No. : +91-11-23664145		 आजादी का अमृत महोत्सव
"प्रभावी विनियमन - सुगम संचार" "Effective Regulation - Ease of Communication"		

Ministry of Communications



## TRAI releases recommendations on “Issues related to FM Radio Broadcasting”

प्रविष्टि तिथि: 05 SEP 2023 7:31PM by PIB Delhi

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has today released its recommendations on “Issues related to FM Radio Broadcasting”. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) vide its reference dated 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022 has sought recommendations of the Authority, under section 11(1)(a) of the TRAI Act, 1997 on the following issues:

- (i) Remove the linkage to Non-Refundable One Time Entry Fee (NOTEF) in the formula for annual fee as prescribed in the FM Ph-III Policy Guidelines dated 25.07.2011.
- (ii) Extend the existing FM license period of 15 years by 3 years.

In order to discuss various issues related to FM Radio broadcasting, the Authority held a meeting with representatives of AROI on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2022. Representatives of AROI, inter-alia, raised the following issues for consideration of the Authority:

- (i) Permitting private FM Radio channels to broadcast independent news bulletins
- (ii) Availability of FM Radio Receivers in Mobile Handsets

In this regard, a consultation paper was issued on 09<sup>th</sup> February 2023 seeking comments of the stakeholders on the issues related to FM Radio Broadcasting. The last date of submission of comments was 09<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and counter-comments was 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023. TRAI received 11 comments and 9 counter-comments from stakeholders. These comments are available on TRAI’s website. In this regard, an Open House Discussion was also held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023 through online mode.

After considering all comments/counter-comments received from stakeholders during the consultation process and further analysis of the issues, the Authority has finalized its recommendations. The salient features of the recommendations are given below:

- (i) The annual license fee of a FM radio channel should be de-linked from Non-Refundable One Time Entry Fee (NOTEF).

- (ii) The license fee should be calculated as 4% of the Gross Revenue (GR) of the FM radio channel during the respective financial year. GST should be excluded from Gross Revenue (GR).
- (iii) The Government may take appropriate measures to provide relief to the FM radio operators to address challenges posed due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- (iv) Private FM Radio Operators should be allowed to broadcast news and current affairs programs, limited to 10 minutes in each clock hour.
- (v) The program code of conduct as applicable to All India Radio for news content may also be applied to Private FM Radio channels.
- (vi) Functions or features pertaining to FM radio should remain enabled and activated on all mobile handsets having the necessary hardware. Built-in FM radio receiver in mobile handset must not be subjected to any form of disablement or deactivation.
- (vii) A Standing Committee, headed by a senior officer of Joint Secretary or above level, to oversee and monitor the compliance by mobile phone manufacturers (or importers) may be established by MeitY. The committee should include key stakeholders such as MIB, AROI, MAIT, and ICEA.
- (viii) An online grievance redressal portal should be provided for submitting information or complaints of case of any non-compliance as regards enablement of FM radio functionality in such mobile handsets that have the necessary functionality for FM receivers.

The full text of the Recommendations is available on TRAI's website [www.trai.gov.in](http://www.trai.gov.in). For any clarification/ information, Shri Anil Kumar Bhardwaj, Director General TRAI CSR and Advisor (B&CS) may be contacted at Tel. No. +91-11-23237922.

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**DK/DK**

(रिलीज़ आईडी: 1954941) आगंतुक पटल : 1815  
इस विज्ञप्ति को इन भाषाओं में पढ़ें: Urdu , हिन्दी , Punjabi