

Essays of Radio & Media in Iran

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Sociology of Radio:

An Attempt to Make the Small, Euphonious Bird Fly

Abstract

"Radio, in my opinion, is a euphonious, small bird which lives amongst other big birds. It is necessary for it to join its nest to be seen; if it does not fly, it won't have any place..."

*In such statements one ought to look for the central ideas and perspectives of the author of *Sociology of Radio*, a book written by Dr. Hassan Khojasteh who in 1998-2008 was the deputy of IRIB and director of "Iranian Radio". He, in that book, is seriously searching for a systematic unification between the existing theories in sociology and the personal experiences and concerns in professional sphere related to radio organization. Introducing briefly the *Sociology of Radio*, the present essay tries to examine the ideas and thoughts of its author.*

Key Words: *radio, sociology of radio, Iran, identity and media functions.*

Introduction

Hassan Khojasteh, born in 1952 in Mashhad, has a BA in sociology, an MA in anthropology and a PhD in strategic management. He who was very experienced in teaching in formal education system started his career as a radio practitioner in 13 October, 1991. Editorship of "*Hi, Good Morning*" (which was a morning program) and, then, that of "*Hi Tehran*" (a similar program) are seen as his first professional experiences in radio. It was such experiences which later as the deputy head and the social director of radio organization at that time, led to the creation of *Tehran Radio* in 1994. He, thereafter, made progress to the Head of radio; numerous public, special, and specialized radios were established one after another by his efforts so that one can, with no doubt, argue that there were around twenty radios active in the "Iranian Radio" (Voice of IRI) when he came to the end of his career there.

Khojasteh holds that developing radio stations can help us to overcome the audience crisis (decrease in audience number). He refers to surveys and studies done in the realm of radio and tries to prove his claim by analyzing the obtained data, especially those of the past decade, related to radio audience. "Radio has been capable of achieving two goals: the duration of listening to radio has increased to two hours and forty minutes while it has been one hour per day. The number of people using this media has also increased to around 50 per cent while they have been around 30 per cent of the population;

although the new rate is much lower compared with the world standard, i.e. around 70 per cent" he holds. (www.mehranews.com).

From the perspective of Dr. Khojasteh, the motto of different radios, i.e. public, special and specialized radios, should be: "maintain the current audience, attract the new one". Such approach, if dealt with correctly and reasonably, could extend the circle of radio audiences to a desired amount; this is the goal at which radio aims.

Paying attention to theoretical domains, reflection on the optimal employment of the capacities of new technologies, and designing the mechanisms for constant, positive changes and for identification of radio as a mass media – are among necessities which need to be always considered by radio managers and program-makers in order that the aforementioned motto come to reality.

Chapters describe different features of radio functions.

Identity of radio

The identification is understood in terms of audience number since the size of the station's listeners (both state-run and private) makes significant contributions regarding its status as well as interest gaining" (Khojasteh 2008:2).

As Khojasteh writes, "that the audience regulates his/her relations with the station regarding his/her perception from identity as well as from the interrelation between the identity and his/her demands" (Ibid: 3).

“There are three main terms related to the kind of listeners which are generated in terms of their perception from the intended station:

a) **Hearing ears:** The term refers to those who listen to the station permanently.

b) **Waiting ears:** The listeners who regulate their relations to the station regarding particular program, time, and reporter.

c) **Unhearing ears:** Those, who due to their negative perception from the station, never listen to it (Ibid: 4).

A variety of factors and elements which consciously or unconsciously have been came together and formed identity of radio, influence how audiences understand radio station activities. The author writes, “Identity-making elements for radio are various assuming they are different in significance.

Radio executives and programmers ought to highly focus on this state so that create desirable identity from the intended radio station or network to their audience and be able to realize the weaknesses and strengths of the radio thoroughly by analysis; because desirable identity or understanding desirable identity means benefiting considerable number of permanent listeners as well as being hopeful to recruit new ones. This is the ultimate purpose of each radio executives, programmers, and producers” (Ibid: 5).

The author thinks that the identifying elements of radio can be divided into form and content groups. The 9 identity-making elements for radio are as followed:

Form group of identity-making elements for radio	content group of identity making elements for radio
Name Band Frequency location Form and the way of broadcasting of program particular announcer	Name Logo and especial slogan Exclusive program Exclusive information

The Author, Finally, explains characteristics of “favorite and successful Radio” and writes, “good and effective name accompanied by appropriate length of wave and power could be an ideal one to communicate the useful information to audience in the best desirable form. However, the role of popular and successful should not be overseen. Observing all the mentioned considerations would lead to benefiting radio popular, qualified, and highly-identified” (Ibid: 23).

Discourse theory and radio

Khojasteh highlights this presumption that, “Radio text due to essential difference between radio and other media, like TV and press, owns particular features, and has to use hearing(1) and verbal(2) signs rather than visual-verbal or only visual signs (3)” (Ibid: 25).

Khojasteh argues that, “no various content analysis methods can adequately meet, in this respect, needs of radio because the way of