

Digital Radio (Delhi) Broadcasting Limited

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COMMENTS ON ADOPTION OF DIGITAL RADIO

Digital radio broadcasting presents a significant opportunity for the radio industry in India to evolve, expand, and flourish. Digital radio's ability to transmit multiple digital audio programs and data services on the same frequency allows for more robust content delivery and a richer listener experience. These technologies will enable radio stations to compete more effectively with other communication technologies and provide equitable access to information for all listeners without any cost or data fees

Q1: Do you agree that single digital radio technology adoption is preferable for the entire country? If not, support your reply with justification.

Yes, adopting a single digital radio technology for the entire country is preferable. This approach ensures uniformity, simplifies the transition process, and reduces costs for both broadcasters and consumers. A single standard minimizes confusion, facilitates the mass production of compatible receivers, and ensures a seamless listening experience across different regions. For instance, the United States has successfully implemented HD Radio as a single standard, which has led to widespread adoption and a robust ecosystem of compatible devices.

Q2: In case a single digital radio broadcast technology is to be adopted for the entire country, which technology should be adopted for digital radio broadcasting? Please give your suggestions with detailed justification.

We leave the decision to the Government on the technology to be adopted. The technology should take into account:

1. Simulcasting Capability:
2. Enhanced Audio Quality:.
3. Additional Channels:
4. Data Services:

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Countries like the United States, Canada, and Mexico have successfully implemented HD Radio, while AIR has experimented with DRM.

Q3. In case multiple digital broadcasting technologies are to be adopted, please specify whether it should be left to the market forces to decide the appropriate technologies and what could be the potential problems due to adoption of multiple technologies? Please suggest probable solutions to the problems, with detailed justification.

While market forces can drive innovation, adopting multiple digital broadcasting technologies can lead to several issues:

1. **Consumer Confusion:** Multiple standards can confuse consumers, who may need to purchase different receivers for different technologies, leading to increased costs and reduced adoption rates.
2. **Incompatibility Issues:** Different technologies may not be compatible with each other, causing fragmentation in the market and limiting the availability of content across different platforms.
3. **Increased Costs for Broadcasters:** Broadcasters may need to invest in multiple transmission systems to support different technologies, increasing their operational costs.

To mitigate these problems, it is advisable to adopt a single standard. If multiple technologies are to be adopted, the government should establish clear guidelines and interoperability standards to ensure compatibility and minimize consumer confusion.

Q4. What should be the approach for migration of existing FM radio broadcasters to digital radio broadcasting?

The migration of existing FM radio broadcasters to digital radio broadcasting should be carefully planned to ensure a smooth transition. A hybrid model where both analog and digital signals are broadcast simultaneously allows broadcasters to gradually introduce digital services without disrupting existing analog services. TRAI and MIB should establish clear guidelines and standards for digital broadcasting to ensure compatibility and interoperability among different technologies. Additionally, providing incentives for broadcasters to adopt digital technologies, such as tax breaks or grants, can help offset the initial costs of transition.

Q5. What should be the timeframe for various activities related to the migration of existing FM radio broadcasters to digital radio broadcasting?

The timeframe for migrating to digital radio broadcasting should be realistic and flexible, allowing broadcasters sufficient time to adapt. We recommend a simulcast approach to digital radio launch. As commercial operators, we need to maintain our existing listeners while the new digital



services are created. A typical migration plan might span several years, divided into distinct phases:

1. **Pilot Testing (1 year):** Pilot projects are launched to test the digital broadcasting systems in real-world conditions. Feedback from these tests can be used to refine the technology and processes.
2. **Initial Rollout (2-3 years):** Digital broadcasting is introduced in Tier-1 areas where the demand and infrastructure are robust. Broadcasters continue to offer both analog and digital services during this period.
3. **Nationwide Rollout (3-5 years):** Digital broadcasting is expanded to cover Tier-2 and Tier-3 markets.

By following a structured approach and allowing adequate time for each phase, the migration to digital radio broadcasting can be managed effectively, ensuring minimal disruption to services and maximizing the benefits of digital technology.

Q6. Please suggest measures that should be taken to encourage existing FM radio broadcasters to adopt digital radio broadcasting.

To encourage existing FM radio broadcasters to adopt digital radio broadcasting, we must take a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach that addresses both the technical and economic needs of the broadcast industry.

First and foremost, we need to provide financial incentives. Grants and subsidies can significantly lower the initial investment required for upgrading to digital technology. This financial support can cover the costs of new equipment, training for technical staff, and other associated expenses. By reducing the financial burden, we make it easier for broadcasters to consider the transition to digital radio as a viable option.

Regulatory support is also crucial. Streamlining the licensing process for digital radio and offering dual broadcasting licenses can help broadcasters transition smoothly without losing their existing audience. This approach allows stations to broadcast both analog and digital signals simultaneously, ensuring that they can maintain their listener base while gradually shifting to digital.

The music royalty issue needs to be addressed with the labels and broadcasters. There should not be additional liability on the broadcasters when adopting this medium and the same license should continue in adopting digital technology.

We must also invest in technical assistance and training programs. Providing broadcasters with access to technical expertise and training can help them understand the benefits of digital radio



and how to implement it effectively. Workshops, seminars, and online resources can equip broadcasters with the knowledge and skills needed to make the transition.

Public awareness campaigns play a vital role in encouraging adoption. Educating the public about the benefits of digital radio, such as improved audio quality and additional content, can increase demand for digital broadcasts. When listeners are aware of the advantages, they are more likely to seek out and support digital radio stations, creating a market-driven incentive for broadcasters to adopt the technology.

