

The radio is one of the most revolutionary pieces of technology to ever be created. Discuss

By Fidelis kimatu

Radio, the oldest form of mass media hasn't just been a technological masterpiece, it has proved to be one of the biggest land mark in human history.

The innovation of the radio is closely linked to those of television and telegraph, both of which were created as ways to communicate via wires. Television were one way of communication, whereas with telegraph one could have a double sided conversation. Where the television and telegraph made for communication using wires, radio come up as the first way to communicate amongst people wirelessly, and it was thus initially termed wireless telegraphy.

The history of radio

The radio appeared on the scene through developments in the late 19th century, starting with Heinrich Hertz detecting and producing radio waves in 1888.

Guglielmo Marconi perhaps made the biggest contribution by building his first radio equipment in 1894. Soon after, radio signals and messages began to be transmitted across distances. In 1906, the first voice and music signals were heard over radio waves from Brant Rock, Massachusetts, US.

As more powerful frequencies were developed, the radio, in the form of wireless telegraph equipment, found a place in ships by the early 1910s. This was a major leap for navigation and communication. In 1910, the US government passed the Wireless Ship Act which required all US ships carrying more than 60 passengers and travelling beyond 200 miles off the coast to have wireless radio systems that could transmit signals up to 100 miles.

Modern historians credit the radio for saving the lives of over 700 Titanic survivors in 1912, when the ship was hit by an iceberg and sank in the Atlantic Ocean. In fact, had it not been for the radio communication via wireless telegraph, there would have been no survivors.

When taken in context with the political atmosphere of the time, i.e. before and during the World War I, the radio began to gain increasing importance. It saved the need for sending physical messengers out to the armies or back to the authorities, since communication could directly be via radio.

Not too many decades later came World War II, where radios had once again taken utmost importance in communication. However, this time they weren't only for the ones actively

involved in war, but also for the civilians and the general public who began to depend on radio for the latest war updates and the like. In the years between World War I and II, radios had gained quite some popularity among civilians, and radio channels meant for the likes of such civilians, like BBC and KDKA came up in no time.

It was after the wars ended that radio began to take a different turn, towards the path of entertainment. FM radio came up where music was broadcasted to listeners. In no time, the radio came to be known for the device on which you can find the top music charts, amidst the decades of the 20th century that were known for their pop culture and the like – the 1950s, '60s, '70s and the '80s.

Despite the rise of television and the internet, FM radio continued witnessing rising popularity. In countries, such as India, with over a billion music-loving population, FM stations are still one of the biggest means of entertainment with people tuning in to their favourite stations at any time of the day while going about their daily business or travelling.

Although there is an existing argument that radio will be replaced by following media and end in demise, until today, when television has been threatened by the Internet, radio still plays great significance. For instance, the emergency radio keeps informative during natural disasters; people listen to traffic channel when driving on road. Moreover, with the development of Mobile Internet and mobile devices (i.e. smartphone), radio makes a great series of revolutions to fit the contemporary communication. Many radio stations produced APP on the mobile market and installed APP on the screen of automobiles. As a result, listeners have easy access to portable devices instead of traditional clumsy receivers.

The relevance of the radio

During the first quarter of the 20th century, radios were more or less used in ships out at sea. Of course, there is no way possible to connect wires to ships, so radio communication is the way to go. It is important to note that even though the radio was used for communication, it was done with the use of morse code rather than other languages. This was primarily because the signals were not all that spectacular, thus it was better to communicate in morse rather than risk not understanding what was spoken.

One of the biggest contributions of the radio has been in the development of music and establishing the music industry.

'Timeless', an adjective we associate with the voices of many prominent singers past and present, has been possible because of the radio. Countless music icons who the world is familiar with today perhaps would not have been known if the radio hadn't brought their voices to every living room.

Music programmes on the radio played a crucial role in defining the careers of nearly all successful artists and also upcoming artist including myself (Jahslave),I was at a radio station "Tuliza FM 92.4" in Kenya launching my music as a reggae artist and it was a very awesome experience. It felt so good.

Also noteworthy is the rise of the frequency modulation (FM) radios. They emerged during the 1930s and 1940s and within 20 years became immensely popular for the audio quality they offered, which was better than that of the amplitude modulation (AM). Thus, FM radio stations became the preferred choice for music lovers around the world.

Across the world, top artists continue to appear on radio stations for promotions, talks or performances. The UK's BBC Radio 1 and Capital FM even have their own music festivals, where celebrities such as Taylor Swift have performed.

Another extremely important use of radios and radio signals is in the practice of astronautics — yes, the job of astronauts. Radio signals can be so strong that they can be transmitted all the way from outer space to our stations on earth. It is the only method of communication that astronauts can use to communicate with the ground (or earth) as well as with other astronauts in space with them. It is rather fantastic to understand the importance of the radio when thinking of it like this.

To think that the invention of the radio was a result of someone being curious about 'wireless telegraphs' is such an exciting thought, because it leads us to believe that with a curious mind, anything can happen.

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By Fidelis kimatu (Jahslave)

