

Reconnoitring Guwahati's FM Landscape: An Analysis of Popular Radio Channels

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Introduction:

The diffusion of FM broadcasting is, in terms of exponential growth, irreversible, and with Guwahati, a southeastern Indian urban centre of eminence, this has been demonstrated to have a strongly felt, transforming impact. This study aims to explore the listening preferences and behaviours of people with respect to popular FM radio stations in the city of Guwahati, where strategic linkages and rapid urbanization make it an epicentre of development for the larger Northeastern region (Misra & Hussain, 2022). Guwahati, being a key education and trade centre, offers a peculiar socio-economic context that has influenced the media consumption habits of this city. The questionnaire will be based on the following aspects: preferences for content, audience structure, the time of day when people listen to the radio, and socio-demographic characteristics. Moreover, the study aims to enhance the understanding of media consumption habits in developed areas, with a specific focus on fast-developing urban centres in India, and Guwahati is the hub of Northeast India (Basumatary & Anand, 2020). With affordable radio receivers becoming widely accessible, the medium experienced a remarkable revival in the public sphere. Rather than being overshadowed by the cable television boom, radio carved its path and thrived, despite scepticism from government bodies regarding its influence on the masses. From rickshaws to mobile phones and cars, FM radio transformed the urban media consumption habits. It became a ubiquitous presence, accessible, portable, and personal. However, amidst the urban frenzy for FM, there remained silent listeners on the margins, often unnoticed. The entry of private players significantly boosted the popularity of FM radio in India. Today, the FM radio market has experienced rapid expansion and significant growth. Its commercial potential is vast, mainly because of its extensive reach from small roadside vendors to corporate professionals; everyone is tuned in. In contemporary society, staying connected and informed has become essential. Media, including radio, now play a vital role in our daily lives, influencing us in ways we may not even be aware of. It shapes our personal and public experiences, our imaginations, emotions, behaviours, preferences, and cultural expressions, such as music, fashion, food, and lifestyle.

The FM radio industry is also being driven by increased advertising from small, local brands and favourable demographics. Due to its localized nature, radio is an ideal platform for reaching specific regional audiences, making it a preferred choice for local businesses. Advertising on the radio is cost-effective, only about 15% of the cost of television ads, making it an attractive option for smaller firms. Local brands contribute approximately 40% of ad revenues in smaller towns. India, with one of the youngest populations in the world two-thirds under the age of 35 and a median age of about twenty-four is an ideal market for FM radio. Urban areas house nearly 30% of this young population, which FM radio stations strategically target. For this demographic, radio is more than a medium; it is a companion, providing entertainment both at home and on the move. (Singh, P., & Pandey, N., 2016).

Electronic Media in Assam: A Journey of Growth and Transformation

For a significant period, All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan were the only sources of electronic media accessible to the people of Assam. The region's foray into audio-visual broadcasting began on 19th November 1982, with the establishment of a Doordarshan Kendra (TV station) in Guwahati, marking the Northeast's first encounter with television (Saikia, 2019). Despite this early start, Assam had to wait until 2004 to see the launch of its first private satellite television channel, Ne TV. However, the Assamese television industry began to truly flourish only after 2010, when several private satellite TV channels emerged and began catering to a growing and diverse audience. While a few private radio stations were introduced post-2000, they failed to challenge the dominance of AIR, primarily due to AIR's unmatched coverage and accessibility across the state. However, the rise of private satellite TV channels gradually reduced Doordarshan's market share over time.

Radio in Assam: Enduring Popularity Amidst Change

Radio once enjoyed immense popularity in Assam due to its broad reach and accessibility. However, the advent of private satellite television led to a decline in its audience. Over the past decade, radio has made a notable comeback with the rise of private FM channels offering infotainment-rich content, shifting away from the more traditional formats. Despite this resurgence, community radio remains limited to a few institutions of higher education.

(Statement of the problem)

Assam boasts the highest radio listenership among all Northeastern states (Buragohain and Alam). Radio remains a favoured medium across all age groups. The introduction of FM radio channels further enhanced this trend, offering a mix of information and entertainment that appealed widely, especially in urban areas like Guwahati. (Dey, S. 2020). The surge in FM listenership laid the foundation for the growth of community radio in Assam. Currently, these stations are primarily government-controlled and operate within higher educational institutions. Notable examples include:

- Jnan Taranga (90.4 FM) was established in 2010 and is run by the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University.
- Radio Luit (90.8 FM) was established in 2011 and is operated by Gauhati University.
- Brahmaputra Community Radio, launched in 2015 in Dibrugarh

Review of Literature:

Previous studies of FM radio in Indian cities often highlight its function as a ubiquitous source of entertainment, information, and advertising. FM radio in India has demonstrated remarkable strength and flexibility in the face of emerging digital challengers, utilizing community-driven content and local stations to remain relevant (Paudel et al., 2020). The popularity of radio also owes to its ubiquitous nature and affordability, which make it a valuable means of communication for various socio-economic groups, including the less fortunate and individuals who do not have reliable internet access (Lamm & Brandt, 2012; Mu-azu & Shivram, 2017). This diverse and large population of Guwahati makes it an interesting case study of FM radio listening in a growing metropolitan environment (Das and Barua, 2011). The role of community radio in promoting connection to the local community and cultural preservation has been reported in previous studies in areas where mainstream media tend to disregard local culture (Sharma et al., 2021). Also, published literature on the topic of Delhi has discussed surrogate advertisement on popular FM stations, which sheds light on the strategic practices of media houses (Singh et al., 2022).

Emerging Paradigms in Marketing: A Study on the FM Radio Market in Chennai City highlights the early monetization opportunity in Chennai's FM radio sector, spotlighting listeners' strong engagement with melodious, informative content, particularly among youth, and urging stations to deepen content appeal and innovative marketing to build brand equity and attract advertisers. As Chennai's FM market grew, differentiation via quality content and engaging formats became critical. The study underscores that success in FM radio hinged not on legacy branding, but on relevance, curated programs, RJ personality, and strategic community connection. (Ananthi, N. 2007). In *Introduction to Radio Production*, radio is explored as a powerful medium of mass communication, known for its immediacy, accessibility, and affordability. The book emphasises its influence in informing, educating, entertaining, and mobilising the public. The book highlights the Importance of understanding the audience and techniques for engaging listeners and incorporating their feedback. (Apuke, O. D.2017) Cordeiro's research illustrates how radio has transformed into "r@dio", a digital convergence platform

characterized by interactivity, multimedia, and audience participation. Far from obsolescence, radio evolves by weaving together traditional audio with web, mobile, and on-demand capabilities—reshaping both its cultural role and delivery formats in a networked media environment. (Cordeiro, P. 2012). Dey, in ‘The Dodransbicentennial Journey of Media in Assam: Issues, Prospects and Way Ahead’, commemorates Assam’s nearly 175-year-long media journey—from early missionary print to the dynamic digital ecosystem of today. The paper acknowledges regional media’s achievements while urging it to adapt through ethical reforms, digital readiness, and sustainable practices to face current and future challenges. (Dey, S. 2020). In “Language pattern and content variation in private Hindi radio FM: A study”, Garg and Mishra reveal that private FM radio in Hindi-speaking regions increasingly adopts innovative, audience-centric language patterns, emphasizing comprehension and engagement over strict linguistic norms. These practices not only reflect changing media strategies but also carry potential cultural and communication consequences. (Garg, P., & Mishra, A., 2020).

Kak's work, titled ‘Essentials and practices of radio management’, serves as a practical guide for aspiring radio professionals, emphasizing the balance between creativity and management discipline. It reflects the real-world functioning of radio stations in India and provides foundational knowledge crucial for efficient radio station management. (Kak, A. 2008). In ‘The Role of Private FM Radio Channels in Popularizing Indian Music’, the authors illustrate how private FM radio channels serve as catalysts in promoting and shaping music tastes, chiefly by reinforcing film-based popular music and maintaining tight alignment with audience expectations. (Kaur, R., Garg, P., & Mishra, A., 2022). *Managing Radio: Sound Concepts* is a comprehensive guide to understanding the inner workings of radio broadcasting, particularly from a management and production perspective. The book examines both the theoretical and practical aspects of managing radio stations in the modern, digital age. (Lister, B., Mitchell, C., & O'Shea, T., 2010). The book- *Community attitudes to radio content: Research report prepared for the Australian Communications and Media Authority*. Australian Communications and Media Authority highlight the complex balance between community standards, freedom of expression, and effective regulation. It underscores the Importance of audience engagement, clear guidelines, and robust complaint systems to ensure radio content aligns with public expectations. (Loncar, T., & Media, CTI. 2010). The authors of ‘Effectiveness of radio as an advertising medium: A perception survey in Delhi/NCR’ points out that radio continues to be a cost-effective and targeted advertising medium in urban India. While it may not rival television or digital media in visual appeal, its audio strength, reach, and recall value make it a viable option, especially for localized or mass-market campaigns. The study recommends that advertisers tailor their content creatively and consider peak listening times to maximise impact. (Paul, M., Dihhlon, L., Bansal, S., & Bagga, T., 2017). Content analysis. *Research methods for social work*- this chapter by B.D. Prasad provides a comprehensive overview of content analysis as a research method, particularly within the social sciences and social work contexts. It highlights content analysis as a systematic, objective, and quantitative technique used to analyze the content of communication, including texts, media messages, speeches, and documents. (Prasad, B. D. 2008). The study on ‘Content, Structure and Functioning of FM Channels and Opinion of Listeners about the content broadcast by FM Channels’ explores the content strategies, organisational structure, and programming formats of FM radio channels, while also analysing the listeners' opinions and preferences regarding the content aired. The researchers focused on understanding how FM channels operate in terms of content planning, target audience engagement, and broadcasting approach. The study concludes that while FM channels have gained popularity due to their entertainment-centric approach, there is a growing need to diversify content to serve broader public interests. The findings suggest integrating more developmental, cultural, and community-based content to make FM a more inclusive and socially beneficial medium. (Singh, P., & Pandey, N., 2016).

Research Gap:

Various research studies have been conducted by scholars in the field of community radio stations and FM channels in different regions. It has been found that limited studies have been conducted to date on the FM channels in Guwahati. Hence, this research study is being conducted to determine the popularity of FM stations in Guwahati city, as well as the listening habits and opinions of the people regarding the most popular FM channels.

Objectives:

1. To analyze the types of programmes aired by the FM channels in Guwahati.
2. To examine the radio listening habits of people in Guwahati.
3. To assess public opinion regarding the influence of FM channels on their daily lives.
4. To evaluate the programming policies of FM channels concerning public interest versus commercial motives.

Research Methodology:

The study explores the listening habits and opinions of FM radio listeners. It is descriptive in nature and consists of a mixed method of approach i.e. a combination of both survey and interview method. A sample size of 100 individuals was selected using a structured schedule comprising questions aligned with the research objectives of the paper. These questions gathered data on listeners' general profiles, including their gender, age, education, and preferred time slots, as well as their views on how local FM radio stations contribute to their daily lives. Moreover, it will provide insights into the listening habits and opinions of FM radio listeners. Moreover, the researchers did in-depth interviews of the various heads of the selected FM stations in the state capital of Assam i.e. Guwahati.

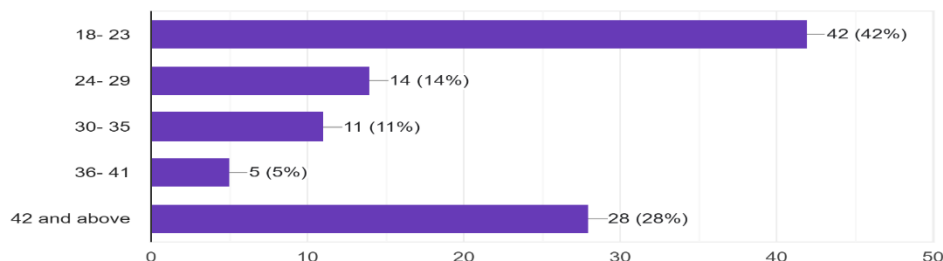
Channel Selection and Policy Analysis

The research was conducted using various analytical techniques to meet the study's objectives effectively. The research universe includes all private FM radio stations in Guwahati city. A probability sampling method was employed, specifically the simple random sampling technique using the lottery method, to select three FM channels —Radio Mirchi 95 FM, Big FM 92.7, and Red FM 93.5 — for detailed analysis. To understand the programming strategies and channel policies, the researcher conducted in-depth personal interviews with the programming heads of the selected FM stations. Despite several calls and emails being sent to the concerned officials in the Guwahati branch, there was no response from Red FM 93.5.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Findings:

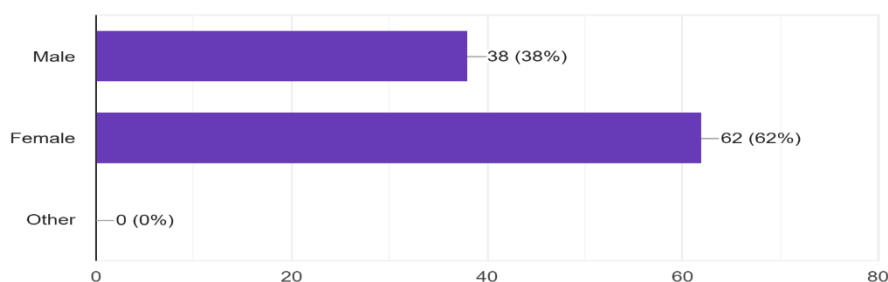
To understand the radio listening habits of people in Guwahati and assess public opinion regarding the influence of FM channels on their daily lives and their requirements or expectations, fifteen questions were asked in total in a Google form, which was circulated on WhatsApp. Data were collected from a total of 100 respondents to understand the listening habits and opinions of listeners of popular FM channels.

1. Age group in years:
100 responses



Study indicates that the majority (42%) of the listeners of FM channels are in the age group of 18-23, followed by the listeners who are in the age group of 42 and above (28%), 24-29 years old (14%), 30-35 years of age (11%), and only 5% of the listeners belong to age group of 36-41 years old.

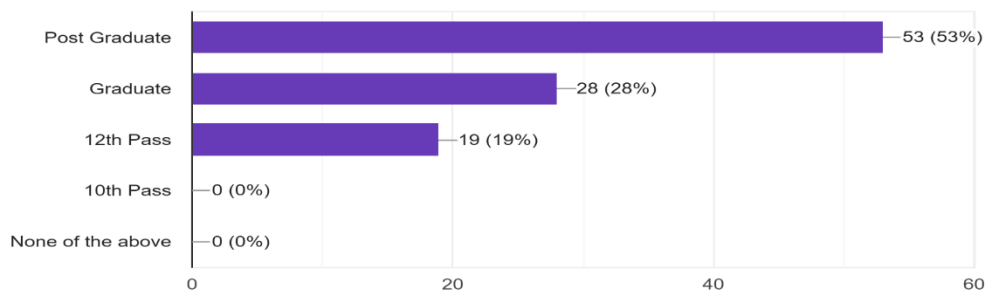
2. Gender:
100 responses



The study reveals that the majority, 62% of the respondents, are female, and 38% are male listeners.

3. Qualification

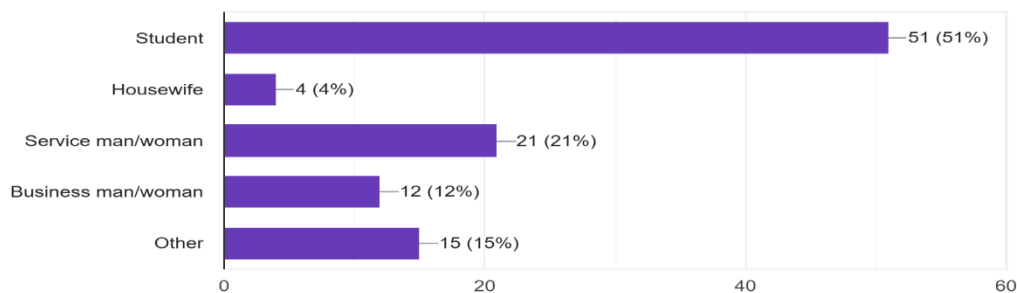
100 responses



Regarding the qualification of the FM listeners in Guwahati city, the table above clearly shows that the majority (53%) of the respondents are postgraduates, followed by 28% graduates, and 19% are 12th pass.

4. Occupation

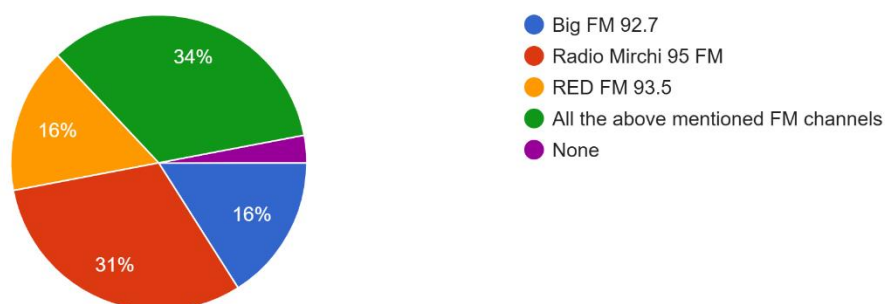
100 responses



A study reveals that among the 100 respondents, the majority (51%) of listeners are students, followed by 21% who are in service. 15% of the listeners do not belong to any of the given categories, followed by 12% who are businesspeople, and 4% of FM listeners are homemakers.

5. You prefer to listen to :

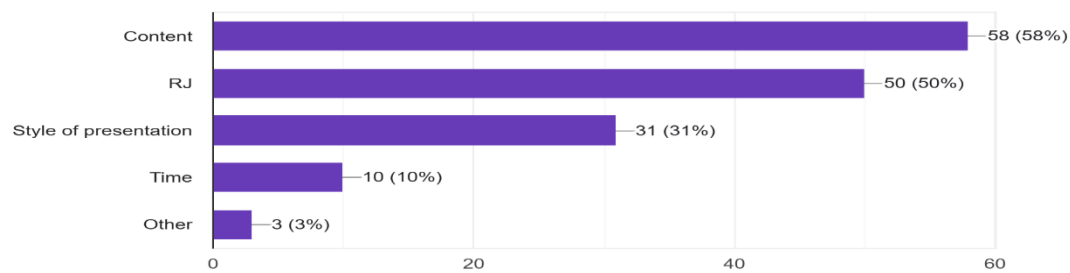
100 responses



The pie chart clearly indicates that the majority (34%) of the listeners prefer to listen to all three popular channels. However, the maximum (31%) listeners prefer listening to Radio Mirchi 95 FM, followed by Red FM (18%) and Big FM (16%). One per cent of respondents do not prefer listening to any of the channels.

6. Which factor grabs your attention towards the channel?

100 responses

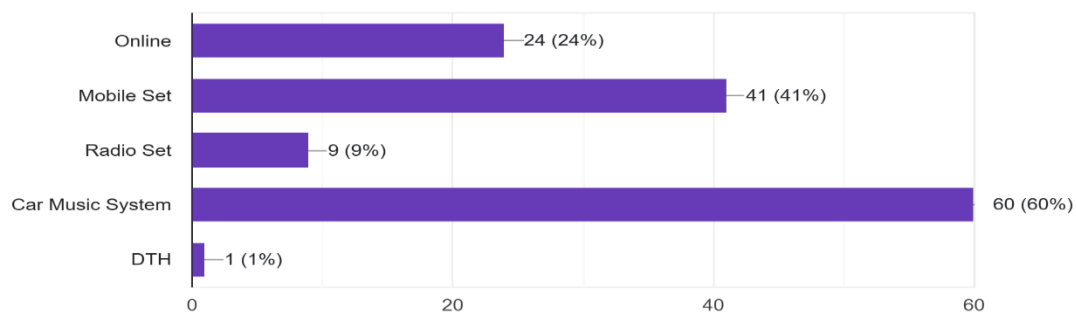


The graph above indicates that the majority (58%) of listeners are interested in listening to the FM channel due to the quality of the content it airs. 50% of the respondents listen to an FM channel because of the popularity of the RJ, followed by 31% who listen because they like the presentation style. 10% listen to a programme on FM at a time that suits them. 3% listen due to other reasons.

7. The study reveals that the majority (60%) of the respondents listen to FM channels in car music systems, followed by 41% on mobile sets, 24% online, 9% on radio sets and only 1% on DTH.

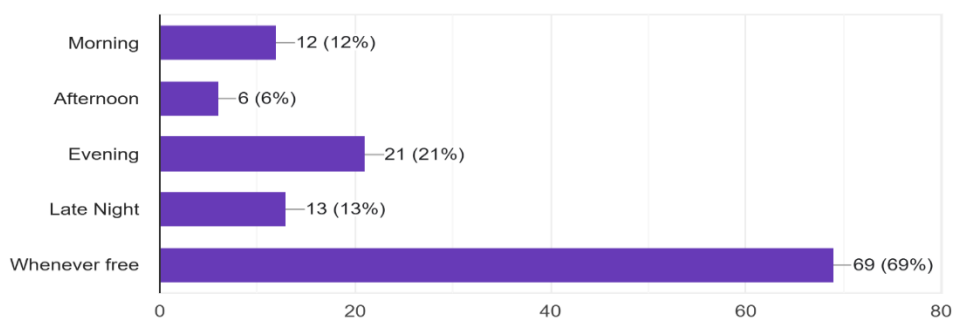
7. Through which device do you listen?

100 responses



8. Preference of time:

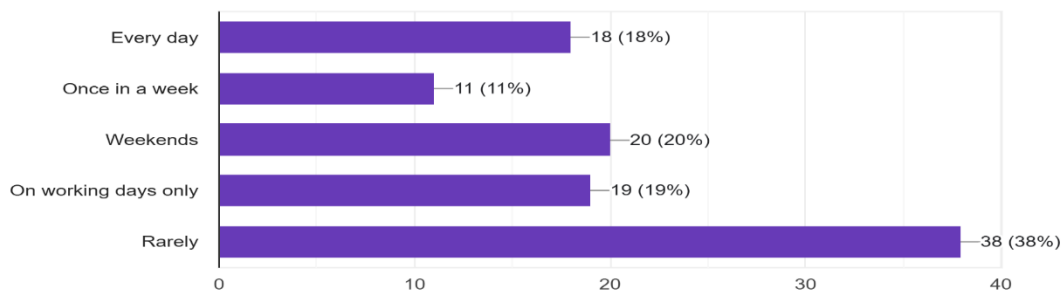
100 responses



8. It was found that the majority (69%) of the respondents listen to FM channels whenever they are free, followed by 21% respondents who listen to FM channels in the evening, whereas 13% listen to FM channels in the late night, 12% in the morning and 6% in the afternoon.

9. How many days in a week do you listen to FM?

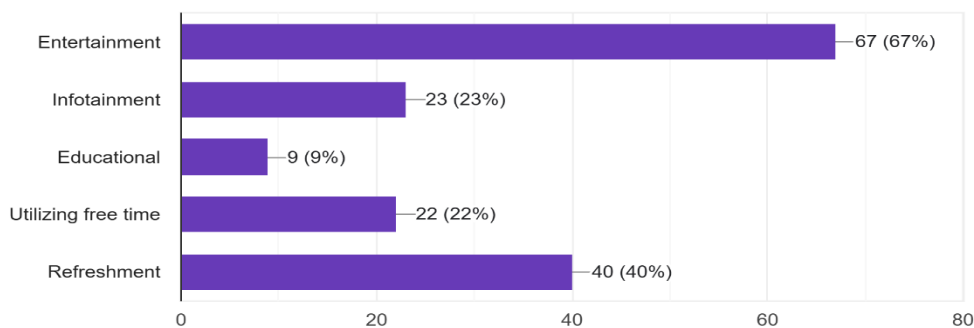
100 responses



The graph clearly indicates that the majority (38%) of the respondents rarely listen to FM channels. Twenty % of the respondents listen to FM channels on weekends, followed by 19% who listen to FM channels only on weekends, 18% who listen every day, and 11% who listen to FM channels only once a week.

10. Purpose of listening to FM

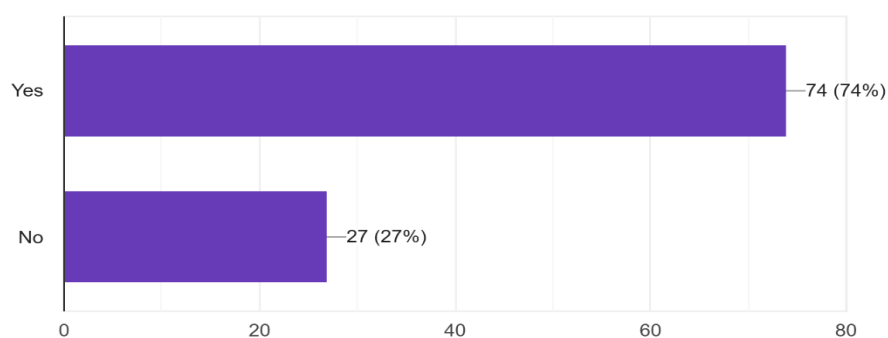
100 responses



The study reveals that 67% of respondents listen to FM channels for entertainment, followed by 40% for the feeling of being refreshed. 23% of the respondents listen to FM channels for infotainment, followed by 22% for utilizing their free time, and only 9% for educational purposes.

11. Do you skip advertisement?

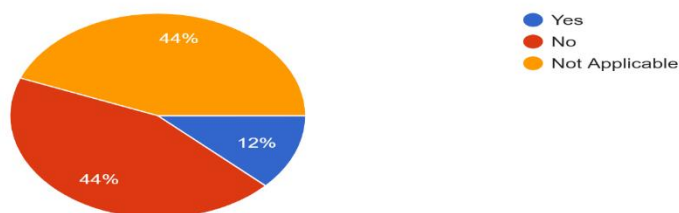
100 responses



The graph indicates that the majority (74%) of respondents skip advertisements on FM channels while listening to a program, and only 27% do not.

12. If no, do you concentrate on the advertisements?

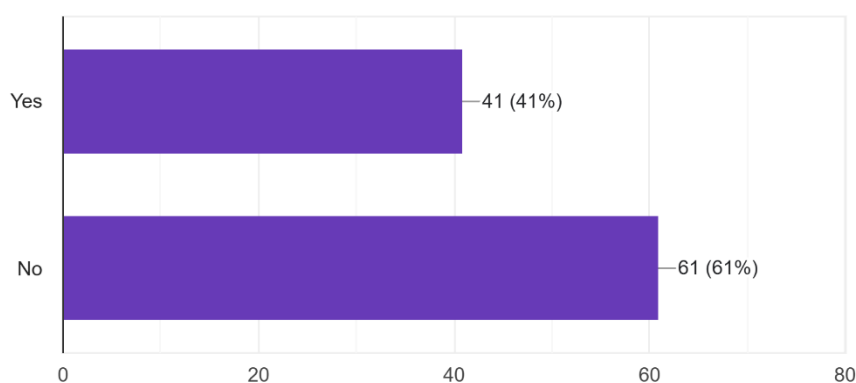
100 responses



It was found that the majority (44%) of the respondents do not concentrate on the advertisements during a programme on an FM channel, and only 12% concentrate on the advertisements.

13. Do you remember the content/ data broadcast by FM channels for a long time?

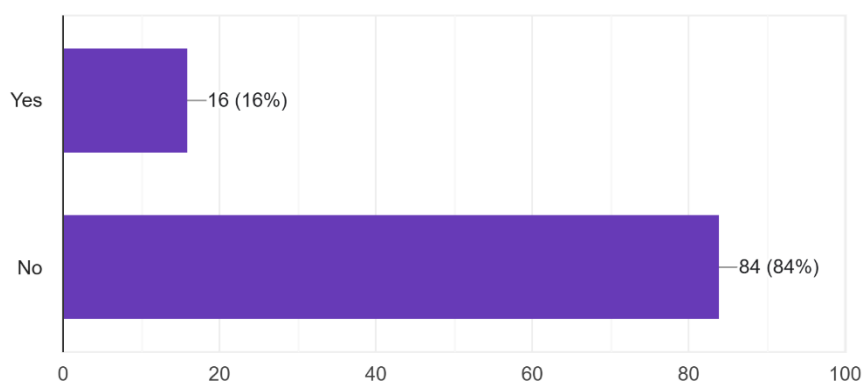
100 responses



The study reveals that the majority (60%) of respondents do not remember the content broadcast by FM channels, while 40% do remember it for a long time.

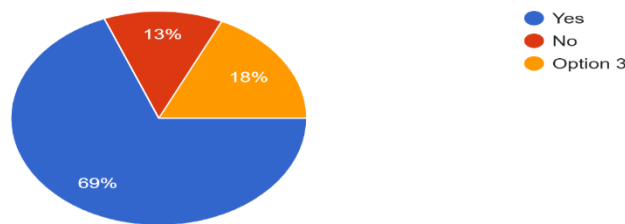
14. Do you interact with the RJs ?

100 responses



The majority (84%) of respondents do not interact with the RJs, while only 16% do interact with them while listening to FM channels.

15. Radio can change the life of people.
100 responses



The majority (69%) of respondents believe that radio can change people's lives, whereas 13% think it cannot. 18% did not provide an opinion or were neutral.

Summary of the findings:

The study conducted to understand the radio listening habits of FM channel audiences in Guwahati involved 100 respondents who answered a set of fifteen questions circulated through a Google form via WhatsApp. The demographic profile of the respondents reveals that a significant portion of FM listeners in the city are young, with 42% falling within the 18–23 age group. This is followed by 28% in the 42 years and above age group, while the rest are distributed across the age brackets of 24–29 years (14%), 30–35 years (11%), and 36–41 years (5%). A larger share of listeners is female (62%) compared to males (38%). Educationally, the respondents are exceptionally well-qualified, with 53% holding postgraduate degrees, 28% holding graduate degrees, and 19% having completed 12th grade. In terms of occupation, more than half of the respondents (51%) are students, indicating a youthful and academically engaged audience. This is followed by 21% of employed individuals, 12% of business owners, 4% of homemakers, and 15% who fall outside these categories. Regarding channel preferences, 34% of listeners enjoy all three popular FM stations in Guwahati. Among those with a specific preference, Radio Mirchi 95 FM leads with 31%, followed by Red FM (18%) and Big FM (16%). Only 1% of the respondents do not prefer any FM channel.

The appeal of FM channels largely stems from the quality of content, as noted by 58% of the respondents. Additionally, the popularity of the radio jockeys (RJs) motivates 50% of the audience, while 31% are drawn to the presentation style. Other factors, such as convenient timing (10%) and miscellaneous reasons (3%), also play a role. Listening times vary, but a large proportion (69%) tune in whenever they are free. Others prefer specific times, such as in the evening (21%), late night (13%), morning (12%), and afternoon (6%). As for the medium of listening, 60% use their car music system, 41% use mobile phones, and 24% listen online. A smaller percentage relies on traditional radio sets (9%) or DTH (1%). However, the frequency of listening varies, with 38% stating they rarely listen, while 20% do so on weekends. About 19% listen only on weekends, 18% listen daily, and 11% tune in once a week. The primary motivations for listening include entertainment (67%) and feeling refreshed (40%). Others mentioned infotainment (23%), spending free time (22%), and education (9%) as their reasons for using the device.

The study also sheds light on attitudes towards advertisements. Most respondents (74%) skip advertisements while listening to programs, and 44% admit they ignore them. Only a small fraction (12%) actively concentrates on advertisements. Memory retention of content appears low, with 40% of listeners claiming that they remember the broadcast material. However, engagement remains limited, as 84% of the respondents do not interact with RJs, leaving just 16% who do. Finally, the study reveals an optimistic outlook toward the potential of radio as a medium, with 69% of respondents believing that radio has the power to bring about positive change in people's lives.

In contrast, 13% disagreed with this view, and 18% remained neutral. Overall, the findings paint a picture of a largely youthful, educated, and female-dominated listener base in Guwahati, who value engaging content and entertainment but are less inclined toward interactivity and advertising on FM radio. The responses to the question “Any suggestion or opinion from your end on radio?” present a nuanced picture of how audiences perceive radio today, reflecting both enduring appreciation and a call for evolution. A significant portion of the respondents expressed neutrality or had no specific suggestions, hinting at either a lack of engagement or indifference toward the medium. However, among those who did provide feedback, content and programming emerged as a central concern. Many listeners emphasized a desire for more

music and less talk—especially music that is soothing, regional, or rooted in folk traditions. There were repeated calls to reduce the dominance of Bollywood content and introduce more diverse offerings such as educational programs, short stories, trivia, financial advice, and community-based narratives.

Innovative suggestions included the development of youth-centric formats, such as campus radio, interactive segments with live calls or polls, and podcast-style episodes. Others urged for a stronger digital presence through mobile apps, archived content, and real-time traffic or weather updates. A few pointed out the need for improved signal clarity and wider office reach, such as more local radio stations in underserved areas like Guwahati. Many respondents still regard radio as a meaningful medium valued for its nostalgia, accessibility, and its utility during commuting, studying, or relaxation. It is also recognized for its role in disseminating local news, public messages, and emergency information. However, radio believes it is becoming irrelevant and obsolete on modern streaming platforms, especially among specific audiences.

Presentation and the role of radio jockeys (RJs) also drew feedback. Suggestions included more precise pronunciation, especially in regional languages, a better balance between entertainment and information, and a more polished and respectful on-air demeanour. Advertising drew criticism for being too frequent or intrusive, with many calling for shorter, more engaging ad formats. A small segment offered creative ideas, such as light-hearted prank calls and humorous content. At the same time, a few responses reflected academic insights, emphasizing the Importance of radio in media education and the need for continued research on audience preferences and digital adaptation.

Questions were asked during the interview with the Head of FM Channels, and they sent their answers.

1. What is the staffing strength of your Guwahati branch?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- 11

Big FM 92.7- Unable to disclose due to internal matters; however, we have the lowest number of staff among our competitors.

2. What criteria do you use for employee selection?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- Educational qualification and professional experience

Big FM 92.7 - We have different criteria for each division across the network. Programming investigates the content, engagement capabilities, scripting abilities, content production competencies, knowledge of market demographics, its belief system, and culture, among other factors. Marketing investigates brand management capabilities. Sales personnel assess market knowledge, brand knowledge, pitch design capabilities, and other relevant factors. The technical department investigates various technical areas, including server management, networking, and computer-based knowledge, among others. Account planning and finance investigates the accounting abilities. Administration investigates general management-based competencies.

3. Can you describe the organizational structure of your channel?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- Non-hierarchical

Big FM 92.7 has a hierarchical structure with clear lines of reporting and accountability. CEO (Chief Executive Officer) – COO (Chief Operating Officer) & Head of Human Resources – Under the COO are: CMPO (Chief Marketing & Product Officer), CFO (Chief Financial Officer), and CTO (Chief Technical Officer). Under CMPO are Programming Heads, Marketing Heads and Digital Heads. Under the CFO are the Admin and Finance teams. Moreover, under the CTO are the technical teams. Under the National Programming Head are COE teams (content production), Music Managers, Regional Programming Head, followed by Cluster Programming Head, then Programming Heads or managers, and then executive producer, then producer, then jocks.

4. What is your daily broadcast schedule?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- Live shows 8 AM -8 PM, rest of the day national programming

Big FM 92.7- Morning show (7 to 11 AM), Suhana Safar (National Show – 11 to 1 PM), B2B Music (1 to 5 PM), Evening show (5 to 9 PM), B2B Music (9 to 10 PM).

5. Who determines the program format?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- Programming head

Big FM 92.7 - Nationally, we receive a directive, and then the regional/ local heads plan according to their station's sensibilities and opportunities.

6. What factors influence your programming decisions?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- Target audience, demographics and interest

Big FM 92.7- Topicality, current vibe of the city and its people, culture, rituals, practices, music, company decisions, etc.

7. Who is responsible for scriptwriting?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- Copywriter

Big FM 92.7- Copywriters take care of scriptwriting.

8. What is the ratio/ balance between national and regional programming?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- 30:70

Big FM 92.7- Region or Local programming – 80% and National programming – 20%.

9. Do scriptwriters conduct research for their work?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- Yes

Big FM 92.7- Yes

10. How do you allocate the budget for specific programs?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- N/A

Big FM 92.7- We share our plans with the national heads who, along with us, fix a few programmes that we are likely to undertake for a particular financial year. Based on the plan, marketing devise the cost sheet upon discussion with local vendors and the final cost sheet with on-air, ground and digital deliverables are sent to account planning team who decides on the final projection of budget based on which sponsors will be approached.

11. How do you handle royalty payments?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- Through the corporate office

Big FM 92.7 - We generate the royalty reports and share them with our national music and finance teams, who perform the necessary calculations and distribute the reports to the label. Following this, finance ensures the necessary clearance based on their consumption data.

12. What are your primary sources of information?

Radio Mirchi 95FM- Times Group news platforms, government notices

Big FM 92.7- Newspapers, DIPR, National portals, AIR, Government bodies, Press releases, relevant websites, etc.

The interviews with the Heads of Radio Mirchi 95FM and Big FM 92.7 in Guwahati offer insightful comparisons into how two leading FM stations function at the regional level. While Radio Mirchi operates with a lean team of 11, Big FM refrained from revealing exact staffing numbers, although it admitted to having the smallest team among its competitors. The employee selection processes differ notably. Radio Mirchi follows a straightforward approach based on qualifications and experience, whereas Big FM uses a highly segmented and role-specific recruitment strategy, reflecting its more complex internal structure. Structurally, the two stations contrast significantly. Radio Mirchi describes itself as non-hierarchical, likely promoting a flatter and more collaborative work environment.

On the other hand, Big FM follows a rigid hierarchical structure with multiple layers of leadership and specialization, particularly in programming and technical divisions. Programming schedules at both stations are structured but vary in

emphasis. Radio Mirchi relies heavily on live shows from 8 AM to 8 PM, whereas Big FM adopts a time-blocked format that combines regional and national content throughout the day. Decision-making in programming reflects each station's organizational philosophy. Radio Mirchi grants autonomy to the programming head, whereas Big FM follows national directives, customized by regional leadership. Influences on programming also show some divergence: Radio Mirchi focuses on demographics and listener interests, while Big FM emphasizes cultural relevance, city mood, and company priorities. Both stations rely on copywriters for scripting, and these professionals are expected to conduct thorough research to ensure the quality of their content. When it comes to the balance of national and regional content, both prioritize regional programming, with Big FM showing a stronger regional tilt (80%) compared to Radio Mirchi's 70%. Budget allocation and royalty payments are more centralised in both organisations, but with more transparency and structured planning apparent in Big FM's responses. Lastly, their sources of information align in their reliance on credible news platforms and official government communication. However, Big FM lists a more diverse set of sources, reflecting its broader programming scope.

Content Analysis:

1. For content analysis, the programming schedules of the FM stations were collected for five consecutive weekdays (Monday to Friday) to analyze the types of programmes aired by the popular FM channels in Guwahati. This allowed for a comprehensive examination of the types of programs aired and their alignment with audience preferences.

Programming Schedule of Radio Mirchi 95 FM

TIME	SHOW		STATUS
6 AM - 8 AM	Mirchi Recharge Mantra	Motivational Show with Vishaal Sethia and Brahmakumari Sister Shreya	Syndicated Show
8 AM - 12 PM	Khati Guwahatiya Gaurab	Morning Show with Mirchi RJ Gaurab	Live Show
12 PM - 4 PM	Kool Kanya Dhriti	Afternoon Show with Mirchi RJ Dhriti	Live Show
4 PM - 8 PM	Teekhi Mirchi Susmita	Evening Show with Mirchi RJ Susmita	Live Show
8 PM - 12 AM	Insta Pyaar	Night Show with Mirchi RJ Rochie	Syndicated Show

Program schedule of Big FM 92.7

	MONDAY to FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Time	Show Name		
07:00	Big Cha Garam	Big Cha Garam	Bhagyoday
08:00	Big Cha Garam	Big Cha Garam	OUATIB (National)
09:00	Big Cha Garam	Big Cha Garam	OUATIB (National)
10:00	Big Cha Garam	Big Cha Garam	Aaliyar Alohi
11:00	Suhana Safar (National)	Suhana Safar (National)	Aaliyar Alohi
12:00	Suhana Safar (National)	Suhana Safar (National)	Big Axomiya Top 10

13:00	B2B - Herua Xur	B2B - Herua Xur	B2B - Herua Xur
14:00	B2B - Herua Xur	B2B - Herua Xur	B2B - Herua Xur
15:00	B2B - Herua Xur	B2B - Herua Xur	Blue Mic (National)
16:00	B2B - Herua Xur	Blue Mic (National)	Tasty Sunday
17:00	Full Volume	Full Volume	B2B
18:00	Full Volume	Full Volume	Big Musicals
19:00	Full Volume	Full Volume	Big Musicals
20:00	Full Volume	Full Volume	B2B
21:00	B2B	B2B	B2B

For the content analysis of the programmes aired on Big FM 92.7 and Radio Mirchi 95 FM, I personally listened to all the programmes on Big FM from Sunday, August 3, 2025, to Saturday, August 9, 2025, for seven days. I also listened to all the programmes aired on Radio Mirchi from August 10th to August 16th, 2025, from Sunday to Saturday, for seven days. Big FM 92.7 broadcasts a programme called 'Big Sah Gorom' (meaning 'hot tea') from 7 AM to 11 AM every day, in which motivational speaker Sujita speaks in Assamese, shares information based on current affairs, and covers soft news primarily (not hard news). Campaigns are done in partnership, and RJ also mentions information regarding national and regional sales of products or services. From 11 AM to 1 PM, a programme called 'Suhana Safar' is broadcast, in which Bollywood actor Annu Kapoor from Mumbai narrates interesting stories of Bollywood, accompanied by Hindi songs. From 1 PM to 5 PM, 'Herua Xur' (meaning lost melodies) is aired, in which back-to-back songs are played from old movies of yesteryears. This programme has no Radio Jockey.

From 5 PM to 9 PM, RJ Aaliya presents the programme 'Full Volume' in Hindi and Assamese, featuring the latest songs from Bollywood and Jollywood (Assamese Movies), along with interviews with celebrities. Contests are played with the announcement of prizes, and listeners' WhatsApp messages are being entertained. From 9 PM to 10 PM, back-to-back songs are played again, with no RJ on Big FM. FM closes at 10 PM. On Sundays, Big FM broadcasts special programmes beginning with 'Bhagyoday' based on astrology and tarot card reading, presented by RJ Aaliya from 7 AM to 8 AM, in which all devotional songs are played. Programme, 'Once Upon a Time in Bollywood' is presented by RJ Bhavna Sumaya from 8 AM to 10 AM, featuring songs, film reviews of new releases, and interviews with the cast and crew of the film unit. From 10 AM to 12 Noon, the programme 'Aaliyar Aalohi' (meaning Aaliya's guest) is presented by RJ Aaliya, in which Aaliya interviews celebrities, and songs from the 1970s, 80s, and 90s are played. From 12 to 1 PM, "Axomiya Top 10" is broadcast, playing all the hit songs from Assamese movies back-to-back with no host. Again, from 1 PM to 3 PM, back-to-back songs from Assamese and Bollywood movies are played without an RJ. 3 to 4 PM programme - 'Blue Mic' is presented by RJs from Delhi or Mumbai, featuring new musicians and singers. 'Blue Mic' is also aired on every Saturday from 4 to 5 PM. RJ Rooma presents a programme called 'Tasty Sunday' from 4 to 5 PM every Sunday, in which songs are played along with a talk on food and local cuisines. 5 to 6 PM back to back-to-back songs are played on a Sunday. 6 PM to 8 PM, a programme called 'Big Musicals' is broadcast, which is packaged by RJ Rooma, in which the singers speak to the listeners. Again, from 8 to 10 PM, back-to-back songs are played with no RJ.

On Radio Mirchi 95 FM, Monday to Friday, programmes are broadcast according to the schedule. The day starts with the programme titled 'Mirchi Recharge Mantra' from 6 AM to 8 AM, in which aspirational and motivational songs are played, accompanied by talks from Vishaal Sethia and Brahmakumari sister Shreya. Listeners of all ages benefit from this programme. It is a syndicated show broadcast from Radio Mirchi's Mumbai studios. From 8 AM to 12 PM, the programme 'Khati Guwahatia Gaurab' is presented by the oldest male RJ of Radio Mirchi, Guwahati- Gaurab, who is very friendly and well-informed. The youth in the 18-24 age group like him a lot. The RJ speaks in Assamese. The programme plays

Bollywood hits along with news and local updates by the RJ. From 12 PM to 4 PM, RJ Dhriti takes over as 'Kool Kanya Dhriti', who is sweet and calm. Softer songs are played during these hours. Then comes RJ Susmita from 4 PM to 8 PM, who is bold and energetic. She speaks in Assamese, Hindi and English to the listeners while playing loud musical songs for the prime-time show- 'Tikhi Mirchi Susmita'. From 8 PM to 12 PM, RJ Rochie takes over and presents her show, 'Insta Pyar'. She discusses love and relationships, answering questions asked by listeners via WhatsApp. This programme is broadcast from Delhi. Special programmes are aired on Saturday and Sunday. Listeners range from the elderly to the young. Most of Radio Mirchi FM's listeners are young, as the programmes are lively and the RJs are engaging.

On Saturday and Sunday, the schedule for Radio Mirchi 95 FM was as follows: From 6 to 8 AM on Saturday, 'Mirchi Recharge' was broadcast. 8 AM to 12 PM, it was live with 'Khatai Guwahati Gaurab'. From 12 to 4 PM, it was 'Kool Kanya Dhriti' live. From 4 to 5 PM, 'Filmi Mirchi' was broadcast from Mumbai, which includes celebrity interviews. 5 to 7 PM, there was a countdown show of Bollywood songs titled- 'Mirchi Top 20'. From 7 to 11 PM, 'Club Mirchi' was broadcast, featuring DJ Richard from Kolkata, who entertained the audience with remix music. From 11 to 12 midnight, RJ Susmita's 'Baate Ankahee' (repeat) was broadcast. On Sunday, again, the day started with 'Recharge Mantra' from 6 AM to 10 AM. 'Filmi Mirchi' was broadcast from 10 to 11 AM. There was a talk on Astrology and Vastu from 11 AM to 1 PM by RJ Tashi from Mumbai. 'Baate Ankahee' by RJ Susmita(original) was broadcast with casual and upfront interviews of celebrities. 3 PM to 5 PM, back-to-back music was played with no RJ. 'Indie Top 10' was broadcast from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM, featuring songs from non-film albums. 6 PM to 8 PM was the time for 'Mirchi Top 20' (repeat). 8 to 9 PM was the time for 'Baate Unfiltered' (repeat). After that, RJ Tashi from Lucknow presented 'Mirchi Mehfil', who played ghazals from 9 to 12 midnight.

Comparative Content Analysis of Big FM 92.7 and Radio Mirchi 95 FM

Both Big FM 92.7 and Radio Mirchi 95 FM cater to the entertainment needs of listeners in Guwahati, but their programme formats, language use, and presentation styles differ significantly.

1. Programme Structure & Format

- Big FM maintains a structured daily schedule with fixed slots for motivational shows, old melodies, celebrity interviews, and back-to-back music. The channel signs off at 10 PM, limiting late-night engagement. Sundays are more experimental with astrology, Bollywood retrospectives, celebrity interviews, and food-based shows.
- Radio Mirchi, in contrast, has a longer daily broadcast (6 AM to 12 midnight) with shows tailored for different audiences throughout the day. The format is more RJ-driven, with distinct personalities for morning motivation, youth-centric mid-morning shows, prime-time energy, and late-night relationship talks. The weekend shows are diversified and appeal to younger listeners as well.

2. Role of Radio Jockeys (RJs)

- Big FM uses RJs selectively. Shows like *Big Sah Gorom* (RJ Sujita) and *Full Volume* (RJ Aaliya) are interactive, but several slots (especially afternoon and late night) are music-only with no RJ intervention. This reduces personal connections but allows uninterrupted music listening.
- Radio Mirchi is RJ-centric. Almost every time slot is anchored by a strong RJ personality (Gaurab, Dhriti, Susmita, Rochie) who not only plays music but also interacts with listeners in multiple languages, gives updates, and runs conversations. This makes Mirchi more engagement-oriented and personality-driven.

3. Language Use

- Big FM primarily uses Assamese in most of its shows, with Hindi featured in select ones, such as *Suhana Safar* (featuring Annu Kapoor) and celebrity-based programmes. This gives it a more regional-cultural flavour.
- Radio Mirchi balances Assamese, Hindi, and English, depending on the RJ and show. This multilingual approach allows it to attract both local Assamese-speaking audiences and cosmopolitan youth who consume Bollywood and English content.

4. Music Choice & Themes

- Big FM places more emphasis on thematic and curated content: motivational songs (*Big Sah Gorom*), retro classics (*Herua Xur*), devotional songs (*Bhagyodaya*), Assamese top hits (*Axomiya Top 10*), and Bollywood nostalgia (*Once Upon a Time in Bollywood*). The channel leans towards family-friendly and soft programming with some cultural depth.
- Radio Mirchi prioritizes contemporary Bollywood and energetic playlists, especially during youth-oriented slots (*Tikhi Mirchi Susmita*). The channel features soft music during the day (*Kool Kanya Dhriti*) and relationship-oriented songs at night (*Rochie's show*). Its music selection is more youth-driven, urban, and trendy.

5. Audience Engagement & Interactivity

- Big FM uses listener messages, contests, and celebrity interviews selectively (*Full Volume, Aaliyar Aalohi*). Campaigns are integrated into shows, but several long blocks are passive (non-interactive, back-to-back songs).
- Radio Mirchi is highly interactive. RJs constantly engage with listeners via WhatsApp, offering relationship advice, hosting contests, and facilitating conversations in multiple languages. This creates a more dynamic two-way communication and builds loyalty among young listeners.

6. Target Audience

- Big FM caters to a broad, slightly older and family-oriented audience with its motivational, devotional, and retro programmes. It is more suitable for those who enjoy a relaxed, informative, and nostalgic listening experience.
- Radio Mirchi strongly appeals to the youth and young professionals (18–35 age group) with its energetic, urban, and personality-driven shows. The blend of music, humour, relationships, and multilingual conversations makes it more vibrant and trendier.

Conclusion:

The study provides a detailed analysis of the top FM stations in Guwahati, yielding insights into how and why people listen, programming strategies, and market competition. It clarifies the complex connection between the quality of content, audience communication, and operational efficiency, which are key factors contributing to the success of radio stations in this busy metropolis (Lee, 2015). The results highlight the enduring relevance of terrestrial radio in the most digitalized media ecosystems, particularly in newly metropolitanized areas (Robert-Agell et al., 2022). This study sheds light upon the fact that Local FM stations remain one of the most important sources of information, entertainment, and cultural heritage as they are part of the unique socio-cultural landscape of Guwahati (Mabika & Salawu, 2014). Future studies can expand these findings by using digital integration as a determining factor in conventional FM broadcasting and in assessing whether radio remains a viable medium of mass communication in such cities in the long term. Popular channels Big FM 92.7 and Radio Mirchi 95 FM adopt contrasting strategies in their programming. Big FM emphasizes content diversity, cultural identity, and thematic depth with an Assamese flavour and strong nostalgia elements. However, the absence of RJs in many slots makes it less interactive. Radio Mirchi, on the other hand, thrives on RJ personalities, youth-centric engagement, and energetic programming with multilingual appeal, which ensures wider connectivity with younger audiences. Overall, the responses during the interviews of the heads of popular FM channels highlight how Radio Mirchi leans towards simplicity and local responsiveness. In contrast, Big FM functions with a more formalized and multi-tiered strategy, ensuring consistency across its network while adapting locally.

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