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Regional variations in FM Radio advertising rates: acomparative Analysis Of FM Rainbow and FM Gold

K.G Suresh[1], Juby Thomas[2], Vishnu Achutha Menon[3]

[1]*Former Professor & Vice Chancellor, Makhanlal Chaturvedi National University of Journalism & Communication Makhanpuram, Opposite M.P. State Shooting Academy, Bishankhedi, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh – 462044*

[2]*Associate Professor, Department of Media Studies, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bengaluru, India – 560067*

[3]*Assistant Professor & Head, Department of Communication and International Studies, Institute for Educational and Developmental Studies, H-107a, Sector-12, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India – 201301*

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***Correspondence:**
vishnuachuthamenon@gmail.com
Department of Communication and International Studies, Institute for Educational and Developmental Studies, H-107a, Sector-12, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India – 201301

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Abstract

This paper investigates the operational reach and pricing strategies of All India Radio's (AIR) FM Rainbow and FM Gold channels across various Indian locations, with a focus on understanding how time bands impact listener engagement and program scheduling. The study analyzes the cost structures for radio spots and sponsorship opportunities, revealing regional variations in advertising rates and their implications for advertisers. Utilizing advertising rate data from AIR published in 2017, the paper provides a detailed examination of rate structures, maintaining consistency and accuracy in comparative analysis. By evaluating the effectiveness of these broadcasting networks in addressing the needs of diverse urban audiences, the study aims to offer insights for optimizing advertisement placements within the Indian radio market. This research underscores the importance of strategic advertising planning based on time slots and regional differences to enhance engagement and maximize return on investment.

Introduction

The history of FM radio in India reflects the country's evolving media landscape and the growing demand for diverse and localized content. The journey began in 1977 when the first FM radio broadcast was launched in Delhi, primarily serving as a platform for experimental programming. It was not until the early 1990s, with the liberalization of the Indian economy, that FM radio gained significant traction. The government's decision to open up the FM sector to private operators in 1993 marked a turning point, leading to the establishment of a range of FM stations across the country. The proliferation of FM radio stations in subsequent decades, driven by technological advancements and increasing urbanization, has resulted in a vibrant and competitive market. Stations such as FM Rainbow and FM Gold have emerged as key players, catering to different listener preferences with their unique programming styles. FM Rainbow, part of the All India Radio network, focuses on regional content and caters to local tastes, while FM Gold, also under the All India Radio umbrella, emphasizes classic music and cultural programming.

Radio advertising remains an effective medium for reaching diverse audiences, with FM stations playing a significant role in India's advertising landscape. Regression analysis has elucidated several critical factors influencing radio advertising rates for both fixed and grid rate stations. These factors include audience size, station format, consumer income, market size, and the number of competing stations. Specifically, the analysis indicates that stations operating with grid rate cards do not rely as heavily on audience size for determining spot prices compared to those with fixed rate cards. This divergence suggests that advertisers should exercise caution when purchasing high-priced spots on grid rate stations, as these spots often yield fewer listeners per dollar spent compared to their fixed rate counterparts (Soley et al., 1980). The evolution of radio broadcasting in India from state-controlled AM to corporate-owned local FM represents a profound transformation in the industry's philosophy. Over the past decade, FM radio has witnessed extraordinary growth, expanding to over 200 stations across the country. This expansion has been accompanied by significant increases in both listenership and revenue. FM radio has thus emerged as a cultural emblem of modernity and progress in India, reflecting broader societal shifts (Sen, 2014). Further analysis reveals a robust positive relationship between advertising rates and revenue, with advertising rates accounting for 81% of the revenue variation (Susanti, 2018). This highlights the critical role of advertising rates in driving revenue generation within the radio industry. In the broader advertising landscape, internet advertising is increasingly shaping consumer purchasing decisions. However, radio advertising remains notably influential, particularly among younger demographics. While television advertising continues to be a dominant medium due to its broad reach and impact, the rising importance of internet and radio advertising underscores a need for advertisers to consider a diversified approach. This evolving media environment suggests that while traditional mediums like television retain their efficacy, the growing potential of digital and radio platforms warrants careful attention and strategic planning (Dash & Belgaonkar, 2012). Community Radio (CR) stations in South Asia, especially in Nepal, have demonstrated potential for financial sustainability through diverse revenue streams, despite regulatory constraints such as the 5-minute per hour cap on advertising. Research indicates that even with such limitations, CR stations can attain financial stability by utilizing a portion of the available advertising time, ranging from 7% to 46%. This approach allows CR stations to balance their revenue needs against the regulatory restrictions. Notably, monthly operating expenditures for CR stations tend to be higher than their annualized capital expenditures, highlighting a critical factor in their long-term sustainability (Hussain & Tongia, 2007). The efficacy of various media vehicles—such as urban dailies, suburban weeklies, and radio—varies significantly across different communities. Although major urban dailies generally have high readership, the effectiveness of these media vehicles can differ markedly between urban and suburban areas. This variation is particularly relevant for small retail businesses, which must navigate financial constraints and select media vehicles that offer the most effective and efficient reach to their target markets. The comparative analysis of media effectiveness in different community settings underscores the need for strategic media planning to optimize advertising investments and achieve desired outcomes (Vaccaro & Kassaye, 1988). The selection of a radio spokesperson, including considerations of gender, vocal pitch, and accent, is a critical decision that significantly impacts the effectiveness of radio advertisements. These elements influence how the advertisement is perceived by listeners and can determine its overall success. Interestingly, the presence of background music in radio advertisements does not universally enhance advertising effectiveness; its impact varies depending on the context and execution (Martín-Santana et al., 2015).

In the Tricity region, private FM radio stations dedicate a substantial portion of their airtime—approximately 83%—to broadcasting music. A detailed analysis of two leading private radio stations in this area reveals a strong focus on music programming, with a particular emphasis on popular, current, and recent genres. The study

also highlights the stations' heavy reliance on film music, which dominates their playlists. During prime time, these stations tend to feature "hit numbers," strategically chosen to captivate their primary audience of "moving listeners"—those who tune in while commuting or engaging in other activities. This programming strategy reflects a deliberate effort to align with the preferences of their target demographic, ensuring maximum listener engagement and retention (Kaur et al., 2022).

The study challenges the prevailing notion that FM radio programs in Ghana are primarily entertainment-focused, revealing instead that FM radio serves as the most reliable and trusted medium for disseminating development information to rural communities. It highlights that FM radio is the primary source of crucial information related to agriculture, education, and health, thereby playing a significant role in promoting rural development. The study underscores the effectiveness of listener participation in radio call-in programs, which actively engages the audience and enhances their motivation and agency (Boateng et al., 2023). In India, music streaming platforms have emerged as the predominant method for consumers to access music, accounting for 67% of the nation's total recorded music revenue. Despite the substantial user base, with over 200 million Indians utilizing these services, advertising on music streaming platforms remains an underexplored opportunity for marketers. The study notes that consumer attitudes towards advertising on these platforms are mixed, with younger users showing a higher tendency to leave the platform rather than subscribe to an ad-free version (Killa & Upadhyay, 2022). Further, the study conducted in Chennai provides insights into effective promotional and marketing strategies employed by jewelry stores. It explores consumer perceptions, preferences, and purchasing behavior related to gold jewelry, generating comprehensive data on the various marketing, product, pricing, promotional, and distribution strategies utilized by jewelry retailers in Chennai, as well as the challenges and opportunities they encounter (Charumathi & Rumana, 2022).

The study reveals that a significant proportion of respondents in Delta North engage with radio broadcasts, illustrating the substantial influence that the use of indigenous dialects and languages can have on the community. Most respondents utilize indigenous languages in their daily interactions, with English predominantly reserved for educational contexts. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the National Broadcasting Commission reassess its policy regarding the allocation of broadcasting time to indigenous languages and consider incorporating additional indigenous language experts and linguists into the broadcasting framework (Praise et al., 2022). Similarly, the study conducted in Hunan indicates that the majority of respondents listen to radio broadcasts, demonstrating the considerable impact of English language usage. While indigenous languages are commonly used in daily life, English is primarily employed in educational settings with English-speaking students. The study suggests that the Broadcasting Corporation of China (BCC) should evaluate its policy on the allocation of time for English language broadcasts and enhance the integration of English language experts and linguists within the broadcasting system (Zhang et al., 2023). Regarding radio signal reception, the study identifies that the AKBC radio station achieved optimal reception at locations N, C, L, and F, while Passion FM's best reception was noted at locations N, F, A, and B. Location N provided the highest reception quality for both stations, whereas location E experienced the lowest reception quality. The study further establishes that signal strength diminishes with increased distance from the transmitting antenna but improves with higher elevation (Ekah et al., 2022). The study analyzed the diffusion pattern of digital communication services across India, taking into account technological advancements. It examined the factors driving regional variations in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) adoption and assessed the influence of social systems on technology uptake at varying levels of penetration. The insights gained from this research are poised to guide infrastructure capacity planning, inform policy development, and enhance projections regarding the diffusion of emerging consumer technologies, thereby supporting digital inclusion and fostering inclusive development (Asrani & Kar, 2022).

In Pune, public gardens and parks can be transformed into revenue-generating assets through the implementation of strategies such as advertising, establishing co-working spaces, and creating physical fitness centers, all while maintaining their fundamental role as open spaces. These innovative financial and marketing approaches have the potential to reduce the local government's reliance on higher levels of government for funding and improve its ability to meet its civic responsibilities (Patil & Vhavale, 2023).

The objective of this paper is to analyze the operational reach and pricing strategies of FM Rainbow and FM Gold across various locations in India, with a specific focus on understanding the impact of time bands on listener engagement and program scheduling. This study will also examine the cost structures for radio spots and sponsorship opportunities, highlighting regional variations in advertising rates and their implications for advertisers. The goal is to assess the effectiveness of these broadcasting networks in catering to diverse urban audiences while providing valuable insights for optimizing advertisement placements in the Indian radio market.

For our analysis, we have utilized the advertising rates published by All India Radio (AIR) in 2017. It is important to note that these rates have remained unchanged since their publication, indicating a consistent pricing structure over the years. The secondary data for this study was sourced from AIR's official records, which provide a comprehensive overview of the advertising rates for various FM stations, including FM Rainbow and FM Gold. By relying on this data, we aim to conduct a detailed examination of the advertising rate structures and their implications for the radio broadcasting industry. This approach allows us to maintain consistency and accuracy in our comparative analysis of the advertising rates between these two prominent FM channels.

Advertising Rates and Strategies by All India Radio (AIR)

FM Rainbow Stations (25 Locations): Bengaluru, Coimbatore, Chandigarh, Cuttack, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jalandhar, Kanpur, Kochi, Kodaikanal, Kolkata, Lucknow, Madurai, Mumbai, Panaji, Patna, Puducherry, Raebareli, Ranchi, Shillong, Tiruchirapally, Tirunelveli, Visakhapatnam, and Vijayawada.

FM Gold Stations (5 Locations)

Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Ludhiana, and Mumbai.

Time Bands

Prime Time (Category I)

07:00 to 11:00 and 17:00 to 23:00

Mid Prime Time (Category II)

11:00 to 17:00

Non-Prime Time (Category III)

23:00 to 07:00

These time bands classify programming slots based on expected listener traffic, with prime time having the highest audience.

FM Rainbow Rate Chart (Effective June 1, 2017)

- Delhi
  - Category I: ₹1100
  - Category II: ₹770
  - Category III: ₹440
- Mumbai
  - Category I: ₹880
  - Category II: ₹660
  - Category III: ₹440
- Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Kodaikanal
  - Category I: ₹770
  - Category II: ₹550
  - Category III: ₹330
- Kanpur, Kochi, Lucknow, Patna, Ranchi
  - Category I: ₹550
  - Category II: ₹440
  - Category III: ₹280
- Chandigarh, Coimbatore, Cuttack, Jalandhar, Madurai, Panaji, Puducherry, Raebareli, Shillong, Tirunelveli, Tiruchirapally, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam
  - Category I: ₹440
  - Category II: ₹330
  - Category III: ₹220

FM Rainbow Sponsorship Rates

In-House Programs (30 minutes, 120 seconds FCT)

- Delhi
  - Category I: ₹11,880
  - Category II: ₹8,320
  - Category III: ₹4,750
- Mumbai
  - Category I: ₹9,500
  - Category II: ₹7,130
  - Category III: ₹4,750
- Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kodaikanal, Kolkata
  - Category I: ₹8,320
  - Category II: ₹5,940
  - Category III: ₹3,570
- Kanpur, Kochi, Lucknow, Patna, Ranchi
  - Category I: ₹5,940
  - Category II: ₹4,750
  - Category III: ₹3,020
- Chandigarh, Coimbatore, Cuttack, Jalandhar, Madurai, Panaji, Puducherry, Raebareli, Shillong, Tirunelveli, Tiruchirapally, Vijayawada, Vishakhapatnam
  - Category I: ₹4,750
  - Category II: ₹3,570
  - Category III: ₹2,380

Note: FCT stands for Frequency Change Time, which refers to the time allocated for advertisements within a program.

Regional variations in advertising and sponsorship rates arise from several interrelated factors. Major metropolitan areas like Delhi and Mumbai, with their large and diverse audiences, experience higher demand for advertising slots, which drives up rates. Advertisers are willing to pay a premium to reach these extensive demographics, reflecting the higher market value of these locations. The cost of living and operational expenses are significantly higher in these major cities compared to smaller towns, influencing the pricing of advertising spots. In such cities, elevated costs are often passed on to advertisers. Intense competition among advertisers for prime slots in major cities further inflates rates, as companies bid more for prominent positions. In smaller cities with less competitive advertising markets, rates remain more affordable. Economic factors also play a crucial role, with regions experiencing stronger economic activity and higher consumer spending commanding higher rates, while areas with lower economic activity have more economical advertising costs. Variations in media consumption patterns and audience preferences across different regions affect advertising rates, with higher rates in areas with greater media engagement and lower rates in regions with less media consumption. Understanding these regional variations allows advertisers to strategically allocate their budgets for optimal reach and return on investment

FM Gold Spot Buy Rates for 10-Second Spots

- Delhi
  - Category I: ₹1100
  - Category II: ₹770
  - Category III: ₹440
- Mumbai
  - Category I: ₹880
  - Category II: ₹660
  - Category III: ₹440
- Chennai, Kolkata
  - Category I: ₹770
  - Category II: ₹550
  - Category III: ₹330
- Ludhiana
  - Category I: ₹440
  - Category II: ₹330
  - Category III: ₹220

FM Rainbow and FM Gold Sponsored Programme Rates

Rates for sponsored programs of 15 minutes, 10 minutes, and 5 minutes duration, with FCT of 60 seconds, 40 seconds, and 20 seconds respectively:

In Delhi, the charges for various categories are ₹6,600 for Category 1, ₹4,620 for Category 2, and ₹2,640 for Category 3 for a 15-minute duration. For a 10-minute duration, the rates are ₹4,400, ₹3,080, and ₹1,760, respectively, and for a 5-minute duration, they are ₹2,200, ₹1,540, and ₹880. In Mumbai, the charges are ₹5,280, ₹3,520, and ₹1,760 for Category 1, 2, and 3, respectively, for a 15-minute duration. For

a 10-minute duration, the rates are ₹3,960, ₹2,640, and ₹1,320, and for a 5-minute duration, they are ₹1,980, ₹1,320, and ₹660. In Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kodaikanal, and Kolkata, the rates are ₹3,300, ₹2,640, and ₹1,680 for 15 minutes, ₹2,200, ₹1,760, and ₹880 for 10 minutes, and ₹1,100, ₹880, and ₹440 for 5 minutes. For Kanpur, Kochi, Lucknow, Patna, and Ranchi, the charges are ₹2,640, ₹1,980, and ₹990 for 15 minutes, ₹1,760, ₹1,320, and ₹660 for 10 minutes, and ₹880, ₹660, and ₹440 for 5 minutes. In Chandigarh, Coimbatore, Cuttack, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Madurai, Panaji, Puducherry, Raebareli, Shillong, Tirunelveli, Tiruchirapally, Vijayawada, and Visakhapatnam, the rates are ₹1,980, ₹1,320, and ₹660 for 15 minutes, ₹1,320, ₹880, and ₹440 for 10 minutes, and ₹660, ₹440, and ₹220 for 5 minutes.
Note: Rates for customized sponsored programs with no FCT are three times the normal rates and are rounded to the nearest hundred.

Regional variations in FM Gold spot buy rates and sponsored program rates reflect differences in market demand, cost of living, and economic factors. For FM Gold spot buy rates, Delhi commands the highest prices across all categories due to its large market size and high demand for advertising, followed by Mumbai, with slightly lower rates. Chennai and Kolkata have moderate rates, while Ludhiana, being a smaller market, has the lowest rates among these cities. For sponsored program rates, Delhi again has the highest charges across all durations and categories, reflecting its status as a major advertising hub. Mumbai follows, with slightly reduced rates, while Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kodaikanal, and Kolkata show moderate pricing. Cities like Kanpur, Kochi, Lucknow, Patna, and Ranchi have more affordable rates, and Chandigarh, Coimbatore, Cuttack, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, and other smaller locations offer the lowest rates. These variations are driven by the relative size of the market, local economic conditions, and competition for advertising space. Advertisers should consider these regional differences to optimize their budget and achieve the best returns on their investment.

FM Gold Rates for Trailers

Rates for trailers on FM Rainbow/FM Gold Channels:

- Delhi
  - 3.30 minutes: ₹3,300 (TC-1), ₹2,310 (TC-2), ₹1,320 (TC-3)
  - 2.30 minutes: ₹2,640 (TC-1), ₹1,850 (TC-2), ₹1,060 (TC-3)
  - 1.30 minutes: ₹1,980 (TC-1), ₹1,390 (TC-2), ₹790 (TC-3)
- Mumbai
  - 3.30 minutes: ₹2,640 (TC-1), ₹1,980 (TC-2), ₹1,320 (TC-3)
  - 2.30 minutes: ₹2,110 (TC-1), ₹1,580 (TC-2), ₹1,060 (TC-3)
  - 1.30 minutes: ₹1,580 (TC-1), ₹1,190 (TC-2), ₹790 (TC-3)
- Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kodaikanal, Kolkata
  - 3.30 minutes: ₹2,310 (TC-1), ₹1,650 (TC-2), ₹990 (TC-3)
  - 2.30 minutes: ₹1,850 (TC-1), ₹1,320 (TC-2), ₹790 (TC-3)
  - 1.30 minutes: ₹1,390 (TC-1), ₹990 (TC-2), ₹590 (TC-3)
- Kanpur, Kochi, Lucknow, Patna, Ranchi
  - 3.30 minutes: ₹1,650 (TC-1), ₹1,320 (TC-2), ₹840 (TC-3)
  - 2.30 minutes: ₹1,320 (TC-1), ₹1,060 (TC-2), ₹670 (TC-3)
  - 1.30 minutes: ₹990 (TC-1), ₹790 (TC-2), ₹500 (TC-3)
- **Chandigarh, Coimbatore, Cuttack, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Madurai, Panaji, Puducherry, Raebareli, Shillong, Tirunelveli, Tiruchirapally, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam.

Advertisers must carefully consider the costs associated with different time slots and locations relative to their budget and campaign goals. Prime time slots in major cities such as Delhi and Mumbai are more expensive due to their broader reach and higher engagement, making them ideal for high-budget campaigns aiming for maximum impact. In contrast, advertisers with smaller budgets might find non-prime time slots or smaller cities more cost-effective. Strategic planning is essential for optimizing campaign effectiveness; high-budget campaigns should target prime times in major cities, while those with limited budgets can achieve effective results by selecting non-prime slots or smaller markets. Understanding regional pricing variations enables advertisers to tailor their strategies to specific markets, improving cost-

efficiency and return on investment. This regional approach helps in effectively allocating resources and reaching targeted audiences across diverse locations.

Regional variations in trailer rates for FM Rainbow and FM Gold channels are influenced by several factors. Larger metropolitan areas like Delhi and Mumbai experience higher audience engagement and demand for advertising, leading to elevated rates. Conversely, smaller cities and towns have lower advertising demand and rates. The higher cost of living and operational expenses in major cities contribute to the increased advertising rates observed there. Advertising competition also plays a role, with intense competition in major cities driving up rates as companies vie for prime slots, while smaller cities offer more affordable options due to lower competition. Economic conditions and local purchasing power further impact advertising rates, with areas of higher economic activity and consumer spending commanding higher rates. Lastly, regional differences in media consumption patterns and audience preferences influence rates, with cities having higher media engagement tending to have higher advertising costs.

Conclusion

The analysis of advertising rates and strategies employed by All India Radio (AIR) across its FM Rainbow and FM Gold stations reveals a structured and diverse pricing model tailored to various time bands and regional markets. FM Rainbow stations, spanning 25 locations, and FM Gold stations, across five key cities, utilize a tiered rate system that reflects the time of day and market demand. Prime time slots, characterized by the highest listener traffic, command the highest rates, while non-prime times are priced lower, accommodating varied advertising budgets. The data illustrates a clear differentiation in advertising costs between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, with major cities like Delhi and Mumbai exhibiting higher rates compared to other regions. Sponsorship rates for in-house programs and spot buys further differentiate by location and time category, underscoring the significant impact of audience reach and engagement potential on advertising costs. FM Gold rates for trailers and sponsored programs also indicate a strategic approach to pricing, with different rates for varying durations and categories, reinforcing the importance of targeted advertising and market-specific strategies. These comprehensive rate charts and time-band classifications offer valuable insights for advertisers, enabling them to make informed decisions based on their target audience, desired reach, and budget constraints. By understanding these dynamics, advertisers can better navigate the complexities of radio advertising and optimize their campaigns to effectively engage with audiences across India's diverse regions.

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