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# **LOTUS FM**

**MULTIFACETED BROADCASTING:  
AN ANALYSIS INTO LOTUS FM'S  
ROLE AND IDENTITY AS A  
“NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE-CUM-  
COMMERCIAL BROADCASTER  
WITH COMMUNITY  
RESPONSIBILITY”**

**Sunita Kaihar**

Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies  
University of Natal, Durban  
March 2001

## *DECLARATION*

I, Sunita Kaihar, declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my own and has not been submitted previously to any other university or technician. Any work done by other persons has been duly acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sunita Kaihar', written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Sunita Kaihar  
Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies (GPCMS)  
University of Natal, Durban  
March 2001

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## ABSTRACT

Radio broadcasting is usually classified as either a public broadcasting service or as being commercially driven. In the South African context, the concept of community radio has further complicated the definition of a public broadcasting service. While profit motivation and niche marketing characterize a radio driven by commercial means, community radio is predominantly non-profit oriented, directed towards a particular community. A public broadcasting service is, amongst other elements, typified as being geographically accessible to all and of paying particular attention to minority groups. Lotus FM, a radio station that came into existence on 16 January 1983, for the South African Indian community, describes itself as a “national public service-cum-commercial broadcaster with community responsibility”. The South African Indian community, a minority group within the broader South African population, comprises of five language groups (Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Tamil and Telegu) and three religious groupings (Hinduism, Islam and Christianity). This research aims to explore the feasibility with which Lotus FM is accommodating the conflicting interests of being a *mélange* of all three forms of broadcasting and reflecting it via its programmes.

## ABBREVIATIONS

FM	Frequency Modulation
RAMS	Radio Audience Measurement Survey
SAARF	South African Advertising Research Foundation
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation

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*87.7fm – 106.8fm*



## Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION

*Lotus FM has a public broadcast responsibility as well as a community responsibility without ignoring its commercial viability.*

*(POST, 29/09/99 – 2/10/99: 1)*

In 1996, the then Station Manager of Radio Lotus, Khalik Sheriff, stated “Radio Lotus is a unique station driven by a team of dynamic, dedicated individuals who share a common credo – to uplift Indian culture, integrate the community and provide the best information, education and entertainment possible” (<http://www.sabc.co.za>). In 1999, with the coming of the new Station Manager, Dr Naresh D Veeran, Lotus FM was described as having “a public broadcast responsibility as well as a community responsibility, without ignoring its commercial viability” (*Post*, 29/9/99 – 2/10/99: 1). The newly constructed Lotus FM website states, “Lotus FM is a commercially-driven, metro-national Public Broadcast Service catering for the needs of South Africans of Indian descent” (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). Both the statements clearly indicate that Lotus FM is balancing three acts in one: public service broadcasting, community broadcasting and commercial radio. The feasibility with which Lotus FM is able to strike a balance in all three forms of broadcasting through its programming schedule, in serving its highly niche community, is what this thesis aims to explore and analyse.

The community being catered for by Lotus FM, i.e. the South Africans of Indian origin, is a niche community that accounts for just 2.6% of the population of South Africa (South Africa Survey, 1999/2000: 6) and comprises of five language groups, i.e. Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Tamil and Telegu, and three religious groupings, i.e. Hinduism, Islam and Christianity (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). Programming to such a niche but culturally rich audience is a challenging task as each religious group and each language group has its own culture, own values and its own traditions. While catering for the needs of the various religious and linguistic groups, Lotus FM has also to ensure its survival and growth in a highly competitive market; a market wherein other commercial and community radio stations are competing for the same audience, i.e. the South Africans of Indian descent.

The aim of the present research is to examine the feasibility of Lotus FM being a public service-cum-community-cum-commercial broadcaster. As will be established later in the thesis, there are great contradictions in being a mélange of all three forms of broadcasting. Where profit motivation and niche marketing characterize commercial radio and non-profit interest exemplifies community broadcasting, public service broadcasting is typified by, amongst other elements, universal geographic accessibility and attention to minorities. A combination of even community and commercial broadcasting would create a conflict of interest between profit motive and community interests. Thus, research into the feasibility with which Lotus FM is balancing such conflicting dynamics via its programming is of considerable interest. Lotus FM is currently in a dilemma where, after having functioned exclusively as a public service broadcaster, because of its position in the SABC's radio portfolio, it has been entrusted with showing a financial surplus in its operations. This implies that Lotus FM must schedule its programmes and content in such a way as to ensure maximum listenership and advertising revenue, while not withdrawing from the responsibility it has to its community (Appendix A1).

The researcher deems it necessary to mention at the outset that, at the time of writing this thesis, Lotus FM is at a threshold where it is debating the way forward, it may either become totally commercial or a public service commercial broadcaster (Appendix A1). Lotus FM has been in existence for the past seventeen years but the focus here is on the performance of the Station in its past year, i.e. since the Station Manager took over the reins in August 1999. The reason behind limiting the span of the research is to facilitate in-depth focus on the programmes, with regard to the changes brought about in November 1999, under the aegis of the new Station Manager. It would also be relevant to mention here that the researcher herself joined Lotus FM as an announcer from November 1999, when the Station came out with a new programme schedule, and has been there since. It would also be of significance to mention at this point that the researcher, prior to having joined Lotus FM, started her career in broadcasting when she joined Radio Phoenix in January 1999, as an announcer. Radio Phoenix is a community radio station in KwaZulu-Natal, catering to the needs of the South Africans of Indian

descent. Thus, the researcher can claim to be well versed with the mandate of being a community radio and of conformance to the mandate through the programming schedule, in this case, the programmes that are aired on Radio Phoenix.

### **Importance of Radio as a broadcasting medium**

Radio, in South Africa, has been suggested as being of primary importance as the most appropriate means of communication (Teer-Tomaselli in DeBeer, 1998: 151). It is one of the media of mass communication that bridges the gap between those separated by geography or nationality and it facilitates in bringing together those who share a common culture or tradition (McLeish, 1994: 2-3). The primary purposes of radio broadcasting are “to inform, educate and entertain, propagandise and persuade”, with music filling the air (McLeish, 1994: 1-2).

Radio broadcasting is usually classified as either Public Service Broadcasting or Commercial Broadcasting. However, the distinct concept of community radio in South Africa has further complicated the definition of a public broadcasting service (Mpofu, 1996: 8). Public Service Broadcasting is defined as a service to the public and, “the provision of a service of *mixed* programmes on *national* channels available to all” are the two essential characteristics of Public Service Broadcasting (Scannell, 1997: 62-63). Public Service Broadcasting is often considered as an alternative to commercial radio as “a commercial station often needs to maximize its audience in order to justify the rates, so pushing sectional interests to one side to satisfy the advertisers’ desire for mass popularity” (McLeish, 1994: 11). The basic difference between Public Service Broadcasting and commercial radio lies in the definition of their audience, since a public service organization views its audience as citizens and a commercial organization regards its audience as consumers or a market. “Public broadcasting has a different role to that of commercial radio, principally by conceiving its audience as a public rather than a market” (Raboy, 1995: 5). The Commercial Radio Companies Association (CRCA) states that the most crucial point in the survival of a commercial radio station is sales staff, because “if the sales team cannot obtain sufficient advertising revenues, the station will fail no matter how good the programmes are” (<http://www.crca.co.uk>). Commercial radio is concerned

with the prioritization of profits and broadcasting to a niche market with advertising being its major source of revenue (Raboy, 1996: 2).

The third category of radio under consideration is that of community radio. "Community broadcasting focuses on serving the clearly defined needs of small groups of people who are bound by geographical as well as other considerations. It is essentially the difference in the diversity of the audience and its size that distinguishes community broadcasting from public broadcasting" (Mpofu, 1996: 9).

Having briefly introduced the three forms of radio broadcasting with regards to South Africa, it is now appropriate to give a historical overview of Lotus FM, the subject matter of this thesis.

### **History of Lotus FM**

On 11 October, 1860, 342 men, women and children, mainly from the South and East of India, set sail aboard the *S.S. Truro* from Madras and docked in Durban thirty-five days later, on 16 November, 1860. That day marked the arrival of the first contingent of Indians to the South African soil. These Indians whom came with the main purpose of working in the agricultural sector, were mainly South Indian Hindus with a few being of Christian and Islamic religion (Meer, 1969: 10). "The majority were Hindus belonging to various caste systems. Most could neither read nor write, but had knowledge of the treasure-house of their religion, culture and traditions, which was passed on to their children by word of mouth" (*Sunday Times KZN*, 12/11/00: 8). Later that month, on 26 November, 1860, the next group of 351 Indians to arrive aboard the *S.S. Belvedere* from Calcutta, came mainly from the southern and eastern parts of India (Meer, 1969: 10). Up to 1869, South Africa had witnessed the immigration of Indian laborers to Natal from the southern (Madras) and eastern (Calcutta) coasts of India. That same year marked a new wave of immigration of traders predominantly from Gujarat setting sail from the West Coast (Bombay) of India (Meer, 1969: 15). "They came mainly from Gujarat and the Gujarati language and culture was added to an already complex South African Indian society, representative of several languages and several religions" (Meer, 1969: 15).

South Africa witnessed the arrival of some 140 000 Indians between 1860 and 1911, and in 1961, after it had declared itself a republic, South Africa recognized Indians as citizens of its soil (*Sunday Times KZN*, 12/11/00: 9). Today, 140 years later, according to the 1996 Census, the population of South Africa boasts of 1 045 596 people of Indian/Asian origin (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>), commonly referred to as South African Indians, comprising just 2.6% of the total population of South Africa. (see Table 1.1)

**Table 1.1**

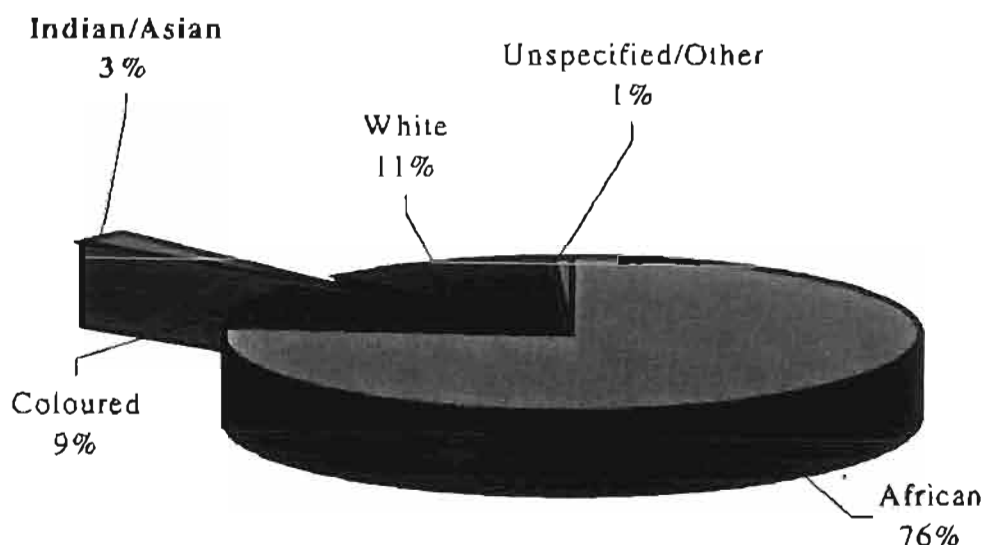
**POPULATION OF SOUTH AFRICA – RACIAL BREAKDOWN  
1996 CENSUS**

<i>Race</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion of Total</i>
African	31 127 631	76.7%
Coloured	3 600 446	8.9%
<b>Indian/Asian</b>	<b>1 045 596</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
White	4 434 697	10.9%
Unspecified/Other	375 204	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40 583 573*</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>)

\* Figures may not add up due to rounding off.

**Chart 1.1 Population of South Africa  
Racial Breakdown- 1996 Census**



Prior to 1983, Radio Truro, a station catering to Indian South Africans, broadcast on shortwave from Swaziland, alongside the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) Radio Zulu, and other regional and national stations in English and Afrikaans. However, there was no South African station with which the Indian community could identify itself. Twenty-two years after the Indians were recognized and accepted as South African citizens, in 1983, Radio Lotus began with the objective of entertaining and informing its community: the South Africans of Indian descent (Appendix B). The present Station Manager says, "Lotus FM targets Indian South Africans who are South African by birth and who are of Indian origin; whose ancestral roots are in India" (Appendix A1). Radio Lotus's rationale at its inception in 1983 was "to provide a range of cultural programmes, music and chat shows to South Africans of Indian descent" (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998: 162). After consultations with representatives and leaders of the community, the management of Radio Lotus identified Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati and Telegu as the five major Indian languages, and programmed its music mainly around these groups. In 1969, fourteen years prior to the inception of Radio Lotus, it was established that "the Hindus are divided into four language groups – two of South Indian, Dravidian origin, Tamil and Telegu, and two of North Indian Sanskrit origin, Hindustani and Gujarati" (Meer, 1969: 62). After deciding upon the name 'Radio Lotus', with the lotus being the national flower of India and hence symbolic of the heritage of the South African Indians, the station started broadcasting from 8 January, 1983. Professor Meer (1969) stated about the Indian, "In South Africa, he has emerged, like the Lotus flower, from the squalid and dismal conditions of his arrival, to confront a technological age and has attuned himself to the twentieth century". Radio Lotus set up its studios at the SABC building in Durban because the majority of the South African Indian community resided in Natal (Appendix B). According to the 1996 Census, about 76% of the South African Indians are located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, followed by Gauteng with approximately 15% (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>). (See Table 1.2.)

Table 1.2

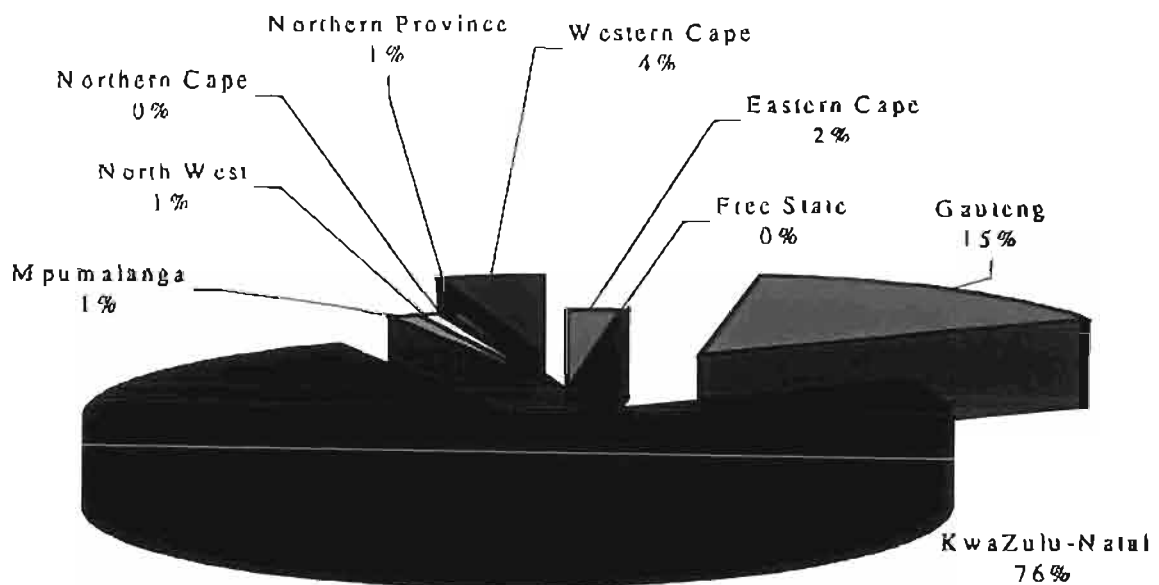
PROVINCIAL INDIAN POPULATION OF SOUTH AFRICA  
1996 CENSUS

Province	Indians/Asians	as % of total
		<i>Indian population</i>
Eastern Cape	19 356	1.9%
Free State	2 805	0.3%
Gauteng	161 289	15.4%
KwaZulu-Natal	790 813	75.6%
Mpumalanga	13 083	1.2%
North West	10 097	1.0%
Northern Cape	2 268	0.2%
Northern Province	5 510	0.5%
Western Cape	40 376	3.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1 045 596*</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>)

\* Figures may not add up due to rounding off.

Chart 1.2 Provincial Indian Population of South Africa



At its inception in 1983, Radio Lotus identified and used English as its medium of broadcast because the South African Indian, irrespective of the community from which he/she hailed, understood this language (Appendix B). This fact is substantiated by the findings of the 1996 Census, in which 93.2% of the South African Indians/Asians identified English as their home language (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>). Thus, the broadcast in English was seen as a unifying factor that brought together all these communities (Appendix B). (see Table 1.3)

Table 1.3

**PROPORTIONAL HOME LANGUAGE OF SOUTH AFRICANS BY RACE  
1996 CENSUS**

<i>Language</i>	<i>African</i>	<i>Coloured</i>	<i>Indian/ Asian</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Unspecified/ Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
Afrikaans	0.7%	81.4%	1.5%	57.7%	23.6%	14.3%
English	0.4%	16.2%	93.2%	38.6%	19.7%	8.5%
isiNdebele	1.9%	0.1%	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	0.1%	0.8%	1.5%
isiXhosa	23.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	8.4%	17.7%
isiZulu	29.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	14.4%	22.7%
Sepedi	11.8%	0.1%	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	4.7%	9.1%
Sesotho	9.9%	0.2%	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	3.4%	7.7%
Setswana	10.5%	0.4%	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	3.8%	8.1%
SiSwati	3.2%	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	1.2%	2.5%
Tshivenda	2.8%	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	1.2%	2.2%
Xitsonga	5.6%	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	0.0% <sup>a</sup>	2.4%	4.3%
Other	0.3%	0.2%	3.7%	2.0%	1.5%	0.6%
Unspecified	0.6%	0.8%	1.3%	1.4%	15.1%	0.9%
<b>Total*</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

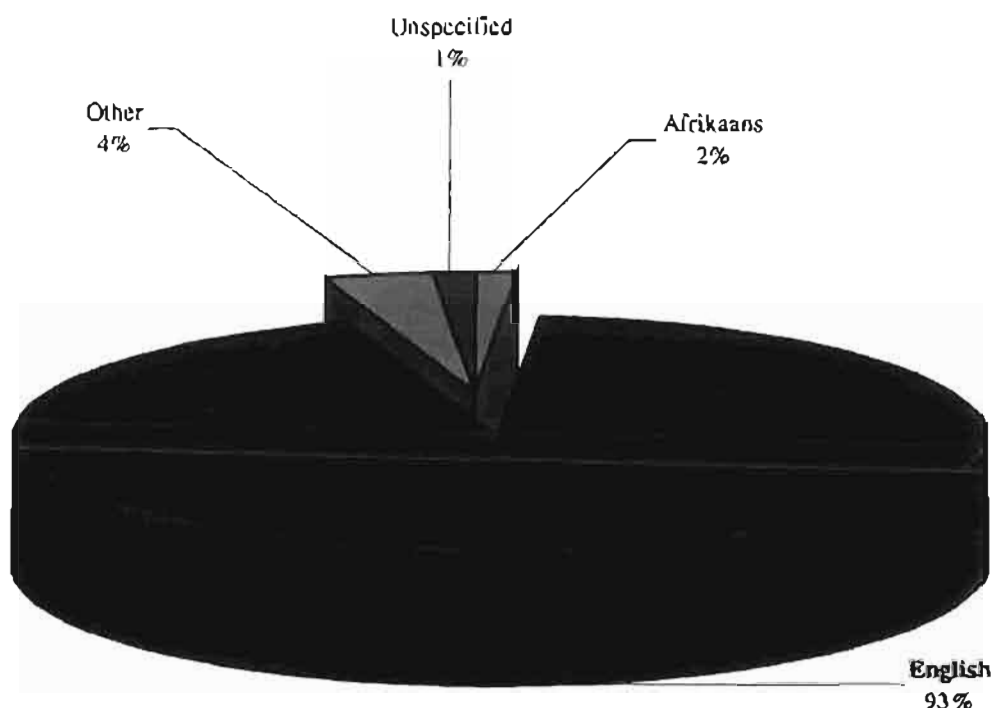
Source: Statistics South Africa (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>)

a Proportion too small to record

\* Figures may not add up owing to rounding off



**Chart 1.3 Proportional Home Language of South African Indians  
1996 Census**



Initially, after its inception in 1983, Radio Lotus would broadcast on the superior FM frequency in the Greater Durban Area for five and a half hours on weekdays and nine and a half hours on weekends. In 1984, with the installation of the Glencoe and Ladysmith transmitters, Radio Lotus began transmitting to Northern KwaZulu-Natal. Subsequently, two months later, in October 1984, the station began broadcasting on FM in Pretoria and MW on the Witwatersrand. At the same time, the hours of broadcast were gradually increased. In August 1990, the broadcast of Radio Lotus to the PWV (Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Vereeniging) area was upgraded to the superior FM frequency. In November 1992, Radio Lotus began broadcasting in FM stereo and a year later, in November 1993, it began transmission in the Western Cape. In October 1995, Radio

Lotus became the first 'Indian' station to broadcast on the PAS4 satellite system, which is currently available on the DSTV audio bouquet (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). Today, Lotus FM has ten transmitters that allow for broadcast to the whole of KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Cape Town.

Right from the day it was set up in 1983, Radio Lotus was "100% community-driven, and the commercial element was 'by the way' ( . . . ) so, the station was run mainly by community needs", comments the Marketing Manager of Lotus FM (Appendix A3). In 1995, with the setting up of the Radio Lotus Transformation Committee by the SABC Board, Radio Lotus transformed itself from a music-driven station to a full-spectrum public broadcaster. The transformation resulted in the station changing its programming format from music only programmes, to include elements of public service broadcasting, such as talk shows, sport, women's issues, current affairs and youth issues. After it became a public broadcasting service, Radio Lotus realized that it needed to go on a huge visibility drive and, in 1996, the station changed its name from Radio Lotus to Lotus FM (Appendix A3). The visibility drive, called 'Taking Lotus FM to the People', was a campaign through which Lotus FM reached the community by staging various shows on a large scale. One such event was the Lotus FM Bhangra Bash, with which Lotus introduced the Bhangra<sup>1</sup> concept at the Rydalvale Grounds in Phoenix, Natal. For this event, more than 40 000 people came together and danced into the early morning hours (Appendix A3). As a part of the change from Radio Lotus to Lotus FM, the station swapped its logo from that of the lotus flower to the radio dial, and its tagline from 'Your Family Friend' to 'The Lotus position – Get Into It' (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). By then, there was already talk of Radio Lotus being more commercially-driven and less community-driven (Appendix A3) and in March 1998, Lotus FM declared its first profit since its inception (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). In November 1999, when Lotus FM's Manager launched a new programme schedule for the station, he described Lotus FM as being "partially a public service broadcaster, partially a commercial station and partially a community station ( . . . ) All three things at one time within the broad portfolio of the SABC"(Appendix A1) However, the need to "focus the station, to streamline it into

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Bhangra' has been comprehensively defined in Chapter Two, on page 33.

following the line of a single mandate” had already been realized at that time. At present, Lotus FM, under the aegis of its Station Manager, is undergoing a strategic analysis phase so as to ensure its survival in the future in a market fraught with competition from upcoming and existing radio stations. The aim here, though, is to illustrate and critically analyse the manner in which Lotus FM’s programming has been reflecting elements of all three forms of radio broadcasting

### **Methodology**

This thesis has been structured in the format of a case study and will draw upon the concepts of public service, community and commercial broadcasting. “A case study is a descriptive type of research undertaking in which individuals, groups, or organizations are interviewed or observed, or various types of archival records are examined” (Williams, Rice & Rogers, 1988: 107). It involves the “observation, description or reconstruction of a phenomenon of interest” (Williams, Rice & Rogers, 1988: 37). The researcher will examine the degree to which Lotus FM conforms to the theoretical aspects of public service and community broadcasting.

“Research methods refer to the systematic, focused and orderly collection of data for the purpose of obtaining information from it, to solve/answer our research problems or questions” (Ghauri, Gronhang & Kristianslund, 1995: 83). The researcher has undertaken qualitative research methods for the purpose of data collection.

Qualitative research is a mixture of the rational, explorative and intuitive, where the skills of the researcher play an important role in the analysis of data (...) The skills needed to do qualitative research are: thinking abstractly, stepping back and critically analyzing situations, recognizing and avoiding biases, obtaining valid and reliable information, having theoretical and social sensitivity, and the ability to keep analytical distance while at the same time utilizing past experience, and a shrewd sense of observation and interaction.

(Ghauri, Gronhang & Kristianslund, 1995: 84)

Being a member of the Lotus FM team, it was only apt that the researcher adopts the Participant Observation approach to research, where “the observer enters the social setting and acts as both an observer and a participant” (Cooper & Schindler, 1998: 367). The strength of the Participant Observation approach to research lies in that the researcher, by way of his/her experience, takes on a dual role of data collection and analysis (Bernard, 1994: 144-145). In participant observation, the “researchers have to balance two roles: that of being participants and that of being observers” and they have to exercise self-control in becoming too identified with the group and losing their objectivity (Berger, 2000: 161). The researcher deems it of consequence to inform the reader at this point that while in her capacity as an announcer with Lotus FM she was exposed to crucial information of a strategic nature, such as in the audience listenership figures, yet, that highly privileged information has not been disclosed in anyway in this research due to moral and ethical reasons.

Bernard (1994: 140-142) states the following as advantages of adopting the participant observation method:

- 1) It facilitates in the collection of different kinds of data;
- 2) It reduces the problem of reactivity – i.e. people changing their behavior when they know that they are being studied;
- 3) Participant observation helps the researcher formulate sensible questions in the native language;
- 4) It gives the researcher an intuitive understanding of what’s going on in a culture and allows him/her to make strong statements about cultural facts that have been collected. It maximizes the chance of making valid statements; and
- 5) Many research problems cannot be addressed by any other than the participant observation method.

Data collection under the participant observation method can involve an array of techniques including observations, different types of interviews and questionnaires (Bernard, 1994: 137). In this case, the researcher went about collecting data by way of in-

depth semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews with the management and staff of Lotus FM, respectively. The fundamentals of an interview are described as encounters between a researcher and a respondent in which the latter is asked a series of questions relevant to the subject of the research. The respondent's answers constitute the raw data analysed at a later point in time by the researcher (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1983: 66)

A semi-structured interview is one that allows the respondent to express him/herself in his/her own terms, with minimum control over the informant's responses being exercised by the researcher (Bernard, 1994: 209). Berger (2000: 112) defines a semi-structured interview as one where "the interviewer usually has a written list of questions to ask the informant but tries, to the extent possible, to maintain the casual quality found in unstructured interviews". An in-depth interview is one that "encourages respondents to share as much information as possible in an unconstrained environment" (Cooper & Schindler, 1998: 325). In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Station Manager, Marketing Manager and Programmes Executive of Lotus FM. In addition to semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews were conducted with the announcers of Lotus FM. In unstructured interviews, one of the most frequently used methods of data collection, the researcher, by exercise of minimal control over the responses of the informant, tries to gain as much information possible by remaining focused and allowing for the interviewee to speak on the subject in his/her own 'frame of reference' (Berger, 2000: 112; May, 1993: 94).

In addition to gathering first-hand information by way of interviews, the researcher also collected information of relevance through newspaper and trade press articles. While the researcher has been a loyal listener of Lotus FM ever since she joined the station in November 1999, yet, in her capacity as a 'participant as an observer', she spent the month of November 2000 in carefully listening to and scrutinizing the various programmes aired on the Station, observing things such as the style of presentation, the music played and the topics of the talk shows, to name a few.

The research has been put together and presented as follows: in Chapter Two Lotus FM is analysed as a public service broadcaster while Chapter Three examines Lotus FM as a community broadcasting service with regards to the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) mandate for community radios in South Africa. In Chapter Four the commercial viability of Lotus FM is examined. The reader must keep in mind that Lotus FM is not a commercial radio, but is a commercially-driven station: the question being, to what extent it is commercially-driven. In Chapter Five the programmes aired on Lotus FM are discussed and critically analysed as a reflection of its balancing three acts in one. and in the concluding chapter, Chapter Six, the researcher, based on her findings, suggests the way forward for Lotus FM.

## Chapter 2 - LOTUS FM AS A PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTER

*As a Public broadcaster, Lotus FM has found the right blend of talk and music whilst still catering for the cultural needs of its diverse audience.*  
<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>

In Britain and many modern nation states, public service forms of broadcasting have entailed the organization of radio and television services primarily as public utilities and resources, rather than as profitable commodities. This emphasis has encompassed their organization and control as national cultural institutions owned, regulated and run in the public interest and dedicated to the public provision of information and entertainment. In these terms, broadcasters have been obliged to serve the public in various ways rather than simply to follow the dictates of commercial markets.

(Scannell, 1997: 61)

Public Service Broadcasting, one of the two main types of broadcasting, aims at prioritising public needs. Public service broadcasting is at times regarded as an alternative to commercial radio, which emphasizes the maximization of profits rather than satisfaction of public needs (McLeish, 1994: 10; Raboy, 1996: 2). The essential notion behind Public Service Broadcasting is that its function is not simply to satisfy commercial interests by giving the public what it wants in an attempt to maximize audience figures, but rather to inform, educate and entertain the public, the notion of 'quality' being central (Teer-Tomaselli, 1994: 124). In the South African context, the definition of public service broadcasting is further complicated by the concept of community broadcasting, which will be discussed in the next chapter (Mpofu, 1996: 8).

Dennis McQuail (1994: 172), of the University of Amsterdam, lists the following as being the main features of a fully developed form of public service broadcasting:

- 1) The provision of a universal service;
- 2) The system should be financed by payments from all citizens (not just the consumers);

- 3) There is public control of access as sender, in greater or lesser detail, to ensure 'fairness', political neutrality and independence from vested interests;
- 4) A public broadcasting service is democratically acceptable to the society (or nation); and
- 5) A public service seeks to achieve various goals of quality of service, as determined according to local cultural and social priorities.

Sir John Reith, the first Director-General of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), who also wrote the charter for the Australian, Canadian and South African Broadcasting Corporations, in the 1930s developed the concept of 'Public Service Broadcasting' as a coherent philosophical position which today is an ideal and a model (Teer-Tomaselli & Boafo, 1996: 183). According to Reith the BBC, the first and paramount public service broadcasting institution, 'founded a tradition of public service and of devotion to the highest interest of community and nation' (Teer-Tomaselli, 1994: 127). Reith identified the following four crucial elements in the practice of Public Service Broadcasting:

- 1) it should be protected from purely commercial pressures,
- 2) the whole nation should be served by the broadcasting service;
- 3) there should be unified control, implying that public broadcasting service should be organized as a monopoly, and
- 4) there should be high programme standards

(McDonnell, 1991: 1)

A more contemporary definition of Public Service Broadcasting was given by Jonathan Powell, who had served on the BBC as Programme Controller. He described Public Service Broadcasting as

the broad commitment to provide and to protect mixed and complementary programming schedules. It includes a commitment to certain minority programmes and to covering, as far as possible, different genres of programming making. Within each genre – whether within drama, current affairs, comedy, children's programmes or continuing education – there is a



full range of programming, a demonstrably broad church. Public service broadcasting is driven by higher aspiration than solely to provide entertainment. Public service broadcasting is the attempt to make quality popular programmes. It does justice to human experience. It deals in more than stereotypes. It adds to the quality of peoples' lives. Its programme genre's reflect the complexity of human being (Teer-Tomaselli, 1994: 127).

The traditional Reithian characteristics of Public Service Broadcasting included the following four elements:

- 1) Independence from both governmental and commercial sources;
- 2) Programme balance – educate, inform and entertain;
- 3) Geographic balance; and
- 4) Impartiality from political output

(Teer-Tomaselli, 1994: 127)

There are two elements that have remained constitutive of Public Service Broadcasting from the beginning. the provision of a service of *mixed* programmes on *national* channels available to all (Scannell, 1997: 62-63).

Though there is no simple definition of what Public Service Broadcasting is, yet, the now defunct Broadcasting Research Unit (BRU) of the UK, in a booklet first published in 1995, *The Public Service Idea in British Broadcasting- Main Principles*, made a reasonably thorough attempt at defining it and maintained the view that broadcasting should be regarded as a comprehensive environment (Raboy, 1996: 6). Marc Raboy, of the University of Montreal, summarizes the main principles of the BRU, which it is believed represent not only the “ideal typical definition, but also the actual, empirical conditions for the existence of Public Service Broadcasting” (Mpofu, 1996: 9). These eight principles that today constitute the fundamental tenets of Public Service Broadcasting, are:

- 1) universal accessibility (geographic);
- 2) universal appeal (general tastes and interests);
- 3) particular attention to minorities;
- 4) contribution to sense of national identity and community;
- 5) distance from vested interests;
- 6) direct funding and universality of payment;
- 7) competition in good programming rather than for numbers; and
- 8) guidelines that liberate rather than restrict programme makers

(Raboy, 1996: 6)

It is on the basis of these eight principles that the researcher proceeds to analyse Lotus FM as a Public Service Broadcaster and its conformance to these principles. The reader must bear in mind that Lotus FM is an SABC radio station and the SABC is the national broadcaster catering for the needs of all South Africans. The Station Manager aptly describes the relationship of Lotus FM to the SABC as one where the SABC is the "umbrella body" and Lotus FM one of its brands (Appendix A1). So, while the SABC, as the national public broadcaster, is catering for all South Africans, Lotus FM is providing a public broadcasting service for the minority Indian component of the South African population. It must also be remembered while reading through this section that the aim is to analyse, keeping in mind its identity, the extent to which Lotus FM is satisfactorily conforming to the fundamental principles of a Public Broadcasting Service, as laid out by the BRU.

### 1. Universal Geographic Accessibility

Universal geographic accessibility is regarded as a fundamental axiom for a public service broadcaster as broadcast programmes should aim to be available to each and every member of a society regardless of their remoteness and accessibility (McDonnell, 1991: 94; Raboy, 1996). A public service broadcasting institution is "responsive to need, making itself available for everyone (...) Indeed its universality makes a point of including the disadvantaged" (McLeish, 1994: 10).

Lotus FM, as stated in its mission statement, is a metro-national public broadcasting service catering to the needs of the South Africans of Indian descent (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). A total of ten transmitters have been allocated to the Station on the FM frequency, allowing for transmission to the whole of KwaZulu- Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape, from 87.7MHz to 106.8MHz (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). The ten transmitters and the frequency on which the audience can receive Lotus FM, are as follows:

87.7MHz	Durban
87.9MHz	Ladysmith
88.2MHz	Port Shepstone
88.3MHz	Pietermaritzburg
88.9MHz	The Bluff
89.4MHz	Durban North
90.0MHz	Glencoe
97.8MHz	Cape Town
100.1MHz	Pretoria
106.8MHz	Johannesburg

All other areas in South Africa and Africa can tune in to Lotus FM via satellite through the Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) system (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>).

The Indians/Asians in South Africa, which is the target community of Lotus FM, account for approximately 1 million of the total South African population of 40.6 million people. Of this 1 million, about 76% is located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, accounting for 9.4% of the province's population (<http://www.statssa.org.za>). The province with the second highest concentration of Indians is Gauteng with approximately 1.5%, followed by Western Cape at about 4% (see Table 2.1). A very miniscule number of the South African Indian population is spread out over the remaining provinces (see Table 2.1). In November 1999, it was reported that Lotus FM, according to the Radio Audience

Measurement Survey (RAMS)<sup>2</sup>, had a listenership of 404 000 in KwaZulu-Natal, an increase of 8% or 30 000 listeners from the previous RAMS figures (*Post*, 10/11/99-13/11/99: 37). (Appendix C). As per the May/June 2000 RAMS diaries, Lotus FM commands a total listenership of 388 000, of which 372 000 is the Indian population component (Appendix D). According to the latest figures released by the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF), Lotus FM's listenership has increased by 80 000 (*Sunday Times*, 04/03/01: 1).

*Table 2.1*

**PROVINCIAL INDIAN POPULATION OF SOUTH AFRICA  
1996 CENSUS**

<i>Province</i>	<i>Indians/Asians</i>	<i>as % of total</i>
		<i>Indian population</i>
Eastern Cape	19 356	1.9%
Free State	2 805	0.3%
<b>Gauteng</b>	<b>161 289</b>	<b>15.4%</b>
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	<b>790 813</b>	<b>75.6%</b>
Mpumalanga	13 083	1.2%
North West	10 097	1.0%
Northern Cape	2 268	0.2%
Northern Province	5 510	0.5%
Western Cape	<b>40 376</b>	<b>3.9%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1 045 596*</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source:* Statistics South Africa (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>)

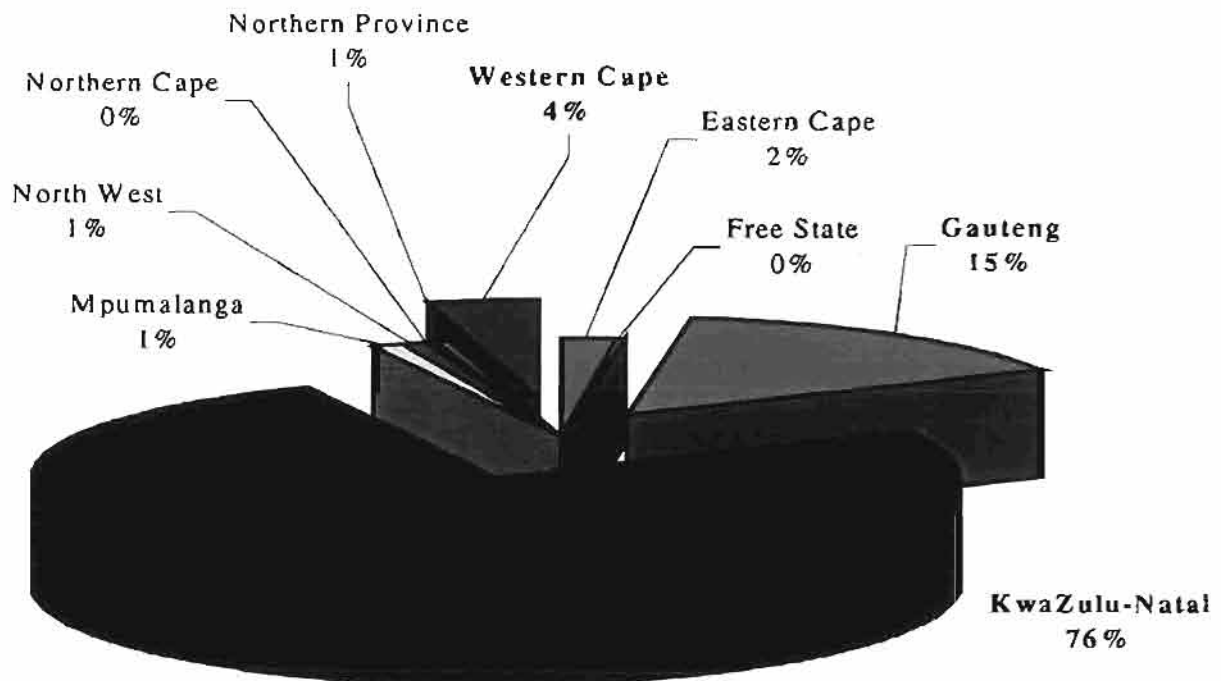
\* Figures may not add up due to rounding off.

Due to the fact that Lotus FM is not a pure public broadcasting service, it is not accessible, via radio, to each and every South African Indian. However, it is accessible to the majority of Indians in South Africa who reside in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. At the moment, the Manager of Lotus FM claims that the cost per listener stands at about 27c to 30c per minute (Appendix A1). By extending the network to, supposing, another

<sup>2</sup> RAMS is the Radio Audience Measurement Survey of the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF). SAARF RAMS provides advertisers and their clients with information related to radio listenership and demographics figures so as to enable them to buy appropriate media space and time. RAMS diaries are conducted twice a year on a period of seven days consecutive listening.

four or five transmitters that would mean escalating the cost to almost R1 per listener, described by the Station Manager of Lotus FM as “pure suicide” in financial terms (Appendix A1). The Station Manager states that “if the SABC has a responsibility to take care of the Indian South Africans, knowing fully well that they’re gonna make a loss, knowing fully well that they might even lose audience, then fine, go ahead; but, it’s a suicidal move” (Appendix A1).

**Chart 2.1 Provincial Indian Population of South Africa**



Thus, we conclude that while Lotus FM is accessible to more than ninety per cent of South African Indians, it does not reach each and everyone of them. Even if Lotus FM were to install a transmitter in each of the remaining provinces, such a decision would have no impact on its listenership figures due to the density of their population not being large enough to form a RAMS sample (Appendix A1). Advertising sales, and therefore, revenue income, is predicated directly on the audience figures provided by RAMS. If

Lotus were an exclusive public broadcasting service, with no commercial viability dictating its functioning, then it could have without fear of loss of revenue fulfilled this service by being accessible to each and every South African Indian, irrespective of the cost involved. However, it is the commercial element and the inflow of advertising revenue which are detrimental to Lotus FM going in for such a 'suicidal move'.

## 2. Universal Appeal (General Tastes and Interests)

The Universal Appeal principle is concerned with broadcasting programmes that cater to the different tastes and interests of the audience (McDonnell, 1991: 94). A public service broadcaster has a commitment to serve minorities, and to service the broadcasting needs of the population (Mpofu, 1996: 10). The October 1996 edition of the *Marketing Mix* stated Radio Lotus's mission as "to provide a balance of multi-cultural programming and Indian language programming directed towards five language groupings and three religious denominations, seeking to reach the greater Durban community in all its diversity" (*Marketing Mix*, Oct. 1996: 69). A public broadcasting service is committed to providing programmes that, in addition to those catering to the minorities, are of general appeal. The Lotus FM website states "Following the edict of entertainment with a mix of information and education, the station uniquely and creatively covers current affairs, news, sport and religion" (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). There are the different types of programmes of general interest and appeal that are aired on Lotus FM:

- 1) *Newsbreak* is the current affairs programme broadcast from Monday to Friday for an hour in the morning (06h00–07h00) and for half an hour in the evening (18h00–18h30). It includes live soundbites, at times live interviews, weather reports and stock exchange indices. The programme is produced by the SABC's KZN news department and has contributors from India, Pakistan, New Zealand, England and France.
- 2) News bulletins are aired on the hour from 06h00 till 20h00 and also feature soundbites.
- 3) Lotus FM hosts two talk shows daily from Monday to Friday for an hour in the afternoon and an hour and a half in the evening. *Viewpoint* is a one-hour controversial topical talk show that runs from 13h00–14h00 and tackles topics

- like empowerment for women and men and motivational issues (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). *Online* is a listener help-line with experts in various fields, hosted from 20h30 to 22h00 from Monday to Friday. The producer/presenter of the programme says "It's a basic talk show format; it's also a listener phone-in and it's a help-line" (Appendix A6).
- 4) *Spice-a-Delic* is a youth programme that can be heard on weekdays between the hours of 14h00-16h00. The programme boasts of various features that are of interest to the youth of today; features that talk about the latest in fashion, environmental matters, tips for the body and soul, movies playing on the circuit and the latest websites that the teenagers can visit (Appendix A8).
  - 5) *Lifestyle* is a comprehensive women's magazine programme that features discussions on women's achievements, Indian and international cuisine, beauty tips, traditional and modern fashion, gardening, home décor, as well as discussion on any social issue that has an impact on women (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). This programme is aired for one hour on weekdays and two hours on Saturdays. On Saturday the programme exclusively discusses cuisine and at times household matters.
  - 6) *E-Male* is an up-to-date weekly men's magazine aired on Saturdays for two hours in the morning, that focuses on men's key interests like sports, fashion, cars, business, finance, etc. (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>).
  - 7) *It's Your Call* on weekdays and Saturday is the listeners' choice of music programme in which the audience calls through requesting for a song of its choice. *It's Your Call* is a three-hour programme aired from 10h00 to 13h00 from Monday to Friday, and 14h00 to 16h00 on Saturday.
  - 8) Religious programmes are aired for an hour every week for each of the three religious groupings of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. *Bhakti Sangeeth* is the Hindu religious programme featuring religious musical songs in the North Indian and South Indian languages and is aired on Sundays for two hours, from 15h00 to 17h00. "*Bhakti* is salvation through love, adulation and selfless surrender to God" (Meer, 1969: 135). The Christian religious programme, *Gospel Hour*, is aired on Sunday mornings from 06h00 to 07h00. The Islamic religious

programme, *Deenyaat*, can be heard on Sunday evenings at 19h00 and runs for an hour. In addition to these separate programmes allocated to each religious group, Lotus FM also features religious music in all three religions, every day of the week for half an hour in the morning, from 05h30 to 06h00 in a programme called *Inspirations*.

- 9) Sports news is featured twice daily, on the morning breakfast show, *Kickdown* and the afternoon youth programme, *Spice-a-Delic*. There is no special sports magazine programme but sports news and results are featured on the hourly news bulletin when there is any special match, tournament or game going on, such as when the South African cricket team is playing a test match or a one-day international. In addition, on weekday afternoons the drive show (*Overdrive*) features horse racing news at about 17h45.

From the above array of programming over widely divergent areas of interest, it can be concluded that Lotus FM showcases programmes that are of wider and general appeal, not marginalizing any particular Indian community.

### 3. Particular Attention to Minorities

Catering to the minorities, especially disadvantaged minorities, is the third characteristic of public service broadcasting (McDonnell, 1991: 94). As a public broadcasting service, Lotus FM has an obligation not only to feature programmes of general taste and appeal, but to also cater for the needs of the minority groups. As stated earlier, Lotus FM is a part of the stable of SABC radio stations. The SABC's radio services consist of twenty-four stations, which are divided into the two categories of commercial services and public service broadcasters. The public service component is made up of twelve stations; one each for English, Afrikaans, the nine African languages and Lotus FM (Teer-Tomaselli, 1995: 585-586). To reiterate the words of the Station Manager, SABC is the corporation with Lotus FM as one of its brands (Appendix A1). As the national broadcaster, the SABC is obliged to fulfill its public service mandate and Lotus, as a part of it, takes care of the Indian audience, which in terms of the broader South African population, is already



a minority. Furthermore, within this minority group that Lotus FM targets, there are sub-minority groups based on linguistic, religious and cultural aspects.

“South African Indians subscribe to a variety of religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism and Zoroastrinism. It is however the first three, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, that constitute their major religious systems” (Meer, 1969: 133). In 1969, the majority of South African Indians were categorized as subscribing to the faith of Hinduism, with 74% of the Indian population in Durban being Hindu, 16% Muslim and 7% Christian (Meer, 1969: 61). In terms of language, the Hindus are divided into four language groups – Tamil and Telegu, comprising the two South Indian one and Hindi and Gujarati, of North India:: origin (Meer, 1969: 61). In 1969, while 38% of the Durban Indians were classified as Tamil speaking and 25% as speaking Hindi, about 12% and less than 2% were classified as speaking Telegu and Gujarati, respectively (ibid). “The Muslims speak Urdu or Gujarati, there being twice as many Urdu speaking Muslims as Gujarati speaking” (Meer, 1969: 62). Thus we confirm that while the Indian population of South Africa is itself a minority in relation to the total populace of the country, within this minority group are further minority sub-groups that Lotus FM attempts to cater to via its programming.

Leaving aside the religious programming referred to earlier and the specialized linguistic programmes referred to below, most of the music aired on Lotus FM is in the two most dominant language groups of Hindi and Tamil. This is not only the case with Lotus FM, but also Radio Phoenix, a community radio station in KwaZulu-Natal broadcasting within a 50km radius to the same community, the South African Indians. From 1995 Lotus FM maintained a 1:1 ratio between North Indian and South Indian songs. This resulted in a sharp decline in the Lotus FM’s listenership (Appendix A1). With the advent of the new Station Manager in November 1999, this ratio changed in some of the prime time popular programmes, from 1:1 to 2:1 and even 3:1 (Appendix A1). The morning breakfast show (*Kickdown*), the youth show (*Spice-a-Delic*), the afternoon drive programme (*Overdrive*) and the Saturday morning breakfast show (*The Weekend Lift-Off*) play music on a ratio of

at least 2 Hindi songs to 1 Tamil song, with this ratio going up to even 6:1 in *Spice-a-Delic*.

For the linguistic minority groups of Telegu, Gujarati and Urdu, Lotus FM showcases a two-hour long cultural programme once a week for each of the groups, Hindi and Tamil inclusive, from 18h30 to 20h30. The schedule is as follows:

Monday	<i>Geetanjali</i>	Cultural Programme in Hindi
Tuesday	<i>Sungeetha Nilayamu</i>	Cultural Programme in Telegu
Wednesday	<i>Guldasta</i>	Cultural Programme in Urdu
Thursday	<i>Geemala</i>	Cultural Programme in Gujarati
Friday	<i>In Isai Mazhai</i>	Cultural Programme in Tamil

These programmes are produced and presented in the vernacular and the music played is confined to the language group. These programmes are also educational where the audience gets to learn the language via a 'listen and learn' feature incorporated in those two hours (Appendix A4, A7).

Lotus FM caters to the three dominant religious groups of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam by way of *Bhakti Sangeeth*, *Gospel Hour* and *Deenyaat* respectively. *Bhakti* (devotion in Hinduism) *Sangeeth* is the Hindu religious musical programme aired on Sunday afternoons for two hours from 15h00 to 17h00, featuring North Indian (Hindi and Gujarati) and South Indian (Tamil and Telegu) devotional songs. *Gospel Hour* is the Christian religious programme featured on Sunday mornings for an hour, from 06h00 to 07h00. *Deenyaat*, the Islamic religious programme, features on Sunday evenings from 19h00 to 20h00. In addition to these three separate religious programmes, *Inspirations*, the daily morning religious programme aired for half an hour from 05h30 to 06h00, features devotional songs in all the language and religious groups.

Special programmes are also hosted during religious festivals. For example, for the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, hour-long Quranic recitals were aired every morning

from 03h00 to 04h00, the time at which the Muslims start fasting during that month. In addition, the 'sehri' (beginning of fast) and 'iftaar' (end of fast) times were also being announced at the correct time. For the Hindu religious day of Mahashivratri (the great night of Lord Shiva), Lotus FM featured an all-night long special on Lord Shiva, playing only 'Shiv Bhajans' (religious songs devoted to Lord Shiva) from midnight till 06h00 on 22 February, 2001. For the Islamic holy day of Eid-UI-Adha on 6 March, 2001, Lotus FM played only Eid songs for three hours from 10h00 to 13h00 on the programme *It's Your Call*. In addition, listeners were allowed to call in and air their Eid greetings to friends and family. For the Islamic listeners who enjoy 'qawwalis', Lotus FM presents the *Qawwali Hour* on Sunday evenings from 20h00 to 21h00. 'Qawwali' was developed by the renowned Persian Saint, Kwaja Moinuddin Chisthi, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, as the Muslim equivalent of Hindu devotional songs (Meer, 1969: 223). On an average, due to the length of a 'qawwali', one is able to play five qawwalis in one hour (Appendix A7).

Most of the music played on Lotus FM in the non-religious and non-cultural shows, comprises of the current hit and popular songs. To cater to the forty-five plus age group, the older generation, *Reflections*, a four-hour long programme aired on Sunday nights from 22h00, features a mix of old North and South Indian songs. Lotus FM also caters for those who take a keen interest in Indian classical music, by way of *Shruti Liya* on Sunday evenings from 21h00 to 22h00. For the teenagers and youngsters, *Spice-a-Delic* on Lotus FM features remixed songs coupled with teenage related aspects such as beauty and fashion tips. *Spice-a-Delic* is a weekday afternoon two-hour programme.

Most of the programmes on Lotus FM feature the musical preferences of the presenter, which may not be the same as that of the listener. So as to give the audience a chance to listen to a song of its choice, *It's Your Call* on Lotus FM is featured for three hours on weekdays and two hours on a Saturday. Due to the probability of listeners in KwaZulu-Natal getting through to the studio being higher than that of Gauteng and Cape Town, one hour of the show time is devoted towards entertaining calls exclusively from residents of those two provinces.

The author is of the opinion that, while Lotus FM has satisfactorily attempted in paying attention to the minorities within its minority 'Indian' target audience, the number of hours given to the Telegu, Gujarati and Urdu cultural groups in a week is insufficient in comparison to the total music mix played per week on Lotus FM. In other words, the Telegu, Gujarati or Urdu community gets to listen to their cultural music for only two hours at a stretch on a particular day of the week. The host of the Telegu cultural programme is of the view that though two hours at a stretch suffices, it is not enough time devoted to the cultural group for a week (Appendix A4). The presenter of the *Qawwali Hour* on Lotus FM is also of the view that one hour is too little a time for the programme as at times he is compelled to fade off a song due to the average duration of a 'qawwali' being anywhere between ten to fifteen minutes (Appendix A7).

Thus we conclude that in its attempt to serve each and every member of its community, Lotus FM has satisfactorily devised its programming schedule in catering for them.

#### **4. Contribution to Sense of National Identity and Community**

One of the most important elements of being a public broadcaster is the creation of a sense of national identity. The provision of a space in which "the emerging culture of multiple identities can negotiate its antagonisms" has been identified as the role of a public service broadcaster (Ellis, 1994: 14). Lotus FM, as stated earlier, falls under the domain of SABC radio stations, and the SABC is the national broadcaster with a public service responsibility. The sense of unity, created by the SABC is relayed by their 'Simunye We are One' logo. It is the duty of a public service broadcaster to reflect issues of national concern (Mpofu, 1996: 14). One of the duties and obligations of a national public service broadcaster is to relay events of national importance such as general elections and rugby, cricket or soccer match scores.

Before discussing Lotus FM's contribution to a sense of national identity, it would be important to reflect upon the cultural duality of the South African Indian. Every South African Indian can trace his ancestral roots to India since the first Indians to land on South African soil came in 1860 from the Indian subcontinent. However, the South

African Indian of today has been born and brought up in South Africa, with knowledge of the Indian customs and traditions. So, while he is South African by birth, he is also an Indian by heritage. Dr Naresh D. Veeran, Manager of Lotus FM, describes Lotus's audience as "Indian South Africans who are South African by birth and who are of Indian origin; whose ancestral roots are in India" (Appendix A1). Thus, Lotus FM is not only faced with contributing to a feeling of South Africanness, but also to that of a South African with some Indianness to it.

Issues dealing with national events relating to South Africa would contribute to a sense of being a South African. These would include events such as general elections, sports updates and airing programmes and music that is produced locally and is South African. Mporfu (1996: 15) emphasizes that "in moments of national crisis, for instance, the national broadcaster should provide a focus of and a voice for national concerns, while still retaining its independence".

The hourly news bulletins from 06h00 to 20h00 and *Newsbreak* comprise regional, national and international as well as cultural news. In addition to the sports updates on the morning drive and afternoon youth programmes (at roughly 07h45 and 14h45), Lotus FM also airs live crossings when there is a cricket match going on abroad wherein the South African team is playing.

For the December 5, 2000 municipal elections, *Viewpoint* on Lotus FM for two weeks from November 13 to November 24, 2000, provided a forum for the listeners to ask questions to the various political parties. The help-line, *Online*, on November 23 and November 30, 2000, did something similar but also had a live studio audience to direct their questions to the various political parties whose representatives were present in the studio.

Following the Throb Nite Club (Chatsworth) tragedy of March 24, 2000, in which thirteen innocent school going children lost their lives while attending a matinee party celebrating the end of the school term, Lotus FM for that day till a week later,

concentrated on the incident in its current affairs programme (*Newsbreak*) as well as on the talk show *Viewpoint*. The talk show also held interviews with the Deputy President Jacob Zuma, as well as the co-owner of Throb Nite Club. The youth programme (*Spice-a-Delic*), dedicated its show a week after that tragic Friday to the tragedy, inviting friends, relatives and families of the victims to come through with their poems, messages and shared experiences with the lost ones. In addition, Lotus FM announcers and staff members aided the Chatsworth Community Distress Center in raising funds for various expenses relating to that tragedy as well as any future tragedies that may occur. Lotus FM served as a channel through which the masses voiced their grief, views, opinions and feelings. Thus, Lotus FM played a major role in building that sense of togetherness as the community, including those who were not related to the victims of the Throb Nite Club tragedy, came together and condemned the people guilty of causing the stampede and subsequent loss of thirteen innocent lives.

Music and programming produced locally contributes to a sense of national identity. While movies and their songs from the Indian film industry provide the number one source of entertainment to the South African Indians, such entertainment is imported from India and abroad and accounts for more than 90% of the music played on Lotus FM. However, there is a lot of talent within the South African Indian community, who produce their own music. Though such music may not be of as superior a quality as the imported one, yet it gives a feeling of 'South African Indianness'. About ten to fifteen years ago, Lotus FM (then Radio Lotus) started promoting local talent by holding a Song-Writing Contest, encouraging the community to write lyrics (Appendix A2 & A3). Lotus FM then formed its own resident band, *Kamal Sangeeth*, to provide professional backing to the Indian South African artists (Appendix A2). Due to financial constraints, the Station could no longer continue with the process (ibid). However, even today, on condition that the album meets with Lotus FM's standards and at least one-third of it comprises original music, Lotus FM will jointly publicize and market the album (Appendix A2; <http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). Another programme that contributes to a feeling of national identity, is *Pages from My Diary*, a cultural programme that

showcases a local South African public figure and his/her achievements and contribution to society

Lotus FM does, thus, in many ways through its programming, develop, reflect and contribute towards a sense of national identity and togetherness.

#### 5. Distance from Vested Interests

The greatest test for a public service broadcaster lies in its ability to abstain from political interference as well as commercial interests. It is the role of a public service broadcaster to provide programming that is not dominated either by the Government of the day or the advertisers (McDonnell, 1991: 82). A public service broadcaster must display impartiality when dealing with politically related matters. Mpofu (1996: 12) states "the history of PSB all over the world, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, is one of constant political interference from ruling parties and media owners" "The ability of broadcasters to resist political interference by remaining in control of the reporting and analysis of news and current affairs" is one of the means by which a public broadcasting service can claim to be politically independent (Teer-Tomaselli in Mpofu, 1996: 12). The reader must bear in mind that Lotus FM is a commercially-driven public broadcasting service.

Due to its position within the SABC network, the news and current affairs programmes broadcast in Lotus FM are produced and controlled by the SABC's Radio News department, with Lotus having no editorial control (Appendix A1). The Station Manager states, "All the news and current affairs on Lotus, on Five, on Metro, on Goodhope, on Ikhewzi and Ligwalagwala, Ukhozi and all stations... are not controlled by the stations themselves; they are controlled by Radio News" (Appendix A1). In its current format, Lotus FM, as a separate entity from its management, is not affiliated towards any political party, and hence, has no editorial control on the news broadcast on its airwaves. As regards the news that is produced and controlled by Radio News, the editorial code of the SABC very clearly states, "We shall evaluate information solely on merit and shall not allow advertising, commercial, political or personal considerations to influence our editorial decisions" (<http://www.newsnet/newsnet>; Appendix E). It further states "We

shall be free from obligation to any interest group and shall be committed to the public's right to know the truth" (ibid). While currently all news broadcast on Lotus FM is being produced and compiled by the SABC Radio News department, in the future, Lotus FM intends on rectifying this situation by deciding upon the editorial content of any bulletin going out on its airwaves (Appendix A1). This, in the researcher's opinion, would most likely result in the listeners getting a subjective view of any news making headlines, which the researcher feels is against the ethics of good journalism. The author believes that people have a fundamental right to unbiased, fair, neutral and objective news, allowing for them to formulate their own opinions and prejudices.

Raboy (1996: 44) articulates that "independence from politics and autonomy from the market have become the leading criteria for the definition of public space". Falling under the domain of the SABC, Lotus FM, as per the editorial code of the SABC, is free from any political interference. Similarly, while the station is commercially driven with advertising as its major source of income, it is not commercially controlled wherein the interests of certain groups are being sidelined. Advertisements aired on any of the SABC radio stations fall under the domain of Radio Active, which is the centralized advertising department of the SABC. Even sponsored features on various programmes are controlled by Radio Active. The researcher, thus, holds the view that Lotus FM is free from 'vested interests' as its programming caters to the diversity of its audience without being dominated by political or commercial interests.

#### **6. Direct Funding and Universality of Payment**

A public broadcasting service should be publicly funded by way of license fees from the corpus of users. "The issue of universality of payment was rooted in the thinking that as everyone is capable of receiving the national public broadcaster, everyone should pay for it" (Mpofu, 1996: 11). To some, the issue of public funding is regarded as fundamental to the maintenance and survival of public service broadcasting. The national public broadcaster, the SABC, charges license fees from its viewers and these license fees serve as a major source of its income. Lotus FM, which is one of the brands of the SABC, relies on advertising as its major source of income (Appendix A1). Though advertising is



Lotus FM's one major source of revenue, the SABC license fees also serve as a minor channel of funding for Lotus FM (Appendix A1). In fact, Lotus FM has been self-sufficient for the past couple of years and in 1998 even declared its first profit since inception (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>).

In addition to advertising and sponsorships, 'eventing' also serve as a channel of revenue for Lotus FM (Appendix A1). 'Eventing' refers to any activity used by Lotus FM to stage any event or promotion. Eventing includes outside broadcasts, acting as media sponsors in events and even staging Bhangras<sup>3</sup>. All these serve as channels of income for Lotus FM. The Station Manager further states that in the past Lotus FM had never actively gone out into the market seeking income via events, concerts, etc. However, within a span of six months in the year 2000, Lotus FM has earned about R300 000 to R400 000 just by way of eventing (Appendix A1).

Thus, we conclude that while the holding company, the SABC, as the national public broadcaster, relies on license fees as its major source of income, Lotus FM runs its operations and sustains itself financially by way of income from advertising, eventing and sponsorships.

## 7. Competition in Good Programming rather than for numbers

As a public broadcasting service, the programmes aired should be distinct in terms of quality and should be different from commercial programming. "Broadcasting should be structured so as to encourage competition in good programming rather than competition for numbers" (McDonnell, 1991: 95). The concept of public service broadcasting lies in the ability of the broadcaster to provide good quality and diverse programmes. As mentioned earlier, a range of *mixed* programmes is one of the elements that has remained constitutive of the notion of public service broadcasting (Scannell, 1997: 62-63). Under

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<sup>3</sup> Bhangra is the most popular cultural folk music of the rural state of Punjab, in Northern India (<http://www.punjabishock.com>). "With its heart pounding beats of the dhol (powerful drumming), Bhangra has permeated the mainstream music industry, making 'Bhangra' an uncontrollable pandemonium on dance floors around the world. (...) Bhangra has become the epitome of popular dance and without the inclusion of it, there's no party" (<http://www.DesiClub.com>). Also discussed in Chapter 4, on page 55.

the second and third elements of public service broadcasting, of 'Universality of Appeal' and of 'Particular Attention to Minorities', we discussed the various types of programmes aired on Lotus FM. Here, we elaborate on the content of these programmes and the way in which there is competition within programming.

One of the jingles that can be heard on Lotus FM says "*Education, Information, Entertainment: Lotus FM has it all!*". In its present format, the overall mix of talk to music on Lotus FM is 60% to 40% (Appendix A1; *Sunday Times*, 04/03/01: 1). While the percentage of music played is going to change from April 2001, in this section we discuss the content of some of the programmes and the manner in which they are different to a radio station such as East Coast Radio, the regional commercial station in KwaZulu-Natal that is hit music driven. Since we have already earlier discussed the different cultural and religious programmes that cater to the minority groups within the Indian community, here we analyse some of the more popular prime time programmes such as the morning breakfast and afternoon drive shows.

The morning breakfast show, *Kickdown*, from 07h00 to 09h00, relays a host of features such as morning messages (dedications), weather report, daily horoscopes, sports news and an interactive feature called 'Citizen X' where the announcer tests two listeners competing against each other, on how attentively they listened to the current affairs programme, *Newsbreak*, from 06h00 to 07h00. *Kickdown* also features a short story with a moral to it followed by a song. With all the talk, features and ad breaks, the announcer is able to play about five to six songs in one hour. The talk show *Viewpoint* allows for listeners to air their views on issues that are of cultural and national importance. It provides a forum for listeners to talk about their opinion and feelings related to issues that affect them. The youth programme, *Spice-a-Delic*, hosts a variety of features during the week, such as matters of environmental importance, the latest on the teenage fashion and beauty scene and a sponsored feature called 'Future Focus' where professors from a university talk about the various courses being offered by their department for the graduating matriculants. In addition, *Spice-a-Delic* hosts a feature called 'Teen-Talk' in

which the views and opinions of the teenagers are solicited on issues concerning them (Appendix A8). *Spice-a-Delic* also features a sports update at 14h45.

The afternoon drive show, *Overdrive*, not only features music but also relays horse racing news and a 'Test Drive' feature in which a report is given on the latest car on the market. *Overdrive* also has a feature called 'Where in the World is Wayne' in which the host gives clues of geographic, cultural and historical nature of any place in the world and the listeners are to call in and guess which part of the world 'Wayne' (a fictitious person) is in. The first person to identify which city, state or island 'Wayne' is in, gets the opportunity of four songs of his/her choice being played for him/her on the show. At about 17h40, a sneak preview is given of the news content of the afternoon current affairs programme, *Newsbreak*, that features at 18h00.

*Newsbreak* at 18h00 hosts a feature called 'Evening Enigma' in which the news reader plays the recorded voice of any public personality, in most cases a politician, and listeners are to call in and identify the mystery voice. The night programme, *Curtain Call*, features listener involvement by way of brain-teasers and clues for identifying the mystery object. The first caller with the correct answer usually gets to have two or three songs of his/her choice played for him/her. The *Curtain Call* also entertains dedications throughout the duration of the show. The late night programme, *Nightshift*, is a light-music programme wherein each day the individual announcers host different features.

These are just a few examples of the different kind of features contained in the various programmes on Lotus FM. As compared to a regional (in KwaZulu-Natal) commercial station like East Coast Radio, where at a time one can hear four to five songs one after the other, with no talk in between, Lotus FM has a 40% music to 60% talk format, encouraging for competition in good programming. A more comprehensive analysis of the programmes aired on Lotus FM can be read in Chapter 5, where the author examines the way in which Lotus FM, via its programming, is balancing all three forms of broadcasting.

#### 8. Guidelines that liberate rather than restrict programme makers

Jonathan Powell, who had served on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as a Programme Controller, in his definition stated, "Public service broadcasting is an attempt to make quality popular programmes" and "public broadcasting is driven by higher aspirations than solely to provide entertainment" (Teer-Tomaselli, 1994: 127). This eighth principle of public service broadcasting by the now defunct Broadcasting Research Unit (BRU), implies that programme makers or producers should be given considerable freedom in producing their programmes.

At the moment, Lotus FM, due to financial constraints, does not have exclusive producers for the various programmes it showcases. Its presenters are recruited in the capacity of announcer producer. 80% of what goes on air comes from production and the remaining 20% is the pure spontaneity aspect of being a radio presenter, such as time-checks and reminding listeners of what station they're listening to (Appendix A1). That is why each individual presenter has different features on his/her programme. The hostess of *Online* decides, based on current events and feedback from listeners, as to what specialist issues to talk about on her programme (Appendix A6). The presenters of the other programmes do also spend a considerable amount of time on compiling and producing their show (see Appendix A4, A6 & A8). The presenters of the various shows are given the freedom to decide on the content of their show, subject to the programme or its content being neutral and not biased towards any linguistic group. This is in respect of the general programmes, excluding the cultural and religious shows. Though at the moment it is the presenter who is performing a dual role of producer/announcer, this freedom of deciding the features of one's show is going to change from April 2001, with some of the announcers becoming full-time producers (*Sunday Times*, 04/03/01: 1).

#### Conclusion

While the author has used the Broadcasting Research Unit's (BRU) eight principles of Public Service Broadcasting as a yardstick against which to measure Lotus FM's conformance to these principles, in her own understanding of public service broadcasting, she accords it the very simple definition of being exactly what the three words state

broadcasting as a service to the public. The public, in the case of Lotus FM, is the minority group of the South African Indians who account for a minute 2.6% of the total population of South Africa. As has already been established, the South African Indian community can be sub-divided into five groups based on language and three based on religion. Prior to October 1996, after which it became commercially driven, Lotus FM was a full spectrum public broadcasting service. Since then, the station has been functioning as a commercially driven public service broadcaster with community responsibility. The author is of the view that Lotus FM has well defended and lived up to its stance as a public broadcasting service and is performing satisfactorily in its capacity as such, while being commercially driven with community responsibility, and this is reflected in the diversity, plurality and cultural specificity of its programmes.

In its endeavour to not marginalize any of its minority Indian community, such as the Telegu, Gujarati or Urdu speaking listeners, Lotus FM has had to compromise on its listenership figures. Were Lotus FM not driven by a public service mandate, it may not have incorporated two hours towards those language groups, as it would have probably played music that is popular and not based on any ratio. As a full spectrum public service broadcaster, Lotus FM may have allocated more hours to the minority groups within the South African Indian community, without concentrating on listenership figures. However, it is that very same public service mandate that has compelled Lotus FM to design its programmes in such a way so as to take care of the cultural needs of the diverse South African Indian community. Therefore, the researcher concludes that, indeed, "as a Public broadcaster, Lotus FM has found the right blend of talk and music whilst still catering for the cultural needs of its diverse audience" (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>).

Having analysed Lotus FM as a public service broadcaster, in the next chapter we go on to explore Lotus FM as a community radio station.

### *Chapter 3 -* **LOTUS FM AS A COMMUNITY BROADCASTER**

*Lotus is licensed as a community public broadcaster.*

Peter Matlare  
Group CEO, SABC  
(*Tribune Herald*, 11/03/01: 1)

Community radio developed after the Second World War as a distinctive alternative to commercial radio as well as the local public radio (White, 1990: 4). Community radio developed with the specific aim of providing for a participatory forum and for allowing for more horizontal communication within local communities (White, 1990: 4). With the interests of the minority groups becoming marginalized in the case of commercial radio, a need was perceived for radio to be owned and operated by people within a local community, with the maximum emphasis being on news and events of the local community (ibid). Some of the most distinctive elements that characterize most forms of community radio are outlined by Robert White (1990, 4-5):

- 1) It is an autonomous radio station serving no more than a single city with its immediate geographical hinterland, all with a distinct local political – cultural identity.
- 2) The governing organization of the station is a non-profit, cooperative form with a board of management elected by the people of the community or by users of the medium who are members of the organization by reason of a nominal membership fee or purchase of a share.
- 3) Community volunteers play an important role in the production of programming and distinctions between professional staff and ordinary users are played down. Every user is also a potential producer.
- 4) The station avoids as far as possible commercial criteria and seeks support primarily from the contributions of users, supplemented by grants from community organizations, foundations, etc.
- 5) The major objectives are to encourage widespread community participation in broadcasting, provide an opportunity for horizontal communication between individuals and groups in the community, stimulate more free and

open debate of community issues and reflect the cultural and social diversity of the community.

- 6) A special effort is made to provide an active voice for less powerful majorities of the community and to allow minorities a chance to make known their alternative views and styles of life.

In USA, community radio developed as an alternative to commercial radio (White, 1990: 4-5). While commercial radio aims at making profits by giving the audience what they want and giving the advertisers the audience and a public service station aims at serving the public in general and in specific, community radio “aims in part to redistribute the power of communication by claiming for groups that are socially and politically marginalized or oppressed the right to a fair share of resources so as to take control of their own lives” (Teer-Tomaselli & deVilliers, 1998: 163).

The Independent Broadcasting Authority, commonly referred to as the IBA, is today part of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), having amalgamated with the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA). For the purpose of this analysis, the author will refer to it as the IBA. The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) was established by the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, No. 153 of 1993. In accordance with Section 192 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, the purpose of the IBA is “to regulate broadcasting in the public interest; ensuring fairness and a diversity of views broadly representing South African society (RSA 1993). The Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, henceforth referred to as the Act, defines a community broadcasting service as one which:

- a) is fully controlled by a non-profit entity and carried on for non-profitable purposes;
- b) serves a particular community;
- c) encourages members of the community served by it or persons associated with or promoting the interests of such community to

participate in the selection and provision of programmes to be broadcast in the course of such broadcasting service; and

- d) may be funded by donations, grants, sponsorships or advertising or membership fees or by any combination of the aforementioned.

(RSA 1993)

The Act further provides for a community broadcasting service to be either catering for a geographic community or a community of interest. The difference between the two is as follows:

- i) **Geographic Community**

The broadcasting service caters to persons or a community whose communality is determined principally by their residing in a particular geographic area.

- ii) **Community of Interest**

The community served in this category is one which has a specific ascertainable common interest and this common interest is the distinctive feature of this kind of broadcasting service.

(RSA 1993)

There are three types of broadcasting services that can cater to a community of interest:

- a) **Services catering for Institutional Communities**

The service here is primarily designed to meet the needs of persons of a community that are directly associated with an institution of learning, labor or any institutional formation.

- b) **Services catering for Religious Communities**

The role of this kind of service is to cater for the religious needs of specific communities whose common interest is based on a religion or belief.



c) **Services catering for Cultural Communities**

The objective of this type of broadcasting service is to meet the cultural needs of a community or groups of communities.

(RSA 1993)

The Act further classifies a cultural community as one having a common interest defined as:

a) **Arts and Culture**

A community whose interest lies in specialized music services; is literary or is associated with one or more of the performing arts.

b) **Historical or Traditional**

These are services aimed at meeting the needs of communities whose communality stems from a similar set of cultural, traditional or other values broadly related to a history or a way of life of that community or group of communities

c) **Other**

Any other service that can be designed as a community of interest.

(RSA 1993)

As has already been mentioned, Lotus FM describes itself as a community mandated, commercially-driven metro-national public broadcasting service catering for the South Africans of Indian descent (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). The South African Indians can be broken down into the five language groups of Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu, and the three religious groupings of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. We infer from these statements that Lotus FM targets a community of interest (the South Africans of Indian origin) that is cultural and religious, that is geographically located (i.e. metro-national) in the whole of KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Cape Town.

The argument at this stage, hinges on what Lotus FM defines as the notion of South African Indians. "The notion of Indianness refers to the South Africans who are the descendants of what was largely an Indian (from the Asian subcontinent) indentured labor force" (Bramdaw, 1994: 9). The 'Indian community' in the South African context classifies all immigrants from the subcontinent of India and their descendants (born in South Africa or anywhere else) (Gokool, 1994: 6). It was important and of considerable significance to ascertain from the Station Manager of Lotus FM, what it (Lotus FM) defined a South African Indian as. To quote the Station Manager, "Lotus FM targets Indian South Africans who are South African by birth and who are of Indian origin, whose ancestral roots are in India" (Appendix A1). In her book, *Portrait of Indian South Africans*, Professor Meer states that as a result of Indian immigration being prohibited by law by 1913, leaving aside a few, the Indian South Africans today are South African citizens by birth (Meer, 1969: 7).

Lotus FM, the national broadcaster in South Africa, has a "public broadcast responsibility as well as a community responsibility, without ignoring its commercial viability" (*Post*, 29/9/99-2/10/99: 1). As stated in the Introduction to this dissertation, the aim of this research is to examine the feasibility with which Lotus FM is able to strike a balance in all three forms of broadcasting via its programming schedule. It would therefore be irrelevant to analyse Lotus FM's conformance to the financial requirements of a community radio, in terms of the IBA mandate, due to the simple fact that Lotus FM's set-up is not that of a community radio station. However, since the programmes on a radio station are directed towards its audience, it would be of great significance to examine the extent or degree to which Lotus FM, as a station with community responsibility, meets the 'Content Requirements' of a community broadcasting service, as mandated in the IBA's *Position Paper on Four-Year Licenses*, 10 June 1997. It is deemed and accepted that a community broadcaster is a genuine community service, if and only if its programmes are community-driven, reflecting the diversity of the community and region wherein it's located (<http://www.iba.org.za>; White, 1990: 5).

The corner stone of democracy is access to information that is timely, accurate and realistic. "Classical liberal thought argues that the primary role of the media is to act as a public watchdog overseeing the state" (Curran, 1996: 83). The IBA Act requires that all community sound broadcasting services broadcast news and other informational programmes and keep their listeners promptly informed of political and social events, especially at the local level (RSA 1993). Section 2(c) of the Act obliges the Authority to "ensure that broadcasting services, viewed collectively:

- (i) *develop and protect a national and regional identity, culture and character;*
- (ii) *provide for regular:*
  - aa) news services;*
  - bb) actuality programmes on matters of public interest;*
  - cc) programmes on political issues of public interest;*
  - dd) programmes on matters of international, national, regional and local significance"*

(RSA 1993)

As mentioned in Chapter 2, where we analysed Lotus FM as a Public Service Broadcaster, the news that is aired on Lotus FM is produced by the Radio News department of the SABC, with Lotus FM having no editorial control; none whatsoever. The editorial code of the SABC can be found in Appendix E. The news that is broadcast on Lotus FM contains reports on events of regional, national and global importance. Besides having correspondents in India and in other parts of the world, Radio News also obtains information through regional and international news offices, such as Cable News Network (CNN), South African Press Association (SAPA), Associated Press (AP), Reuters and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). At Lotus FM the day commences with news headlines at 06h00, followed by the current affairs programme, *Newsbreak*, from 06h00 to 07h00. News bulletins are subsequently broadcast on the hour for the whole day, with the last bulletin for the day being at 20h00. *Newsbreak* also features for half an hour in the evening, from 18h00 to 18h30. Most of the bulletins and *Newsbreak* feature soundbites and the stories, after being accessed from Newstar, are

edited and put in order of importance (<http://www.sabc.co.za>). Newstar is a computerized news management network to which journalists feed their text bulletins together with sound clippings, allowing for anyone within the network being able to access timely and relevant news. Many a times, funeral notices are announced after the news bulletins. While the news headlines and bulletins are of general importance to the nation's populace, in order to cater specifically to its community, the South African Indians, Lotus FM features community news on a daily basis. Community news on events such as celebrations, fun/run walk, charity fairs, qawwali nights<sup>4</sup>, school reunions, etc., is aired twice daily during the weekdays. 'What's happening in the community', which features news from the community diary, is aired at 10h30 and 12h30, Monday to Friday. Any organization wanting to publicize their event can do so by sending Lotus FM a fax on the organization letterhead, giving details of the event.

The two actuality programmes of public interest are *Viewpoint* and *Online*. *Viewpoint* is a topical talk show wherein issues of public interest are discussed, welcoming listeners to air their views on the topic of the day. *Online* is a help line talk show format programme that is aimed at aiding the community on different matters. During the course of the week, *Online* features various experts in the studio, in the field of medicine, law, psychology, etc. Community radio can "raise awareness on issues such as the potential of women" and can contribute towards "improving literacy and education" and providing information on aspects such as health, environment and democracy, to name a few (Rolt, 1996).

In November 1999, after Lotus FM came out with a new programming schedule, it was mentioned in the *Sunday Times KZN* that the talk show *Viewpoint* "would continue to tackle topics that interest the community, like empowerment of women and men and motivational issues" (*Sunday Times KZN*, 07/11/99: 7). *Viewpoint* had first started in October 1995 and has come a long way since then in educating and empowering the community. Says the host of *Viewpoint*, "When I started, people were afraid to talk about

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<sup>4</sup> A 'qawwali' is defined as the Muslim equivalent of Hindi devotional singing (Meer, 1969: 223). It is a rhythmic spiritual hymn wherein the listeners go into a trance. A 'qawwali' night, therefore, features the rendition of qawwalis. Also discussed in Chapter 5 on page 67.

issues. Now they are eager to share their problems. They have learnt from those brave enough to talk openly about their experiences. Now people find it easier to talk” (*Sunday Times KZN*, 7/11/99: 7). (see Appendix C). While most of the topics discussed on *Viewpoint* are of general interest and universal in nature, many a times matters of specific importance and relevance to the Indian community also form the subject matter of the programme. Following are some of the topics that have been discussed on *Viewpoint*, which currently features on Lotus FM from 13h00 to 14h00:

My husband is constantly accusing me of being unfaithful (23/2/00)

Are school going youngsters too young to date? (8/3/00)

My colored husband is not accepted by my family – exploring the issue of inter-racial marriages; do people still believe that you should marry someone of your own race? (9/3/00)

When parents fight in front of their children (6/11/00)

When work colleagues stab you in the back (7/11/00)

Have fireworks become a racial issue? (8/11/00)

Is there any truth in the Pokemon suicide? (9/11/00)

The week of the 13-17 November, 2000, *Viewpoint* featured representatives of the various provincial political parties in order to provide listeners with the opportunity to get an answer to their queries, thereby facilitating and informing their choice of whom to cast their vote in the December 5, 2000 municipal elections. *Viewpoint* is indeed a controversial talk show as it has sparked arguments and debates on many issues. What is important though is the fact that Indians in South Africa are opening up and becoming brave enough to talk openly about issues affecting them, such as those on extra-marital affairs and husbands having mistresses, abuse of women at home, divorce, etc. Fridays on *Viewpoint* is an open-line day when any one can call through to talk about anything, especially the topics that were discussed earlier during the week.

*Online* is a help line listener phone-in programme with experts from different fields being physically present in the studio to answer any queries that the Lotus listener may have (Appendix A6). *Online* is an hour and a half long programme that is broadcast from

8:30pm to 10:00pm on the Lotus airwaves. Following are some of the topics that have been discussed on *Online*:

Labor relations in the restaurant industry (3/11/00)

The Indian head massage (6/11/00)

Marriage contracts – dealing with the different types of contracts and what they entail (7/11/00)

Dealing with infidelity in a relationship – in marriages, and picking up the pieces afterwards (8/11/00)

Pension pay-out systems (10/11/00)

Some of the other issues that have been discussed on *Online* are rape and how to deal with it, osteoporosis, laser eye surgery, arthritis and legality of possessing a gun. In the run-up to the 5 December 2000, municipal elections *Online* also dedicated two of its shows on a Thursday (i.e. 23/11/00 and 30/11/00) by giving members of the various provincial political parties a chance to air their views, and be questioned by the studio audience and the audience sitting at home listening in via the radio. This 'local government debate' was held as a joint initiative of *Newsbreak* and *Online*. Thus, *Viewpoint* and *Online* are the two main talk shows that provide a platform for discussion and debate on matters of political, national, international, local and cultural significance. On matters of public interest during which a show or a play is being staged at a particular venue, the afternoon prime-time drive show, *Overdrive*, usually hosts an interview with members of the organizing committee to inform the listeners of the event being held and its importance.

Since community broadcasters are supposed to be a reflection of the communities they tend to serve, the Independent Broadcasting Authority requires that community broadcasting services reflect the language needs of their target communities while not limiting the broadcast to the official or formal language (<http://www.iba.org.za>). The diversity of programmes has already been mentioned in Chapter Two on 'Lotus FM as a Public Service Broadcaster'. However, to establish Lotus FM's conformity to the community radio mandate, it would be significant to elaborate on the programmes which reflect the language needs of Lotus FM's target community. While the South African

Indian community can be broken down into subgroups based on language spoken or religious affiliations, some of these subgroups form a minority within the larger South African Indian minority group. The South African of Indian descent community, contributing just 2.6% of the population of South Africa, is linguistically broken up into five groups: Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati, Telegu and Urdu, and three religious groups: Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The majority of the South African Indians regard English as their first and home language (see Table 3.1). Thus, about 90% of the programmes broadcast on Lotus FM are in the English medium.

*Table 3.1*

**PROPORTIONAL HOME LANGUAGE OF SOUTH AFRICAN INDIANS  
1996 CENSUS**

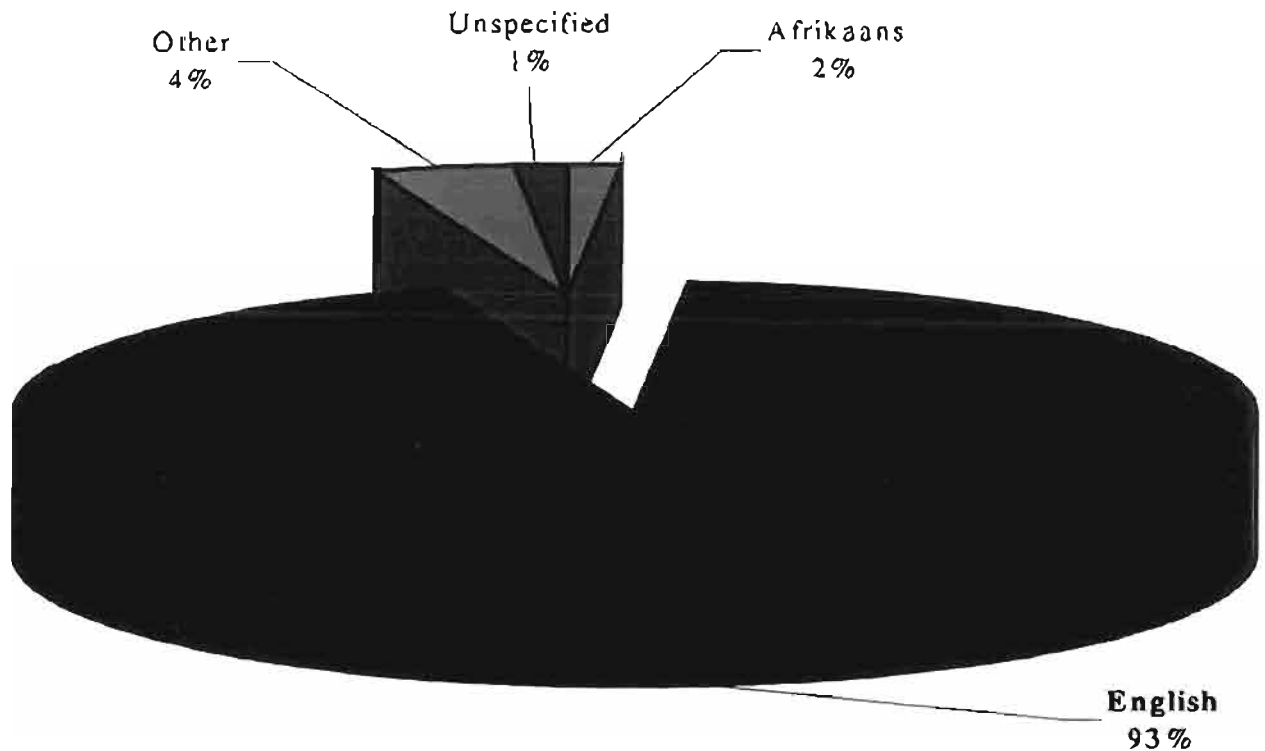
<i>Language</i>	<i>Indian/Asians</i>
Afrikaans	1.5%
<b>English</b>	<b>93.2%</b>
isiNdebele	0.0% <sup>a</sup>
isiXhosa	0.1%
isiZulu	0.2%
Sepedi	0.0% <sup>a</sup>
Sesotho	0.0% <sup>a</sup>
Setswana	0.0% <sup>a</sup>
SiSwati	0.0% <sup>a</sup>
Tshivenda	0.0% <sup>a</sup>
Xitsonga	0.0% <sup>a</sup>
Other	3.7%
Unspecified	1.3%

*Source:* Statistics South Africa  
(<http://www.statssa.gov.za>)

a Proportion too small to record

\* Figures may not add up owing to rounding off.

**Chart 3.1 Proportional Home Language of South African Indians  
1996 Census**



The two most dominant language groups, in accordance with the balance of music played, are Hindi and Tamil. Lotus FM has a large music library dominated by Hindi film music over any of the other languages. This is a result of the easy availability of such music and the popularity of Hindi movies. In Durban itself, there are many outlets from where one can easily purchase Hindi compact discs and cassettes. Besides Roopanands, such music can also be obtained from Bombay House, AA Video and other Indian and Pakistani shops stocking such music. Prior to November 2000, one could subscribe to Zee TV on the Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) bouquet, for twenty-four hours of Indian entertainment. November 2000 witnessed the launch of Sony Entertainment Television and Bollywood For You (B4U) on the DSTV bouquet. While Sony TV is similar to Zee TV because both feature Indian and Pakistani serials as well as



game shows, countdown shows and movies, B4U is a twenty-four hour Hindi movie channel. In addition, Hindi movies are also released on the big screen at Isfahan cinema in Durban and Goodhope Cinemas in Johannesburg. While these movies are also easily available for hire on video, the same cannot be said of movies in the other four languages. Thus we see a predominance of the Hindi language in terms of movies and music. Nevertheless, Lotus FM does attempt to prevent the minority language groups from being marginalized and has designed programmes catering to their needs.

Lotus FM is not the only community broadcaster catering to the needs and tastes of the South African Indians. There are other radio stations as well such as Radio Phoenix in KwaZulu-Natal, East Wave in Johannesburg, Voice of the Cape and Radio 786 in Cape Town. So while these stations' programmes are designed exclusively as a reflection of the needs of their communities, Lotus FM, too, attempts to serve its community in the best possible manner by designing programmes that cater to its culturally rich community. The needs of the language groups are reflected in the cultural programmes that are aired on weekdays between the hours of 18h30 to 20h30, with two hours per week being set aside for each of the language groups. The anchors of these programmes speak in the vernacular and the music played in those two hours is strictly in that particular language group. These programmes also include a 'listen and learn' feature in which the presenter either tells a story in the vernacular and then translates it in English (Appendix A4). He/she may also translate a popular song, based on the listeners' feedback through e-mails, snail mail and faxes, line by line into English (Appendix A7). These cultural programmes also feature not just the latest music, but classical and old music as well, thus catering to different age groups within that language. For example, the host of the Urdu cultural programme, *Guldasta*, plays remixes to capture the younger generation (Appendix A7). The host of the Telegu cultural programme, *Sungeetha Nilayamu*, says that she not only plays remixes for the younger market, but also features semi-classical and Karnatic music as well (Appendix A4).

In addition to these cultural programmes, Lotus FM also caters for the religious groups on Sundays. *Bhakti Sangeeth* is the Hindu religious programme that is presented for two

hours on a Sunday afternoon between the hours of 15h00 to 17h00 and features religious songs in Hindi, Tamil, Telegu as well as Gujarati. *Gospel Hour*, the Christian religious programme, is presented on Sunday mornings from 06h00 to 07h00 and features readings from the holy Bible. The music in the *Gospel Hour* is not western, but is in the vernacular. *Deenyaar* is the Islamic religious programme featured on Sunday evenings, from 19h00 to 20h00. In addition to these separate religious programmes for each type, the weekday morning 05h30 to 06h00 *Inspirations* features devotional songs in all the language and religious groups. Thus, Lotus FM while maintaining English as its broadcast medium, avoids marginalizing the minority groups by devoting two hours per week to each of the linguistic group, and one and two hours to the Christian, Islamic and Hindu religion, respectively.

The IBA states:

Taking into account that South African music regulations are intended to ensure the development of local music and talent and the development of the local music industry, all sound broadcasting services dedicating more than 15% of their airtime schedules to the broadcasting of music are required to ensure that at least 20% of music broadcast by them is of South African origin. One of the criteria used to determine whether a musical work qualifies as South African music is that it must be principally performed by musicians who are South African citizens.

(RSA 1993)

White (1990: 5) states that localism and variety are the two characteristics that stand out in the programming of a community radio. “There is a commitment to the best and the unique in local community culture, bringing attention to facets of culture and talents that might otherwise go unnoticed” (White, 1990: 5).

The local Indian music industry in South Africa is virtually non-existent (Appendix A1 & A2). About ten to fifteen years back, Lotus FM (then Radio Lotus) actually helped develop the local Indian music. The Programmes Executive of Lotus FM, who was then

Production Specialist, comments that in those days “a lot of groups used to come in and just record cover versions of film songs, religious songs (...) But nobody was actually producing anything that was typically South African Indian” (Appendix A2). Radio Lotus then started holding ‘Song-Writing Contests’ encouraging members of the community to write lyrics in each of the five languages. With the help of language specialists, the lyrics were edited to make them “sufficiently good enough” (Appendix A2). After realizing that some bands were good but did not have good enough singers or there were some very good singers but without the right backing from the band, Radio Lotus then formed its own resident band, *Kamal Sungeeth*, to “give all those singers out there the opportunity for good music and to have the songs recorded for radio” (Appendix A2). Radio Lotus ran the project for about ten years and then due to financial constraints, as it was expensive doing recordings, had to put an end to it. However, at present, Lotus FM will support a band by covering the studio fees and engineer fees only on the condition that at least one-third of the album is the original work of the artiste (ibid). In the past fifteen years, ever since Radio Lotus helped promote the local Indian music industry, it has recorded some 600 songs of which, according to the current Programmes Executive, about 550 are still being played on Lotus FM.

Local talent is showcased on Lotus FM on Saturday evenings for two hours, from 17h00 to 19h00. The programme is called *Culture Club* and features only local South African Indian music. The host of the show introduces the song as well as the artiste and makes a special mention if it was a song that was part of the ‘Song –Writing Contest’. In response to the IBA requirement of playing at least 20% locally produced music, the Manager of Lotus FM states that it (i.e. Lotus FM) is able to almost play 15%. He further comments that playing 20% is “virtually impossible because even if we play all the songs over and over again, twice a day, three times a day, we still won’t reach 20% because people don’t want to listen to it” (Appendix A1). Thus, *Culture Club* is the only programme on Lotus FM that exclusively showcases local talent and features minimal talk, to the extent that the announcer is restricted to simply introducing the song, the artiste, the lyricist and the music producer. *Pages from My Diary* is a programme that showcases a local personality and is broadcast on Saturday afternoons, from 4:00pm to 5:00pm, just before

the local music programme, *Culture Club*. *Pages from My Diary* profiles a local personality and his/her experiences and lifestyle while growing up in South Africa during the apartheid regime. A lot of South African Indians are able to empathize with the personality being profiled on *Pages from My Diary*. In addition to these two programmes dedicated to promoting local talent, one can also hear local songs being played once in a while in some of the programmes such as *Lifestyles* and *Tamasha*.

Lotus FM does, thus, give local talent its due share. As mentioned earlier, the local music industry for South African Indians is virtually non-existent in the country. The Station Manager, Dr Naresh D. Veeran, on that subject matter, says, "There's no infrastructure, there's no support by the state, there's no support from the broader community" (Appendix A1). Lotus FM was indeed "solely responsible for creating a semblance of an infrastructure that supported Indian music, Indian local music" (ibid). The Station Manager further asserts that Lotus FM tries to maintain a 15% mark-up and submits it to the IBA. The Station Manager further states, "If the Authority demands 20% or more, then the Authority must put their money where their mouth is and help support local music" (Appendix A1). The author is of the opinion that the Station Manager is justified in holding that view as for long Lotus FM has been doing everything for its community, and it's time that the community became self-sufficient. The author, in agreement with the view of the Programmes Executive, believes that Lotus FM, as a community broadcaster, can be the instigator of an activity or event but should not be expected to shoulder the sole responsibility of running the activity (Appendix A2).

The researcher is of the opinion that as a community broadcaster, Lotus FM has satisfactorily attempted to conform to the applicable IBA stipulations of a community broadcasting service. The reader must remember that Lotus FM is not a 100% community radio, but is a community mandated commercially-driven public broadcasting service. In the next chapter, the author explores the extent to which Lotus FM is commercially driven.

#### Chapter 4 - COMMERCIAL VIABILITY OF LOTUS FM

*We are also very commercially driven; we've got to find ways of making a profit.*

Vimla Frank  
Marketing Manager,  
Lotus FM

Lotus FM was initially a music-driven community-oriented station. In 1995 Radio Lotus was transformed into a full spectrum public service broadcaster and in 1996 the Station went on a visibility drive and was transformed into a semi-commercial service (Appendix A3). In 1998, Lotus FM declared its first profit ever since its inception (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). Today, Lotus FM is commercially driven to the extent that advertising is its major channel of income (Appendix A1).

In general, one can tune in to the radio at any time of the day with the basic purpose of listening to music. "The filling of programme hours with recorded music is a universal characteristic of radio stations around the world" (McLeish, 1994: 157). One can also view radio as a tool of getting instant and latest news. A commercial station is concerned with making profit via advertising and hence it's a music-driven format with minimal talk. McLeish (1994: 11) states "a commercial station often needs to maximize its audience in order to justify the rates, so pushing sectional interests to the side to satisfy the advertisers' desire for mass popularity". A programme is popular if it is understood or enjoyed by the majority of the people. A language specific programme is bound to sideline the general populace from listening in since only a small portion of the potential audience would be able to comprehend what is being spoken. Music, however, has fewer boundaries, as it is sound that appeals to the human ear. Nevertheless, cultural tastes need to be taken into account.

In this chapter, we will first explore Lotus FM's sources of income and then analyse which of its programmes are potentially commercially driven. As already established, any commercially driven organization strives to make a profit in its operations and in the media industry it is advertising that serves as the biggest source of income, with trade

companies reaching out to the audiences and the larger populace by way of different media channels, be it television, radio or even the print media. Advertising is Lotus FM's biggest source of income. The other means by which Lotus FM earns its revenue is through events such as an 'Outside Broadcast' (OB), an 'Eastern Extravaganza' or a 'Bhangra' or maybe even a combination of two of them (Appendix A3). An 'Outside Broadcast' occurs when two or three of the Lotus FM presenters broadcast live from an event. It involves the relay of talk and music on the airwaves while Lotus FM announcers conduct an interactive session with the public present at the event. An Outside Broadcast would take place if a client launching a store were to approach Lotus FM for its presence on the occasion (Appendix A3). An 'Eastern Extravaganza' can be any of the two things. a) an eastern-wear fashion show or b) a musical performance by a live local band coupled with dancers. If a client (e.g. welfare organization) were to approach Lotus FM for its involvement in raising funds, then the station would recommend an Eastern Extravaganza or even a Bhangra<sup>3</sup> (Appendix A3).

When Lotus FM stages a 'Bhangra', its Bhangra team, consisting of some of its announcers, dances on the stage from beginning to end with the crowd swaying and moving to the beat of the popular Indian dance numbers. Being commercially driven, Lotus FM now has to find ways of making profits so as to remain self-sufficient. Whereas previously Lotus FM would instigate an event or function and would try and absorb the cost, the station can no longer do this as it now has to find ways of making a profit (Appendix A3). Lotus FM now has to show a surplus in its operations and thus it is aiming at doing by now charging organizations for events (Appendix A3). The charged rates differ depending on whether the sponsor is a welfare organization or a commercial one, with a higher fee being charged from a commercial organization (Appendix A1 & A3). In the year 2000, Lotus FM was involved in quite a few income-generating events. For the 'Rothmans July' at the Greyville Racecourse in Durban, Lotus FM staged an Eastern Extravaganza as well as a Bhangra. In July itself, Lotus FM staged a 'Mega Bhangra' bash at the Stanger Winter Charity Fair. In June 2000, Lotus FM was part of

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<sup>3</sup> The term 'Bhangra' has already been defined in Chapter 2, on page 33. It can be defined as music with powerful drumming and rhythm emanating from North India and serving as the epitome of popular dance.

the Royal Agricultural Show in Pietermaritzburg, at which it attracted a crowd of around 25 000 to 30 000 to attend the function (Appendix A2). The youth programme, *Spice-a-Delic*, hosted a live broadcast from the venue and on the last day of the event, Lotus FM staged a Bhangra. In addition, at least twice in a year Lotus FM stages a Bhangra in Gauteng. In July 2000, the Bhangra team drove from Durban to Lenasia for the Johannesburg Institute of Social Services (JISS) Red Nose Carnival. Subsequently in October 2000, the Lotus FM Bhangra team went up to Gauteng to stage a 'Mega Bhangra' bash at Carnival City. The Carnival City Bhangra was held indoors and in a venue that could cater for about 5 000 people, Lotus FM managed to pull a crowd of about 4 500 (Appendix A2). Also in October 2000, to help celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Victoria Street Market in Durban, Lotus FM held an Outside Broadcast with two of the Lotus FM presenters broadcasting live from the venue and interacting with the crowd by way of competitions. A number of gifts sponsored by the owners of shops in the Victoria Street Market premises were given out to the winners. That same evening, Lotus FM staged another 'Mega Bhangra' at the MTN Durban Diwali Festival, where thousands of people danced till late night to the beat of the up-tempo Indian Bhangra music. The Lotus FM team has also staged live road shows with the Lotto team. Besides being lucrative activities, as large numbers of people show up to meet with the Lotus FM presenters, these events are also aimed at providing entertainment to the community and as part of the visibility drive, these activities market Lotus FM to commercial and community organizations.

Media sponsorship serves as another channel of revenue for Lotus FM, where it gets involved in concerts featuring personalities from the Indian film and music industry. Most of the music played on Lotus FM and other Indian radio stations, is from the Indian movies that make up Bollywood, the Hindi film industry. The songs featuring on the soundtrack of these movies are sung by artistes from the music industry, who are termed as playback singers. A concert featuring Indian film stars and singers usually attracts a full-capacity crowd as the South African Indians look forward to seeing these stars at close quarters. Lotus FM, as the media sponsor, advertises at least two weeks in advance for the shows and also gives out free tickets on its popular programmes such as the

morning breakfast (*Kickdown*) and afternoon drive (*Overdrive*) shows. Some of the mega shows that Lotus FM has been involved in include the *Awesome Foursome* concert, held in April 1999, in which four of the top stars of the Bollywood film industry performed in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town. The Indian musical concerts that Lotus FM got involved in, in the year 2000, were the Udit Narayan Show in January 2000, the Abhijeet Concert, the Unnimenon and Harini concert in August 2000 and the Sonu Nigam Nite in September 2000. All the stars in these concerts were singers from the Indian film industry. The last musical concert in which Lotus FM was a media sponsor, was the Kumar Sanu Nite, held in January 2001. These concerts are usually sold-out events and hence are another way by which Lotus FM earns income.

Lotus FM does not consider itself to be in the radio business, but rather in the entertainment industry. The Station Manager of Lotus FM states that just by way of events, Lotus FM earned around R300 000 – R400 000 between March/April 2000 and September/October 2000 (Appendix A1). Lotus FM also recently launched a book based on its popular Saturday morning breakfast show, *The Weekend Lift-Off*. The sales of the book are also expected to bring in revenue to the station. The book, *The Best of the Weekend Lift-Off*, is soon to be followed by a CD with the best jokes, one-liners and other features from the show (Appendix A1). Thus, second to advertising, 'eventing' serves as a major source of income for Lotus FM

As the Station Manager has stressed, advertising is Lotus FM's core income (Appendix A1). Eventing and sponsorships may bring in revenue but advertising serves as Lotus FM's major source of income. Advertising is a paid form of mass communication and the advertising strategy or rates of any organization are privileged information not meant for public disclosure. Advertising on Lotus FM falls under the domain of Radio Active, a service section of the SABC, entrusted with the responsibility of securing advertisers for the radio stations. It is a centralized department with the head office being in Auckland Park, Johannesburg. While the advertising policy of Lotus FM cannot be disclosed due to its strategic significance, it would be imperative, though, to discuss the types of advertisement audible on Lotus FM. Adverts can be heard for the better part of the day



and hardly feature on the late night programmes, which is quite understandable since the majority of the people are sleeping at that time. At the time of the provincial municipal elections of December 5, 2000, one could hear adverts of the Minority Front (MF), the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). Besides the SABC Corporate Marketing ads, some of the regular organizations and businesses who regularly advertise on Lotus FM are *Jet Stores*, *Sunday Times*, *Pick & Pay*, *Shoprite Checkers* and *Edgars*. The University of Natal advert has also featured a few times on the morning breakfast show, *Kickdown*. The youth programme, *Spice-a-Delic*, often featured ads of *Coca-Cola* and *McDonalds*, the fast food company. On a few occasions *Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC)* in conjunction with Lotus FM, has run competitions on *Spice-a-Delic*. With the matriculants having finished writing their exams by December 2000, one could also regularly hear the advertisement of *UNISA* being played on Lotus FM, especially during the youth programme (*Spice-a-Delic*). The *Lotto* is another ad that is heard quite often, especially on a Friday and Saturday.

In addition to advertisements and events, sponsorships also serve as a form of revenue for Lotus FM. Roopanands, the family-run business that “brings India to you”, sponsors the North Indian and South Indian top fifteen songs countdown shows. The company is involved in a trade exchange with the station according to the terms of which they sponsor the gifts (a compact disc and video) on the countdown shows and the two programmes start with the opening billboard and end with the closing billboard. For example, at 13h30 on a Sunday afternoon, the presenter of *Hits of the North* will be heard saying, “*Hits of the North* is brought to you with the compliments of Roopanands”, after which one will hear the Roopanands advert. At 15h00, as the show is an hour and a half long, the presenter announces, “*Hits of the North* was brought to you with the compliments of Roopanands”. The same opening and closing billboards can be heard on the South Indian top fifteen-countdown show, *Hits of the South*. Many a times the news bulletins have been sponsored by *Kay Makan Electronics*, *Trelidor Patented Locks* and even *The Kitchen Studio*. *Spice-a-Delic* hosts a sponsored feature called Future Focus once or twice a week. It is a ten-minute feature paid for by a tertiary institute. On November 29, 2000, Future Focus featured two faculty members of the University of

Durban-Westville, speaking about the different subjects being offered by the Engineering Department at UDW and the procedure for getting admission in the course. On November 30, 2000, Future Focus featured the School Liaison Officer of M.L. Sultan Technikon, talking about the various courses that high school graduates can enrol for at M. L. Sultan Technikon. Another sponsored feature is the *People's Bank* one that commenced from November 2000 and can be heard on weekday afternoons at 17h30 on *Overdrive*. This is a feature wherein two members of the *People's Bank* talk about the different aspects of banking and the types of accounts and their benefits that one can obtain at *People's Bank*.

The Station Manager of Lotus FM holds the view that at present none of the programmes aired on Lotus FM is commercially driven (Appendix A1). He is of the belief that possibly the late night programme (*Nightshift*) is potentially music driven, i.e. commercially driven (Appendix A1). The author, who herself presents the *Nightshift* on a Monday morning from 02h00 to 06h00, does believe that the programme is potentially commercially driven as it involves minimal talk. The other presenters of the *Nightshift* do have lectures on their shows, but it is predominantly music driven. However, the author, after having been in the radio broadcasting industry for almost two years, is of the opinion that *The Zone* is a highly commercially driven programme. *The Zone* is the party up-tempo musical programme that features on Saturday nights from 20h00 to midnight. *The Zone* is a basically music driven show in which the DJ behind the studio desk just plays one track after another and usually talks at an interval of four to five songs. The DJ does also allow listeners to send their messages live on the airwaves. The ratio of the music played on *The Zone* is 4 North Indian (Hindi) songs to 1 South Indian (Tamil) song. The author finds it important here to advocate that there is a greater demand for North Indian music over the South Indian one. The Station Manager has also mentioned in the interview that research has indicated that a 1:1 balance between North Indian and South Indian songs is not an accurate reflection of what the audience really wants to hear (Appendix A1). If one were to carefully monitor the listeners' choice of music programme, *It's Your Call* on weekdays and Saturdays, the way the author did, one would observe a maximum of one or two South Indian songs being played in one hour.

About 90-95% of the music played on the programme is songs from Hindi films. That could also be a possible explanation of the reason behind the Station Manager, upon joining Lotus FM and bringing about changes in the programming schedule, deciding to maintain a 2:1 balance of Hindi to Tamil songs in some of the popular programmes such as the weekday morning breakfast show (*Kickdown*), the youth programme (*Spice-a-Delic*), the afternoon drive show (*Overdrive*), the men's magazine programme (*E-Male*) as well as the Saturday morning breakfast show (*The Weekend Hit-Off*). The author is of the view that these programmes may not be music driven, as they involve a lot of talk, but are commercially driven on a music ratio basis. If the audience wants to hear more North Indian than South Indian music, and if Lotus FM satisfies that need in some of its programmes, then it is therefore gaining more audience and hence creating a market for the advertisers. Commercial radio is concerned with making profits and an organization will invest money where the audience that can purchase or consume the product, is the maximum.

Thus, having discussed the potentially music driven shows, the different types of adverts played on Lotus FM and eventing and sponsorships as a secondary source of income, one can conclude that Lotus FM is commercially driven to quite an extent, with advertising, as per the Station Manager, serving as its one major source of income. In terms of audience demographics, whether Lotus FM is providing a profitable market for the advertisers, is an aspect that's going to be discussed in the next chapter, Chapter Five, in which we analyse the feasibility and the manner in which Lotus FM, by way of its identity, is reflecting all three forms of broadcasting in its programmes.

## Chapter 5 – MULTIFACETED BROADCASTING: BALANCING THREE ACTS

### IN ONE

*The Station was partially a public broadcaster when I took over and partially a commercial station and partially a community station. It was all three things at one time within the broad portfolio of the SABC.*

Dr Naresh D. Veeran  
Station Manager, Lotus FM

In the previous chapters we analysed Lotus FM's conformance to the requirements of each of the three forms of radio broadcasting, i.e. public service broadcasting, community broadcasting and commercial radio. This chapter provides an overview of the feasibility with which Lotus FM is balancing all three forms of broadcasting and reflecting it in its programming in terms of the diversity and demographics of its audience, the South African of Indian descent; a minority community in South Africa, accounting for just 2.6% of the population. In numerical terms, of the approximately 40.6 million population of South Africa, about one million of it is the Indian South Africans component (South Africa Survey, 1999/2000: 7).

At its inception seventeen years ago in 1983, Lotus FM (then Radio Lotus) had, through consultations with the members of the Indian community, identified Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati, Telegu and Urdu as the five basic language groups of that cultural community and had programmed its music around those five languages with the broadcast medium of English being seen as a unifying factor for all these different cultural and linguistic groups (Appendix B). Even today, Lotus FM centres its programmes around the diversity of its audience, the only difference from 1983 being that in its present programmes Lotus FM has to provide for different types of programming in order to defend its stance as a public service broadcaster. While a few years back Lotus FM was mainly music driven, since 1995 its programming strategy has changed to incorporate aspects such as current affairs, religion, news, sports and men and women's magazine programmes (Appendix A3). At the same time, Lotus FM has a responsibility to make a profit in its operations while attempting to meet the needs of its culturally diverse audience (Appendix A1). It is thus significant, from a radio programming and

broadcasting perspective, to examine the feasibility of indulging in this form of multifaceted broadcasting, while aiming not only to survive but flourish and grow in a highly competitive market, characterized by other community and commercial radio stations.

“A radio station’s programmes and schedule are a reflection of its knowledge of the audience its catering for and their needs” (Jackson & Charley, 1997: 147). The more a station knows and understands its audience, the better will be its ability to target them at different times of the day and consequently provide advertisers with the markets they need or can create (Jackson & Charley, 1997: 147). Here we analyse the different programmes in accordance with the type of listeners that are being targeted via the programmes. Due to policy matters, confidentiality and its strategic nature, the author could not obtain the individual RAMS figures for each of the programmes, so as to facilitate analysis. However, by way of experience and observation, the author has attempted to critically analyse the target listenership of the different programmes.

We begin with the weekday and weekend early morning light music programme, the *Nightshift*, which is presented by a different announcer on each day of the week. At that time of the morning, i.e. between the hours of 02h00 to 06h00, the people who are awake are mostly those who are trucking on the roads or those working the nightshift. At times, there are some students who are busy studying for exams, but that is not often the case. Many of the late-night announcers have a fan following and these listeners make the effort of staying up in the early hours of the morning to listen to their favourite personality present the *Nightshift*. This is also because most of the presenters on Lotus FM who present the *Nightshift*, cannot be heard regularly during the day time. The author who herself presents the *Nightshift* on a Monday morning, can vouch for that from her own experience. It has already been stated that the announcers on Lotus FM are performing a dual job as producers-cum-announcers. The presenters of the *Nightshift* too, have incorporated their own features allowing for interaction between the listeners and them. One of the interactive features presented on a *Nightshift* during the week is ‘identifying the mystery object’, where the announcer describes an object and the

listeners are to call through and guess the object being described. The first correct listener gets a song of his/her choice played for him/her. Some of the other interactive features hosted on the *Nightshift* include the request line, where the announcer plays the listeners choice of music, entertaining calls from truck drivers on the road at that time and a feature called 'what's on your mind' where listeners call in and tell the presenter what thought is occupying their mind at that moment. Some of the presenters also allow for 'morning messages' (dedications) by which listeners can call in and wish their friends, family or relatives on any auspicious occasion being celebrated by them on that day. Thus, the individual announcers try to obtain maximum listener involvement, which is one way by which he/she knows that there are people tuned in to his/her show in those early hours of the morning. However, one must also bear in mind that for every one listener that calls in, there are hundreds and thousands of others who don't do so, but rather just enjoy the music and presentation of the programme.

Thus, the author, after careful observation of the *Nightshift*, is of the opinion that this programme is catering for those trucking on the roads, and basically any one above the age of 35 to 40 years. This assumption is not only based on the author's observation of the type of people calling in on her show, but also on the basic reasoning that most of the income earners, about 45% of which fall in the age group of 15-39 years (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>) are sleeping in those early hours of the morning. *Inspirations*, the weekday and weekend morning religious programme, featuring after the *Nightshift*, is one that, in the author's opinion, targets the middle-aged and elderly housewives who are the ones observing early morning prayers on a daily basis.

The weekday morning breakfast cum drive show, *Kickdown*, which is aired from 07h00 to 09h00, can also be classified as being of general appeal as it is aired at a time when most of the people are either getting ready to go to work or are driving on the roads. "The breakfast and drive-time programmes are likely to be heard by many people over a relatively short time-span, perhaps 20-30 minutes" (McLeish, 1994: 160). The programme targets the people who are headed off to work as it features the weather report and regular traffic updates. *Kickdown* hosts a number of features such as morning

messages, identification of the 'tangled tune' and also features competitions, giving away tickets for concerts, plays, or even Lotus FM Bhangras. Most of the people who call in on that show during competitions are either driving on the road or at home getting ready for the day. Thus, there is no age restriction on the listenership of *Kickdown* as it does not marginalize anyone from tuning in.

*It's Your Call* is the listeners request programme that targets anyone and everyone who is tuned into Lotus FM between the hours of 10h00 to 13h00. McLeish (1994: 161) states the aims of a request programme as:

- 1) To entertain the general audience
- 2) To give special pleasure to those who have taken the trouble to send a request
- 3) To foster goodwill by public involvement

It is those who call through on the Lotus FM general number that get to listen to the song of their choice. An hour can incorporate a maximum of 8-9 songs. As has already been established, about 76% of the South African Indians reside in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, with approximately 15% and 4% in Gauteng and Western Cape, respectively (South Africa Survey, 1999/2000: 7). Thus, the probability of a listener from KwaZulu-Natal calling through is greater than that of someone trying to get through from Gauteng or Cape Town. In order to allow maximum number of people a chance of listening to their favourite song, Lotus FM's *It's Your Call* incorporates the following:

- 1) No individual may call more than once in a week requesting for his/her choice of song to be played
- 2) Only individuals residing in Gauteng and Cape Town may call through between the hours of 11h00 and 12h00.

"The declared intention of the programme is to play records and it is therefore music rather than speech which remains the central ingredient" (McLeish, 1994: 161). The only part where the presenter speaks on *It's Your Call* is when he/she introduces the song and mentions the name of the person who requested for it. Also, at 10h30 and 12h30 on *It's Your Call*, the presenter reads out the events happening in the community from the

'community news diary'. The Community News feature runs for a maximum of five minutes. Thus, *It's Your Call* aims at targeting everyone but most of the people who call through on the programme, are those who are at home and at times some working men and women. *Lifestyle* is the women's magazine programme aired on Lotus FM. "A magazine is usually designed with a specific audience in mind and tightly structured with the emphasis on content" (McLeish, 1994: 169). *Lifestyle* features different items of women's interest, such as health and beauty tips, gardening, pet care, house furnishing and décor and cuisine. Aired from 09h00 to 10h00, it is a programme that targets the housewives and household conscious people. It features songs too, but is predominantly a talk show format in which the women call in and seek advice or help on women's issues. *E-Male*, on the other hand, is the men's magazine programme targeting basically the 25-40 age category, as the content of the show includes discussions on the latest in cars, fashion, sports, etc. *E-Male* also features discussion on events taking place in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Cape Town. The music balance in *E-Male* is 2 Hindi to 1 Tamil and features the latest songs from the Indian subcontinent.

*Spice-a-Delic* is the weekday afternoon youth programme aimed basically at capturing the youth market, i.e. the school going and university going generation. This is one of the reasons why the programme features basically remixes and up-tempo music. The features are also youth-oriented, such as 'Catwalk,' which is the teen fashion feature. Other features include 'Teen Beauty Scene' and discussions on topics concerning the youth in 'Teen Talk'. Dedications are also featured twice weekly. While *Spice-a-Delic* is a programme which is aimed at the youth market, it is very much music driven, thus attracting other listeners as well. It is a show that is ideally catering for the age group of 16-24 years, but, in the opinion of the presenters, targets all people from children to the 60 or 70 year olds (Appendix A8).

*Overdrive* is the afternoon, 16h00 to 18h00, drive show on Lotus FM. Once again, this programme is catering for anyone who enjoys music, but especially those who are driving, returning to their home from work. As compared to the 20-30 minute time-span heard by listeners in the morning drive show, "the afternoon output will probably be



heard in longer durations” (McLeish, 1994: 160). *Overdrive* not only features the latest tunes, but also features traffic news after every twenty minutes, a preview of the content of the 17h00 news bulletin and 18h00 *Newsbreak*, as well as a listener involvement featured called ‘Where in the world is Wayne’. Horseracing news also features on a daily basis on the *Overdrive* at 17h45. Thus, it is another programme that is of general taste and appeal. In the author’s view, it doesn’t target any specific cultural or linguistic group or any specific age group.

The weeknight dedication programme, *Curtain Call*, is a programme of general taste and appeal featuring music, dedications, as well as brainteasers. While it allows for the community to call in and send messages on the airwaves, at times these dedications are the cause of listeners switching over to other radio stations, due to the fact that the dedications become boring as some callers have such long messages causing loss of interest. However, dedications allow for listeners to send messages to each other, thus overcoming the time and distance barrier. *Curtain Call* runs from 22h00 to 02h00 and with dedications, adverts, station jingles plus the DJs talk, it allows for, on an average, only five to seven songs being played in an hour. Due to the fact that it features late at night, one doesn’t usually hear as many callers in comparison to the Sunday afternoon dedication programme, *Magic P.M.* that features between the hours of 17h00 and 19h00. The *Magic P.M.* is a listener dedication programme and features live on-air messages with music breaks. Once again, this programme targets everyone who enjoys music but who basically would like to send messages to family and friends, separated by distance.

Between 18h30 to 20h30 on weekdays, Lotus FM showcases cultural programmes for the five different linguistic groups. These programmes are not for the general audience, but cater for the minority language groups. As a result, a cultural programme in any one linguistic group tends to sideline the general populace from tuning in due to its inability to comprehend the songs or the spoken word. The presenter of the Telegu cultural programme is of the view that *Sungeetha Nilayamu* caters for the over 35 age group Telegu community, which is probably one of the smallest Indian communities in South Africa (Appendix A4). Similarly, the presenter of *Guldasta*, the Urdu cultural

programme, believes that his listeners are anyone above the age of 25 years, who enjoy that kind of music. Thus, these cultural programmes are for the specific language groups and serve as a switch-off factor for the general populace. At the same time, the religious programmes of *Bhakti Sangeeth*, *Gospel Hour* and *Deenyaat* cater to a small minority of listeners who enjoy listening to devotional music. These three programmes also eliminate the general populace from tuning in. *Shruti Liya* and *Qawwali Hour* on Sunday evenings are also culture specific programmes. *Shruti Liya*, featured on Sunday evenings from 21h00 to 22h00, is a programme that showcases classical music, a type of Indian music that is not enjoyed by all. It is basically for an elderly market. *Qawwali Hour* is a programme that features 'qawwali', a beaty spiritual hymn in which the listeners go into a trance (Appendix A7). A 'qawwali' is also defined as the Islamic equivalent of Hindi devotional singing (Meer, 1969: 223). Once again, it is the kind of programme that can be enjoyed by people who have a liking for qawwali music.

The Saturday and Sunday morning breakfast shows, *The Weekend Lift-Off* and *Breakfast in Bed*, respectively, are also programmes catering to a wider audience. *The Weekend Lift-Off*, which can be heard on Saturdays from 06h00 to 10h00, features a lot of adult humour and general knowledge questions, while also featuring popular film songs. It is more talk driven than music driven. The same applies to the Sunday morning *Breakfast in Bed*. Both these shows, though of universal taste and appeal, seem to target the mature audience due to the nature of the humour on these shows.

*Kodambalikam Beat* and *Bollywood Beat* are the movie review programmes featured on Sunday mornings. These programmes appeal to audiences who enjoy being updated about the latest movies on the circuit, as well as gossip and news from the Indian film industry. It has already been mentioned that there is a great demand for Indian movies within the South African Indian community. These two programmes feature reviews of the latest movies on the circuit while also showcasing their songs. *Hits of the South* and *Hits of the North* are probably the two most popular music driven shows as they feature the top fifteen South Indian and North Indian songs, respectively. *Hits of the South* is featured on Sundays between noon and 13h30, thereafter followed by *Hits of the North*

till 15h00. It has already been established that on a regular music programme the balance of music played is 1 Hindi to 1 Tamil. The countdown programme allows for the listeners of the separate linguistic groups to enjoy their latest hits for a whole hour and a half. However, considering the fact that the timing of the programme is one when most of the people would not be at home but out either shopping, driving or on the beach, it is assumed that not as many people as there should be tune in to the show.

*Pages from my Diary*, a local programme that profiles a local personality, is aired on Saturday afternoons from 16h00 to 17h00. The hour-long programme may feature a couple of songs in the programme, but doesn't usually do so. In as much as this programme might be of interest to that portion of the community which takes interest in its members, it is not something that would appeal to everyone, but rather to a very small minority. *Pages from my Diary* is important from the aspect of recognizing established members of the community for their contribution to the Indian community. Continuing with Lotus FM's commitment to a sense of national identity and its responsibility to the community, *Culture Club* is a programme that showcases local South African Indian talent. This is one programme that would be listened to by quite a big proportion of the community for the simple reason that it is not only a music driven programme but also has that touch of 'Indianness' that the South African Indian can associate him/herself with. It has been established in Chapter Three on community broadcasting that the quality of local songs is inferior compared to the popularly accepted and widely listened to music emanating from the Indian subcontinent. The author would ideally classify this programme as catering to the above 30 age group, but certainly not to the younger generation.

*Tamasha*, a non-stop 'chutney' and 'nagara'<sup>6</sup> music programme, caters for a highly niche community that enjoys this particular kind of music. Once again, this programme does not appeal to everyone, but to a certain section of the Indian community (Appendix A5). It is culturally a very rich programme featuring 50% local and 50% international artistes,

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<sup>6</sup> The term 'chutney' is of Indian origin denoting a sauce made by blending together different herbs and ingredients, such as mint and coriander leaves. Chutney music is a South African Indian localized word for music that features a variety of instruments and the language of which is not pure Hindi.

with the lyrics of the songs being penned on real-life happenings and family conflicts (Appendix A5). The language, though about 90% is Hindi, is not that simple to comprehend as it is mixed with Bhojpuri, a dialect from the state of Bihar in India. Since the Indian community in South Africa is not able to speak or understand Hindi properly, the chances are that the listenership for *Tamasha* is, once again, a small minority of the people who understand the message being conveyed through the song and who enjoy the music. With Indian film songs being the most popular of its kind in the country, *Tamasha* can be classified as targeting a niche section of the South African Indian society.

*Reflections* showcases songs from the 1950s' up to the 1980s' and, thus, basically caters to the market of anyone above the age of thirty-five years. Old songs are not usually heard during the course of the week and even if they do feature, it's in the remixed format. On the *It's Your Call* listeners choice of music programme, one would observe that it is usually the Cape Town and Gauteng listeners that request for the golden oldies. With the demand for film songs, Bhangra, remixes and pop numbers being the greatest, one doesn't usually hear the melodious songs of the previous decades. With a view to rectify this imbalance and give the old music its due share and meet the needs of that segment of the Indian community which enjoys old songs, Lotus FM features the programme *Reflections* on Sunday nights from 22h00 to 02h00 the next morning. There is a small feature on *Reflections* where the listener of that night gets his/her choice of old songs played for him/her. To ensure that the listener's choice of old songs are available in the studio, the presenter asks the listener to write to him a week prior to that Sunday. Thus, *Reflections* targets principally the elder market, one that the author regards as anyone above the age of thirty-five years.

While *Reflections* on a Sunday night satisfies the musical needs of the older market, *The Zone* on a Saturday night caters to the young market, from the age of six to about twenty-five to thirty-five years, for the simple reason that it is an up-tempo music show. Saturday nights are when the youngsters usually frequent night clubs and Lotus FM offers that market and anyone else on a Saturday night having a braai or a party at home,

the opportunity of loud up-beat music to complement the environment they are in. *The Zone* features not only Bhangra, remixes and pop, but golden oldies (remixed) and 'chutney' as well. Thus, it caters to the musical taste of everyone, but principally of those who are out on the beach, having a party at home or driving on the roads and enjoying the up-tempo party music. In between the music, the presenter also allows for the wider community to send messages to family, friends and loved ones. Overall, it is a music driven programme catering to the needs of all but specifically targeting the younger generation.

*Newsbreak*, the weekday morning current affairs programme, is one that is of general interest and caters for all listeners as it keeps the community abreast of events of regional, national and international significance. This is probably the only programme with the maximum listenership, as the cornerstone of democracy lies in access to relevant, true, accurate and timely information. Also, many people in the morning rush do not get time to read the newspaper, but do catch up with the latest news and events via the current affairs programme. In the author's opinion, the age bracket of the listenership of this programme would be anyone from the age of sixteen and above, as it is hosted at a time when students are likely to be getting ready for school or university, housewives would be busy preparing the morning breakfast and the income earners would be getting ready to go to work. To avoid monotony, *Newsbreak* on Lotus FM also features two or three songs in the course of the hour-long programme. The evening current affairs *Newsbreak* is once again a programme of general interest catering to all listeners interested in keeping au fait with the events of the day and their significance in the listeners daily lives. The evening *Newsbreak*, from 18h00 to 18h30, features a song or two as well, but concentrates on the events that have taken place during the day. It also has an interactive feature called 'Evening Enigma' in which the listener is to identify the mystery voice featured on the show.

The talk show *Viewpoint* basically caters for an older market. This is by way of the fact that it is aired at a time when most of the working executives are at lunch or on the roads, i.e. from 13h00 to 14h00. The topics discussed on *Viewpoint* are of an adult and mature

nature, soliciting the views and opinions of grown ups and experienced people, sidelining the school children and college youth. It is a one-hour topical talk show in which one often hears listeners heating up under the collars on the issue under discussion. Since it features no music but just talk and the normal adverts, it acts as a 'switch-off' factor for those who are interested in listening to music during their lunch break. As already mentioned in the previous chapters, the topics discussed on *Viewpoint* are those of cultural, regional and national significance. For example, on December 4, 2000, *Viewpoint* initiated discussion on whether the Indian community was apathetic to vote in the December 5, 2000 municipal elections. Most of the people who called in were adults and the middle-aged ones. Thus, *Viewpoint*, while targeting a mature audience on issues concerning them, tends to lose audience interested in music, who then switch over to other stations catering to their needs.

*Online* is a help-line listener phone-in talk show format with a specialist in the studio to answer listener queries on different aspects of the topic under discussion. It is a programme that is targeted towards an adult audience and is definitely not for children (Appendix A6). *Online* hosts different topics for discussion in the field of law, medicine, psychology, politics, etc. and is an hour and a half long, featuring from 20h30 to 22h00 on weeknights. Listener phone-in and participation is subject to the topic under discussion and while at times there aren't too many callers, making it difficult for the presenter to sustain talk for the duration of the programme, at other times the show is inundated with so many calls that one and a half hour seems too short for discussion (Appendix A6).

Having described and analysed the different programmes aired on Lotus FM, the author concludes that Lotus FM is catering well to the needs of every segment of its culturally rich community, the South Africans of Indian descent. Not only do the programmes and their content target every segment of the community but, even the presenters compliment the programme and its aim. So, where on the one hand you have young voices presenting the weekday morning and afternoon drive shows (*Kickdown* and *Overdrive*), the youth programme (*Spice-a-Delic*), the up-tempo party music *Zone* and the countdown shows

*(Hits of the North and Hits of the South)*, on the other hand one will find mature people presenting the women's magazine programme, all the cultural and religious programmes, *Pages from My Diary* and the old music programme (*Reflections*).

As a public broadcasting service with community responsibility, Lotus FM has been, for the past seventeen years, serving its community effectively not just by way of its programming, but by being actively involved in the upliftment of its community. The station has streamlined its welfare assistance programme in such a way so as to assist a different welfare organization every year (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). In 1996, Lotus FM assisted the Natal Blind and Deaf Society in raising over half a million rand through the Society's Annual Trustee's Banquet and its three day Carnival on the Durban beachfront (*ibid*). In 1997, Lotus FM assisted the Umzinto Child and Family Welfare Society by augmenting the number of people who attended its Charity Fair and in that same year, Lotus FM assisted the Community Chest in the Western Cape by way of a fund-raising awareness campaign (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). In March 2000, Lotus FM assisted the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) in raising funds by way of pledge money. Different Lotus FM presenters, including the author herself, took part in the 'Jail & Bail' activity for the CANSA. Lotus FM has also staged outside broadcasts for welfare and cultural organizations such as the Aryan Benevolent Home (ABH) (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>).

In addition, when overseas artistes from India tour South Africa, Lotus FM, as a service to its listeners, undertakes joint ventures with the promoters of these shows, to take the artistes to the people. In the early 1990s, when Indian mega-star Amitabh Bacchan had toured the country, Lotus FM (then Radio Lotus) arranged for the Indian community to see their idol, by taking him to a major shopping centre in Chatsworth, resulting in more than 80 000 people flocking there to see him (<http://www.sabc.co.za>). In April 1999, prior to the 'Awesome Foursome' concert, Lotus FM arranged for teenage heartthrob and the top star of the Indian film industry, Shah Rukh Khan, to be flown by helicopter along with accompanying Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar, to the Chatsworth Centre where once again thousands of people, mostly young girls, ladies and married women, rushed to

see their favourite hero. In September 2000, when the young and handsome teenage sensation singer, Sonu Nigam, came to South Africa for his concerts, Lotus FM held three interviews with him, providing listeners with the opportunity of calling in to the Lotus FM studio lines and speaking to their favourite singing sensation.

After the Gujarat catastrophe of 26 January, 2001, in which more than 13 000 people lost their lives as a result of the devastating earthquake to hit the state of West India, Lotus FM not only gave extensive coverage to the story on its hourly news bulletins and current affairs programme (*Newsbreak*), but also allowed various organizations the use of its airwaves to advertise for donations in aid of the 'India Earthquake Relief Fund'. In addition, Lotus FM in conjunction with the South African Hindu Maha Sabha, also held an Inter-Faith Prayer Service for the victims of the Gujarat tragedy. Similarly, after the Throb Nite Club (Chatsworth) tragedy of March 24, 2000, in which thirteen innocent children lost their lives as a result of a stampede in the club, Lotus FM assisted in raising funds by way of pledge money, towards the Chatsworth Community Distress Center. Thus, Lotus FM has been involved in the upliftment of the community by way of fund-raising projects and awareness campaigns and has also been a facilitator in the community coming face to face with their favourite actors, actresses and singers from the Indian sub-continent.

Having analysed the various programmes and their content aired on Lotus FM, the researcher draws the conclusion that Lotus FM is serving well its community not only in terms of providing different genres of programmes, but by also becoming actively involved in its community. The programmes cater to the diversity of its audience in terms of cultural, religious and demographic aspects. In serving different members of its community, Lotus FM is compromising on its listenership in programmes that marginalize the general community from tuning in. Lotus FM has also served its community by bringing them closer to the world of Bollywood movies and stars. By acting as media sponsors for concerts involving Indian film stars and singers, Lotus FM not only sustains itself financially, but also serves its community by giving it a chance to win tickets for the concerts. Further, by conducting live interviews with the stars, with



the aim of allowing the listener to have a telephonic conversation with his/her favourite celebrity from the Indian subcontinent, Lotus FM bridges the gap between the listeners and these Bollywood personalities separated by barriers of time and distance. While providing for its culturally diverse audience by way of its programmes, Lotus FM is simultaneously sustaining itself financially by relying on advertising as its main source of income. Events and sponsorships also serve as income providers for Lotus FM.

The author therefore concludes that Lotus FM has comfortably functioned in its capacity as a public service broadcaster with community responsibility, while being commercially driven. It has satisfactorily conformed to the mandates of a public broadcasting institution and community radio, while relying on advertising as its primary source of income. This it has managed to do without sidelining any sector of its community. However, it does raise the question here as to how healthy it is to function in such a manner and for how long Lotus FM can not only survive but also grow in a competitive market characterized by other community and commercial stations targeting the same community, i.e. the South Africans of Indian descent. In the next section, the author analyses not only the feasibility, but the practicality of Lotus FM continuing in its current format of a multifaceted broadcaster

Chapter 6 – FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD FOR

LOTUS FM

*But I think we, as management, would like the station to run on a commercial basis, simply because it becomes much more competitive with other stations out there, other commercial stations out there that are actually stealing some of our listeners.*

Tansen Nepaul  
Programmes Executive  
Lotus FM

In a world of cut-throat competition where “a radio station in South Africa sees every medium as competition” in terms of adshare, be it television, print media or cinema (*Professional Management Review Africa*, Oct 2000: 67), is it practical, in terms of long-term growth and survival, to function as a broadcaster with elements of public service broadcasting, community radio and commercialism? The answer, in context to Lotus FM, is in the negative for the simple reason that in accordance with Darwin’s theory, it is a world of the survival of the fittest. In response to that, the Station Manager of Lotus FM comments, “It cannot happen in a confined operational stance; it has to be within a very strategic direction (...) take the best of everything” (Appendix A1). One cannot survive without direction and focus for long, without compromising on audience figures, which in turn will impact on the financial stability of Lotus FM. In terms of radio broadcasting, the most fit is the one that has the biggest turnover, the greatest adshare, the biggest slice of the market share, further growth prospects and is popular. Lotus FM has none of these except, perhaps, popularity because it is the only national broadcaster catering to the Indian community in South Africa. To achieve all the other elements, it is vital that a radio station be focused and have a direction and vision that would be complemented by its strategy.

Even since its inception in 1983, and prior to the surge of other community radio stations, Lotus FM held a monopolistic position in the market for broadcasting catered towards the South African Indians. By way of its being the only station catering to their needs and tastes, Lotus FM can be said to have been commanding a stable and loyal listenership and may also be recognized as the best serving its community by providing a mix of

programmes designed to meet the needs of its linguistic and culturally rich community: the South Africans of Indian descent. In a country having a population of approximately 40.6 million, the Indian component is at a mere 2.6% of that, i.e. about one million. In November 1999, the listenership of Lotus FM, according to the Radio Audience Measurement Survey (RAMS)<sup>7</sup> of the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF), stood at 404 000 (*Post*, 10/11-13/11/99: 37). Due to the number being too small to count for a RAMS sample, the RAMS figures for Lotus FM do not take into account the 40 000 odd Indians residing in the Western Cape (Appendix A1). Roughly, one can say that Lotus FM has a total listenership of just over half a million, including those who tune into Lotus FM via satellite (Appendix A1). However, in terms of actual statistics to take to the advertisers, Lotus FM has, according to the May/June 2000 RAMS survey, a total listenership of only 388 000, which is 16 000 less than the 404 000 figure reported in November 1999 (Appendix D; *Post*, 10/11-13/11/99: 37). Of the total listenership of 388 000 of Lotus FM, the Indian population is 372 000 (Appendix D). According to the latest figures released by the South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF), Lotus FM's listenership has increased by 80 000 (*Sunday Times*, 04/03/01: 1). The Manager of Lotus FM claims that currently the listenership of Lotus FM stands at 480 000 (*Tribune Herald*, 11/03/01: 1). (Also see Appendix D: SAARF RAMS figures). The direct implication of the above is that while a total of 952 102 people are 'prospective' listeners on the RAMS sample, approximately half of them are the actual loyal listeners. In the province of KwaZulu-Natal itself, which has the highest density of Indians, of a total of 790 813 Indians, Lotus FM holds just about half of that market. In terms of catering to an exclusively Indian population and designing programmes to meet their needs, the audience share of Lotus FM is too small to ensure its growth and survival in the future (Appendix D).

It is detrimental for the future of the station, and for the purpose of this research, to explore and analyse why the community is not tuning in to Lotus FM, resulting in its (Lotus FM) attracting less than half of the Indian population of South Africa. Why is it that the community for whom the station was created, is not listening to it? The answer

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<sup>7</sup> The purpose of the SAARF RAMS has already been defined in Chapter 2, on page 20.

perhaps lies in the demographics of Lotus FM's listenership and in the surge of other community and commercial radio stations that are targeting the same listenership. 59.3% of Lotus FM's listeners are female and 40.7% male, with most of them falling into the 25-49 and 50 and above age groups (<http://www.lotusfm.co.za>). Of late, there has been a steady increase in the 16-24 age group (*ibid*). We have observed in Chapter Five that most of the programmes on Lotus FM cater to an above 25 or 30 years market, thus marginalizing the future income earners from tuning in to Lotus FM. One can also deduce that keeping in mind that Lotus has been in existence for the past seventeen years and reigned in a monopolistic position till a few years back, its most stable market lies in the 50+ age group. The 16-24 year olds are obviously listening to some other station that is satisfying their taste and needs. In fact, even a large proportion of the 25-39 year olds can be classified as listening to some other radio station. In this case, it's East Coast Radio, the regional commercial broadcaster in KwaZulu-Natal. As per the past seven days listenership figures for the RAMS May/June 2000 diary, while Lotus FM had an Indian listenership of 372 000, East Coast Radio stood proudly at 328 000 Indian listeners (Appendix D). The biggest threat to Lotus FM is East Coast Radio, the commercial Western music-driven station that is slowly but surely capturing Lotus FM's audience (Appendix A1).

In addition to East Coast Radio, with the advent of community radio stations, listeners are now being offered with a choice between the metro-national Lotus FM and the community stations in their provinces catering to their specific needs. Radio Phoenix<sup>8</sup> was set up on 5 April, 1996 as a community radio station in KwaZulu-Natal, broadcasting within a 50km radius from its studio in Newlands (East) and covering areas from Stanger and Umkomaas to Phoenix, Chatsworth and Isipingo (Kaihar, 1999: 5-6). Radio Phoenix is a community broadcaster catering to the needs of the South African Indians (*ibid*). Radio Phoenix, like Lotus FM, provides a range of programmes for all segments of the Indian community in South Africa. Not only does Radio Phoenix have the normal

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<sup>8</sup> As of March 2, 2001, Radio Phoenix has been off air owing to a late application for a temporary license and also as a result of allegations of fraud and mismanagement within the station (*Post*, 28/02/01-03/03/01: 1). It is not clear at the present stage how long this break in transmission will be, or what impact it will have on the listenership figures of Lotus FM.

weekday morning and afternoon drive shows, the listener's request and dedication programmes while playing the latest film songs, it also features Western music at night and devotes one hour to Western music only on Saturday evenings. In addition, as part of its conformance to the IBA mandate, Radio Phoenix features three hours of local music on Saturdays and showcases an hour-long local music countdown show on Sunday afternoons after the North and South Indian countdown shows. The cultural programmes in each of the five languages are held weekly between the hour of 20h00 to 21h00. Radio Phoenix also features a woman's interest magazine programme and a business magazine programme. Radio Phoenix also caters for the youth by way of a teenage programme called *Teen Vibes* and *Planet Playtime* for the below 12 years of age children. *The Saturday Night Fever* is similar to Lotus FM's *The Zone*. Radio Phoenix also airs hour-long talk shows. Thus, we see that within its broadcast area, Radio Phoenix is catering for the same community that Lotus FM is targeting and is providing it with programmes similar to that on Lotus FM.

Similarly, in Johannesburg, East Wave Radio is the community broadcaster catering to the Indian community in **Lenasia and surrounding areas** within a radius of approximately 30kms (Appendix G). **East Wave Radio** features Hindi film songs, bhajans, ghazals, classical music, qawwalis and Tamil classical and film songs (ibid). It also hosts talk shows on medical, legal, financial and municipal services' issues and conducts interviews and talks with representatives of religious and cultural organizations (Appendix G). In the Western Cape province, we take *Voice of the Cape* and Radio 786 as two examples of community broadcasting services. "The Voice of the Cape is a Muslim radio station in Cape Town with an Islamic ethos, its overall aim being to broadcast to the broader South African community" (Appendix H). The Voice of the Cape's first broadcast featured in March 1995 and since 1<sup>st</sup> September 1995, it has been broadcasting on a daily basis in Boland, and on alternate days, in the Cape Metropolitan Area (Appendix H). The station's programme content varies from religious to current affairs, to light listening, and also features live interviews, actuality issue-driven programmes, phone-ins and regular news bulletins (Appendix H). Radio 786 was officially launched on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1995, at the Vygieskraal Sports Stadium in Western Cape (Appendix I). Radio 786

broadcasts over a 45km radius, covering the Cape Metropole, including the Southern and Northern Suburbs and also reaching Atlantis, Boland and the West Coast (Appendix 1). Radio 786 is primarily a talk show radio with less than 5% music being played in the programmes and it targets primarily the Muslim community, "which is estimated to be about 750 000 in the Western Cape" (Appendix 1). While the largest proportion of its audience lies in the 25-45 age group, with 26% in the age group of 16-24, its programmes are of such a nature that they cater to listeners of all denominations (Appendix 1). As the station's profile states, its programme content includes "news and current affairs, women's issues, arts and literature, weather, sport, education, health, youth, environmental issues, theology, music and programmes for the whole family" (Appendix 1).

Having discussed a few of the community stations in the broadcast area of Lotus FM and observed that these stations are serving the same community as that of Lotus FM, the author wishes to suggest the way forward for Lotus FM. Community stations are designed to meet the specific needs of the communities they serve. It would not be impertinent to mention here that the needs of the Indian community in KwaZulu-Natal may be different from the needs of the ones in Gauteng or Cape Town. Lotus FM has been trying to satisfy the needs of its community in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape. However, in the process of trying to be everything to the South African Indians, Lotus FM has been compromising on its audience and market share. The point of contention is that of parity, if a listener's needs are being satisfied by the community station in his/her area, there is no motivation for him/her to listen to the same thing being offered on another station. In this case, if Radio Phoenix in KwaZulu-Natal, East Wave Radio in Johannesburg and Radio 786 and Voice of the Cape in Western Cape are able to satisfy the needs of their community, then that relieves Lotus FM of providing the same service and gives it the opportunity to better serve its community by giving it something over and above that which the community radio stations are offering. The Manager of Lotus FM argues that as a result of these stations taking care of the community responsibility, Lotus FM now has the liberty to "pursue programming on Indian level in a much more focussed commercial line" (Appendix A1).

Looking at the trends in the listenership figures of Lotus FM, as compared to East Coast Radio, it is vital that Lotus FM focuses itself and become a music driven commercial station, with emphasis being on capturing the upcoming market. "Radio stations need to focus on a particular niche market with particular emphasis on the emerging market" (*The Future of Media*, Jan/Feb 2000: 31). In order to make itself financially viable, Lotus FM must have the listenership figures to take to the advertisers. Going by the RAMS figures, if an advertiser in KwaZulu-Natal had to adspend on targeting the Indian community it would rather allocate its advertising budget to East Coast Radio, through which it would reap the benefits of being heard by not just the Indian South Africans but the overall audience of the station. "It's no longer enough to simply look at audience figures" but the purchasing power of the audience also (*The Future of Media*, Jan/Feb 2000: 31). Lotus FM has a stable market in the '25-to-the-grave' age group (Appendix A2). However, what it needs to do is to capture the market wherein lies the real spending power and that is the 24-39 year olds.

According to the 1996 Census, 44.2% of the South African Indians fall in the 15-39 age group, with 27.4% in the 0-14 category and 23.8% in the 40-64 age group (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>). (see Table 6.1). Thus we see that more than 70% of the South African Indians fall in the 0-39 years age group and that is the market that Lotus FM should be capturing in order to ensure its future survival and growth. However, it is not a simple task for Lotus FM to attract that market in its current profile as a public service-cum-community broadcaster that is commercially driven. "One of the most difficult markets for advertisers to penetrate is the youth market" (Price, 1996: 347). With the Indian youth market of the day tuning into Western commercial stations and other community radio stations such as Radio Phoenix, which also play Western music, it would be difficult for Lotus FM to capture that market through its current strategy. Therefore, with a view to sustain itself financially in the future and compete on the basis of good programming, it is important that Lotus FM use its music in a commercial way to not only capture but retain the 24-39 age group.

Table 6.1

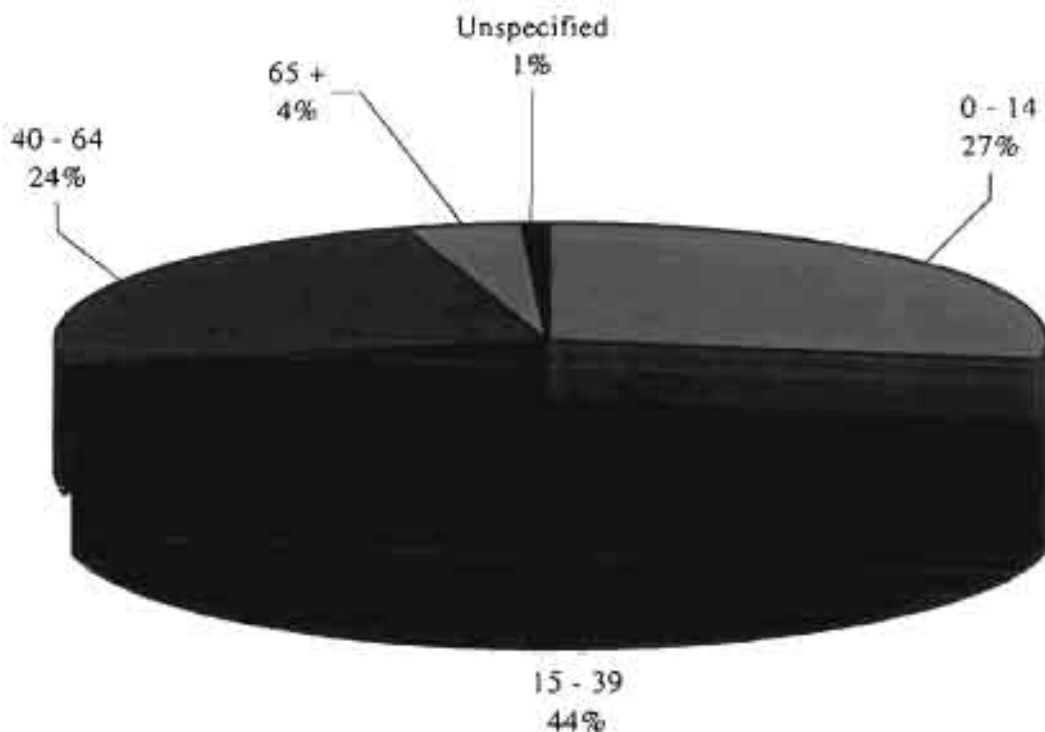
**PROPORTIONAL AGE PROFILE BY RACE: SOUTH AFRICA  
1996 CENSUS**

Age	African	Coloured	Indian/ Asian	White	Unspecified/ Other	South Africa
0 - 14	36.0%	33.0%	27.4%	21.1%	37.0%	33.9%
15 - 39	43.1%	44.2%	44.2%	39.0%	38.0%	42.7%
40 - 64	15.5%	18.4%	23.8%	28.2%	14.9%	17.4%
65 +	4.2%	3.6%	3.8%	10.3%	3.9%	4.8%
Unspecified	1.2%	0.8%	0.9%	1.5%	6.1%	1.2%
<b>Total*</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa (<http://www.statssa.gov.za>)

\* Figures may not add up owing to rounding off

**Chart 6.1 Proportional Age Profile of Indians in South Africa  
1996 Census\***





The various community radio stations are catering to the different needs of the Indian community. In addition to these existing community radio stations, the South African Indian will now have access to four more Indian radio stations and an Islamic one by way of satellite. The four radio stations that will now be available to the South African Indians by way of satellite are Sunshine Radio in London, Metro East FM in Nairobi, India 3 relaying directly from India and Radio Asia in Paris, a full-time Tamil station (*Post*, 15/11-18/11/00: 15). (see Appendix C) Till the mid-1990's, Lotus FM had a monopoly in terms of broadcasting to the Indian community. However, with the advent of community radio stations from 1995, the Indians were offered choices. Now, with the coming of these four channels via satellite, the South African Indian will have further choice.

Satellite television, in terms of the Indian channels B4U, Sony and Zee TV, also offers the South African Indians a choice between listening to the radio and watching Indian serials, soaps, song and movies. Further, with the Western influence manifesting itself into the lifestyle of the Eastern market and the youth tuning in to radio stations that offer Western music, such as East Coast Radio, 5FM and Metro FM, Lotus FM is now facing competition from not just the community radio stations but also these commercial stations that are stealing the Indian listeners. In order to ensure its survival and growth in the future, it is vital that Lotus FM focuses its strategy and its programming and become a full-spectrum Indian music driven commercial broadcaster. The station has already put forward its proposal to the SABC to become a commercial radio, as it now has to show a surplus in its operation. Lotus FM has to try and capture the Indian market by way of Indian music, which it considers to be its greatest strength, weakness, opportunity and threat (Appendix A1). If one were to see the Lotus FM ads, one would instantly observe the commercial element in it (Appendix J). These ads seem to be targeting the youth market.

The author, therefore, concludes that after having been the sole provider to the Indian community for more than fifteen years, and having sustained Indian culture during the apartheid regime, time has come for Lotus FM to focus its strategy in a commercial way

and use its music so as to develop the 'Indianness' within the younger generation which is being influenced by the Western element. One of the biggest strengths of Lotus FM is the abundance and archives of music it has, which is something that a community radio station like Radio Phoenix cannot boast of. Being a small community broadcaster, Radio Phoenix does not have a music library, but rather, most of the 'voluntary' presenters play their own music. Lotus FM, on the other hand, has a big library that stacks not only compact discs and cassettes, but also long playing vinyl records. Lotus FM can use this to its advantage by becoming a music driven station and giving listeners something over and above the service being provided by the community radio stations. These community radio stations are there to take care of the specific needs of the South African Indians. Lotus FM has to fight competition for audience share with Western commercial stations which are slowly drawing the Indians into their Western influence. This it can do only by adopting a music driven commercial profile of which the South African Indians can proudly boast of as the station being exclusively theirs and providing the best entertainment: Lotus FM.

## EPILOGUE

The aim of this research was to ascertain the feasibility of broadcasting in which one is not confined to any particular type of broadcasting, i.e. public service, commercial or even community, in the South African case. The researcher stated at the outset that Lotus FM is currently swaying in the winds of change as it has realized that one cannot function in a competitive market without being focussed towards a particular community or in a certain direction. This research thus begs the question of the possibility and advisability of strategizing one's programming in such a way as to incorporate elements of all three forms of broadcasting. The Manager of Lotus FM, Dr. Naresh D Veeran, took over his responsibilities in that capacity at a stage when Lotus FM was indulging in 'multifaceted broadcasting'. That Lotus FM needed to focus its overall strategy and direction was something that had dawned on the Manager from the day he assumed his responsibilities in that capacity. The author wishes to advise upcoming radio stations deciding on a successful programming strategy, that it is feasible to mix elements of the different forms of broadcasting, subject to the license under which they are registered. The programmes can be devised by blending in the best elements of commercial, community and public service broadcasting with the overall music of the station. To quote Dr Naresh D. Veeran, Manager of Lotus FM:

*It cannot happen in a confined operational stance; it has to be within a very strategic direction. (...) Take the best of everything. But it can be done: it's not impossible.*

(Appendix A1)

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Tansen Nepal, 15 November, 2000: Appendix A2

Vimla Frank, 15 November, 2000: Appendix A3

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Hamesh Seegobin, 18 October, 2000: Appendix A5

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# *APPENDIX*

# *APPENDIX A*

Transcribed Interviews of  
LOTUS FM Management &  
Staff Members

## *APPENDIX A1*

### **Transcribed Interview of Dr Naresb D Veeran, Station Manager, Lotus FM**

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2000

Sunita : When did you take over as the Station Manager of Lotus FM?

Naresh : On the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 1999.

Sunita : What was the station like when you took over and what vision did you have for it then?

Naresh : The station was partially a public broadcaster when I took over and partially a commercial station and partially a community station. It was all three things at one time within the broad portfolio of the SABC. So the vision, of course, was to focus the station, to streamline it into following the line of a single mandate, the mandate that could either have been commercial, community, or public broadcaster exclusively. So the vision was to firstly focus it and, of course, to do a strategic analysis of the station, to look at the whole operational side of things, the strategic side of things.. the core of that, then focus it. Yeah, that was it!

Sunita : And what goals did you lay out at the outset?

Naresh : Of course two major goals: revenue and listenership.

Sunita : Now within four months of your becoming the Station Manager of Lotus FM, you brought about changes in the programmes aired on Lotus...

Naresh : Right.

Sunita : ...which culminated and took off in the form of a re-launch, an altogether new look, from the 1<sup>st</sup> of November '99. What were the criteria on which you based your decision for the new look?

Naresh : First of all, it wasn't a new look because the logo and the advertising strategy hadn't changed. Second thing was the programming strategy hadn't changed; it was still very much a public broadcasting/community/commercial mandate. It was still in operation four months after I came. What had changed was essentially the programming schedule, in terms of DJ line-up, in terms of tweaking the existing stuff. It was merely a tweak of what we had, but it wasn't a change; it wasn't a programme change. It was perceived as a programme change because it seemed quite radical at that time. But in retrospect, I mean if you look at some of the audience and their complaints and their concerns at the time, we still had women's programmes, we still had youth

programmes, we still had talk programmes; the programming hadn't changed. It was just the tweaking of DJ line-up; of focusing and shortening programmes, lengthening otherwise and creating opportunities for listeners and creating opportunities for advertisers. That's what happened in November last year.

Surita : So you didn't bring any new programmes, to some extent?

Naresh : Well, there was a couple. One of them was the help-line, *Online*. That was something new that hadn't been done at Lotus before. And the other one I brought in was a social responsibility programme called *Pages from My Diary*. Now *Pages* is essentially a look at the life of Indian South Africans over the last 140 years and we're taking personnel and interviewing them on that. There was a couple of other...the other one was like the Sunday morning breakfast show called *Breakfast in Bed*. Of course, *Viewpoint*, the talk-show too. But all of those changes, the new programmes, yeah, took off like this (snaps his fingers). The listenership went up in all of those ones. So I think it was a combination of gut instinct and feel, but if you ask me what it was that informed those changes, it was essentially I looked at historically where these programmes have been, I looked at historically where the DJs have been and then I tried to match it with all of the RAMS diaries from 1997 to now, looking at the RAMS trends and comparing what worked in Lotus to what didn't work, to which DJ worked and which DJ didn't work. So ultimately, because I didn't know anybody here personally, I didn't know much of the operational side of things, I said "I'm gonna have to rely on research and research". RAMS is one form of research... a survey, but it's not really a research, but it is a survey. But there's other types of research we did at the same time. One was the music project that we had initiated in September-October last year. So those two things in combination told me, "Listen, we are on the right track" and that's when I implemented the changes.

Surita : The media launch for Lotus FM was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, 1999. What was the underlying intention of the media launch?

Naresh : There's three things we do with a launch. One, of course, is to launch the new programme schedule to the media. So all the newspapers coverage... so all of our listeners who are reading all those newspapers. Then you talk about the *Post*, *The Natal Mercury*, *The Daily News*, *Sunday Times*, *The Tribune*, *Times Extra*, *The Tribune Herald*, all of this local papers, the *Sun* group of papers and all of these things, all the little papers. So you're getting other radio stations, you're getting all the television channels, all the newspapers, magazines that are invited there, obviously to publicize the new programme schedule. The second thing would be a launch to the trade, that's now to all of the advertisers, potential clients, existing clients, the advertising executives...to show this is what we have available now...

selling opportunities, buying opportunities, advertising opportunities. And thirdly, it is a great morale booster for the staff itself, to be part of the dynamic process, to see the start... because it wasn't the end of a process, it was the beginning of a process, that launch. So that 28<sup>th</sup> was signifying a big morale booster for the staff to all be involved, to be, even for a day, for an evening, to be empowered to feel larger than life, to take on... 'this is our schedule, we've put it together and we're gonna make this happen'. And also, it ensures a buying process as well. It ensures the people that they will sort of buy in at that level because if you can get their co-operation at the ground level, it's assured of thereafter.

Sunita : In your opinion, how successful was the media launch in terms of trade, advertising and then the clients?

Naresh : In terms of those three objectives, let's start with the last one first. In terms of the staff buying, I think it was very successful because there was lots of reservations when I came up with the ideas, but I did it in consultation with all of them anyway. But when I did propose a lot of those ideas, there was a lot of resistance. But it was successful in that they made conscious decisions, thinking that 'you know what, we're gonna have to do this here. Change is essential and we have to go with that', and eventually quite a few of them fell in line. Those that didn't, well, came around later when they saw the results of it. In terms of the trade, it was excellent because any advertising to the trade, i.e. advertising to advertisers themselves, is good advertising because you can't lose that presence, top of mind awareness...all of those things are essential and its marketable. Durban itself's got four radio stations...four-five major radio, say four major radio stations – P4, there's Lotus, there's Ukhozi and there's East Coast Radio. Those are the four major radio stations here...all eat the same piece of food, you know, a piece of the pie. So that was there. What didn't work for us was the media 'cause I think while we invited all of the newspapers, magazines and what have you, I mean, a couple of things came out of there. *Cosmo* did a little feature on me, personally, as one of the 'movers and shakers'. *Post* did a thing on me personally. *Sunday Tribune* did something. So what happened was they in their own minds shifted the focus from the station to me personally. And that wasn't the intention. And that's why part of the exercise failed. And also the publicity that we expected to get out of the programme schedule, didn't materialize as I thought it would. But eventually we did get it, of course, all the newspapers covering all that, but not the way we thought it would be. You know we thought it'd be big, song and dances and all of those things; it just didn't work.

Sunita : It's almost been a year since Lotus came up with the revamp, the re-launch...

Naresh : Yeah, the schedule, yeah.

Sunita : How successful have the changes brought by you been in terms of the overall listenership of Lotus FM, which last year in November was reported at 404 000 approximately?

Naresh : Yeah! When I joined the station in August, the listenership was 370 000. By November, at the end of November, it was 404 000. And that number held until, I think, February, thereabouts, around the 400 000 mark. So it was successful in that it boosted listenership to about 30-35-40 000. But the problem was it held there and stabilized at that level and there was no potential to grow it. And that was great in the sense that in a highly competitive environment to maintain an audience is great and that's exactly what happened. But where the fear comes in is when there's no growth, no visible growth, especially in audience figure. I mean that was scary. So yeah, there was success at so many different levels. There was success in that the mindset of people were changing. There was success in that the programme and the way it was presented is changing. It was successful in that there were new advertisers coming in, we started making profits and generating money and revenue. It was successful in terms of top of mind awareness and advertising campaigns and all of those things. But I think real success, especially for a radio station, is measured purely in numbers and Lotus always had more than 52% penetration into its audience; that's the highest in this country of any radio station. But the problem is our audience is so small; it's just something less than a million or about a million. Off that million, at least say, 800 000 are listeners, potential radio listeners. So we own half, just more than half the audience, which is great! But in the long run we need to find ways in which to bring the other half on board and that's the difficulty.

Sunita : Does the station have plans for going in for a further revamp of its programmes?

Naresh : Yeah. You see there's been lots and lots of tweaks over the years. Tweaks in the sense that either the logo was tweaked or the advertising strategy was tweaked; the programme strategy was tweaked. But nothing was changed; there was no turnaround strategy ever. I have plans to do that. What are those plans?

Sunita : No, why?

Naresh : Why? Well essentially for two things again: revenue and listenership. And I feel that while we have a 50% piece of the pie, there is potential for at least 65-70%, at least or at best! And with the listenership now standing at about just over 400 000, I would think 600 would be a good number to stabilize at, just sit stable. So hopefully in the next three years, I would think...it may be optimistic, but I would like to think in the next three

years we can touch 600 000. It may not be possible because of the community itself, the environmental changes, changes in the way people perceive themselves and who they are. But I don't think it will fail as a lack of effort, a lack of strategy, a lack of smart thinking.

Sunita : In the *Post* last year of September 29<sup>th</sup> – October 2<sup>nd</sup>, you were quoted as stating that Lotus FM has a “public broadcast responsibility as well as a community responsibility, without ignoring its commercial viability”. Your newly designed Lotus website states that same thing, that Lotus FM is a ‘commercially-driven metro-national public broadcasting service, catering for South African citizens of Indian descent’. So these statements very clearly imply that while Lotus falls basically under the domain of a public broadcasting service, it also has elements of being a community broadcaster as well as commercial radio. Now you must be aware that there are great contradictions in being a melange of all three forms of radio broadcasting. Where profit motivation and niche marketing characterize your commercial radio and non-profit interest exemplifies community broadcasting, public service broadcasting is typified by, for example distance from vested interests and attention to minorities. Now a combination of say even community and commercial radio would create a conflict of interest between community interest and profit motive. How then does Lotus deal with such conflicting interests in its programming and daily functioning?

Naresh : Okay! That question is probably the pivot on which everything swings right now because for so many years it was exclusively a public broadcaster, catering to a particular community, a niche market, a minority group as well, you can call it. But it functioned like that within that environment for so many years. It's now come to a point where because of it's position in the SABC's radio portfolio, it's going to have to show a profit, which means that while the community responsibility is there, the commercial responsibility, the commercial aspect of the whole deal cannot be ignored. It definitely cannot be ignored! So my argument is very simply...there are a number of community radio stations, especially if catering to Indian South Africans. You've got Radio Phoenix in Durban, Radio Hindvani or ABH who come up so very often with a one-month license, in Durban. Johannesburg has East Wave Radio plus other small stations that come up every so on, Al-Ansar, Radio Islam...all of those. Cape Town has community broadcasters: Cape Talk, there's a Radio Islam I think, Radio 786. So I'm saying those community stations are taking care of the community responsibilities of radio, which frees us now to pursue programming on Indian level in a much more focussed commercial line, because we're freed of that community responsibility because stations exist to take care of that. So I'm saying we should focus our programming, our direction, our strategy, our advertising, our stings, jingles, sound, music...all of that, into a commercial radio station: an

Indian commercial radio station, possibly a music radio station where our public broadcasting responsibilities of current affairs, news, are done in a commercial way, where we take care of community announcements in a commercial way, where we take care of religion and culture and language in a commercial way. That was my proposal to Gemini when Gemini consultants came to the SABC. That was my proposal to the radio management when I thought about these changes. So that's what I'm at right now. I said to you, the day I came here I realized we cannot be all things to all people. Ultimately it's a case of 'this is what we stand for, this is what we do and this is what we do best'. And we're gonna run that programme schedule for the next two years or three years and let's see what happens then. We've never had it long enough, this is a chance here.

Sunita : If one were to ask you to quantify in percentage terms, what proportion of programmes on Lotus fall under the public service, what are community oriented, what are commercially driven, what proportion would you allocate?

Narash : I won't be able to estimate because there are actual real figures. We have to submit these figures to the IBA every year. I don't have it on hand but to estimate right now for conversational purposes, we're talking almost 90% of Lotus programming as community responsibility programmes; it's driven by community. There's possibly about 10%, and that 10% is like midnight to 6:00 programmes, that are without direction in terms of community responsibility. But the rest of it, the entire programming schedule, as it stands right now, is purely driven by community—everything from the breakfast show to the drive shows, to the talk shows, to the youth shows, to the women's programme, current affairs shows, news shows, all of them are driven by community. So it's almost a 90% responsibility. Our talk mix, for example, is 40% music to 60% talk, which like further solidifies our position as a public broadcaster in the past. And that is what is stunting our growth because of our responsibility on one level to doing certain things which people sometimes don't wanna hear; people don't want it.

Sunita : What programmes would you classify at the moment as being commercially driven, in terms of music?

Narash : None.

Sunita : None? Not even your breakfast shows?

Narash : None! Not even the breakfast show. I would think the late night music shows are potentially music driven, commercially-driven, but I think it's none.



- Sunita : Okay.
- Naresh : A commercially driven show, especially in a radio station, is an almost all-music format: hit music, hot music, adult contemporary, R & B, hip-hop or whatever it is. Those are commercially driven music stations. I suppose you get commercially driven talk stations as well, like 702. But if you're talking about commercially driven music station, none of our programmes fit that profile.
- Sunita : Another of the elements of being a public broadcasting service is 'universal geographic accessibility'. At the moment Lotus FM has ten transmitters that allow for transmission to the whole of KZN, Gauteng and Cape Town, with other parts of South Africa and Africa, having access to Lotus via satellite. Ideally as a public broadcasting service, Lotus FM should be accessible to all South African Indians.
- Naresh : Right.
- Sunita : Right? So keeping in mind that there are South Africans of Indian descent in the other six provinces of South Africa, even though the concentration is comparatively less, should Lotus not be transmitting to those regions as well? After all, not every person has access to satellite television.
- Naresh : Okay. The ten transmitters form a footprint that takes care of the high-density Indian South African areas, of course. So that's Cape Town, that's the PWV area, what they used to call the PWV area. Vereeniging, Pretoria, Witwatersrand area, and then of course KZN. The problem here essentially is... Cape Town, for example, is not counted in RAMS. Did you know that? In all these years, Cape Town is not counted in RAMS because Cape Town's only got 45 to 50 000 Indians there... 40 000 Indians, Indian South Africans there. And RAMS, SAARF, believe that that number is too small to count Indians, to count for a RAMS sample. So it doesn't count Cape Town. Now we're losing 40 000 listeners in a RAMS sample which means those figures are not shown on our listenership survey, which you can't go to advertisers with. Every satellite listener, right, doesn't go on that figure. So we're losing probably another 38-40 000 more. Now if you look at a place like Berhal, Trichardt, Roshnee, Springs, in Johannesburg, in Cape Town you look at the Western Cape, Eastern Cape... like East London, Port Elizabeth is a big Indian area, but there are less than 10 000 Indians living there. Check your census figures. There's less than 10 000 there. Now, the cost per listener at the moment is about twenty-seven to thirty cents per minute, I think. By putting up another ten transmitters, another five transmitters, another four transmitters, for example, we're talking about making that almost a rand per listener, which is nowhere in the world. It's pure suicide to go and do something like that. If it's pure public broadcasting, yes! The

SABC has a responsibility to take care of Indian South Africans, knowing full well that they're gonna make a loss, knowing full well that they might even lose audience, then fine, go ahead, but it's a suicidal move. And as Station Manager, that's something I won't accept because that's throwing really good money after a bad day, in that situation. I would rather focus the strategy, focus even the footprint and take care of our biggest audiences. And our biggest audience is Johannesburg and Durban, with 80% of all Indians in this country living in Durban. So why waste? And strange enough also, you'll find that people living in the outline areas of KZN, I mean people in Johannesburg and Cape Town, are much more affluent, and increased wealth and increased numbers in terms of income and so on, who can afford a satellite. For example, the people of Vryeburg, yeah, in Northern Transvaal, wanted Lotus there. So the entire community got together, put money and built their own transmitter.

Sunita : Okay. One more element of Public Service Broadcasting is direct funding and universality of payment. This is according to the defunct British Broadcasting Research Unit.

Naresh : Universality of payment? In payment of what?

Sunita : What sort of funding does Lotus rely on to run its operations? I'm talking non-advertising. Like SABC is run on licenses.

Naresh : TV licenses, yeah.

Sunita : How does Lotus run, i.e. non-advertising?

Naresh : You know, of course, advertising is just one area. We look at about say three major...four major areas. Well, there's a difference between as is the situation right now and what I'm thinking. And as the situation existed before my coming on and right now, it was purely: advertising is one and to a small extent, sponsorships. But that's also another revenue form of advertising anyway... sponsorships. The third one of course were alternative sources, in terms of 'eventing' Lotus, where we were getting involved in terms of doing a show or a concert or something. Now what had happened is, I decided that we must not see ourselves as a radio station, because when you start restricting yourself and you think of yourself in the radio business, you're always gonna be thinking of radio, and expansion becomes impossible. But if you think of yourself in the entertainment business or the edutainment business or the infotainment business, you suddenly realize that 'you know what', the possibilities of forming partnerships is really great. You see yourself as being much broader than you really are and you see yourself as being part of a much much larger entertainment community. So as a result, I said, we must start looking at alternative revenue strengths. So the future of where we're

taking off right now, is we're launching books and CDs that are coming out of programmes and one of them is due next week, *The Best of the Weekend Lift-Off*. The CD follows in a couple of months' time. The website is a source of income as well and we haven't exploited that; but from January onwards we'll be doing that, as a source of income.. tweaking the website in line with the rest of our strategy and marketing it. And then eventing recently have brought in, in the last six months at least, about R3-R400 000, which has never happened in the past because we never actively went out looking for money via events, concerts and all that. We always did as community responsibility. So I've been putting a tag of R15-20-30-40-50 000 to some of these events in an effort to bring in revenue. We've found that people are prepared to pay; they are prepared to pay. Sometimes we'll put in an amount, they'll put in an amount and we'll do a rand for rand exchange or 2:1 exchange or 3:1 exchange, and normally we have policies depending on currency and what they do and what they have to do often. But so much so that's another source of revenue. And of course TV licenses do filter down to us in one way or the other; it does filter down.

Sunita : So TV licenses and advertising, is your one steady income?

Naresh : TV advertising is not a steady income to radio.

Sunita : No, your radio advertising. What is your one steady income?

Naresh : Oh, it's radio advertising. That's all we do. It's the core, core income.

Sunita : Okay. The greatest task for being a public service broadcaster...I'm analysing Lotus in terms of all three forms...

Naresh : Public broadcasting service, yeah.

Sunita : ... is the ability to abstain from political interference.

Naresh : Yes.

Sunita : Now how does Lotus resist interference by remaining in control of the reporting and analysis of news and current affairs?

Naresh : You see now that is a very interesting question because we do not have editorial content which is something that I think is very, very arguable. All of the news and current affairs on Lotus, on Five, on Metro, on Goodhope, on Ikhewzi and Ligwalagwala, Ukhosi and all stations... are not controlled by the stations themselves; it's controlled by Radio News. So there's nothing we do there. So a political nature or the political nature of a story is dependent totally on Radio News and that's where the debate

is right now. Because I feel that final control should be left with the station on all matters going out on air. Now we've had so many arguments and things like that. So that's why I say it's difficult to answer that question in light of the fact that we're not controlling.

Sunita : But do you plan on controlling that in the future?

Naresh : Oh absolutely! That control must be here. In terms of what appears in a news bulletin, for example, that's an operational issue; that should be left to news. But in terms of aligning ourselves in a particular political stance, in a particular cultural stance, in a particular socio-cultural/economic/linguistic stance, whatever, on any issue, that should be in line with the overall strategy of the station. And the news team should be briefed accordingly. That's why I feel, strongly believe, that there should be a news team dedicated to the station, who'll know the vision of the station, who'll know the mission of the station, who'll know the strategy of the station, which, unfortunately, has never happened at the SABC as a corporation.

Sunita : How much freedom do the programme makers, the producers, on Lotus have in deciding the content of the programme they do?

Naresh : A real problem has been we could never afford to pay producers in the past and that's something I'm initiating in the future. But ultimately, it is envisaged that at least 80% of what goes on air comes from production, 20% is pure spontaneous stuff; time-checks and all those things. But it's assumed that that's the norm; it's almost never kept to because for the simple reason that we can't afford producers, which now we're remedying, which I'm trying to find money to do that.

Sunita : So at the moment your DJs, are they producing themselves?

Naresh : They are producing themselves. Because they are hired as DJ/Producers, Announcers/Producers.

Sunita : Okay. Aside from the cultural and religious programmes, the music balance in most of the other shows, the music shows, comprises a fifty-fifty balance between Hindi and Tamil songs, most of them.

Naresh : No! They used to, not anymore.

Sunita : Not any more? Could you tell me how did this balance come about, fifty-fifty ratio?

Naresh : That's a very interesting question for the simple reason that it's almost a historical Indian issue in this country, more than a music issue. What had

happened is...in any minority group, you'll find sub-groups and Indian South Africans are no different...people who distinguish themselves on the color of their skin, or their accent, their salaries, their class, whatever. But a further distinction amongst Indian South Africans is that their language of origin, their historical evolution of India, is suddenly used as a measuring point; to a point that you find people identifying themselves as Tamil speaking, or Hindi speaking, or Telegu speaking, Gujarati speaking. Roughly, people of South Indian are Tamil-Telegu speaking and North Indian, Gujarati Indian and Hindi speaking, in this country. So what had happened is Lotus, when it was launched in '83, played music, not based on any ratio whatsoever; just played Indian music. And then they found that the different parts of the community said, "listen you're playing more of that type of music than our type of music, music that's more Hindi than Tamil", and then the Tamil community said "you're playing less of this" and so on. It got to a point that by 1995, it got to such a heated debate that the previous Station Manager decided to play a one to one ratio, for every South Indian song, one North Indian song; South- one song, one from the north. From a listenership of 570 000, we came down to 270 000, because it was now based on a ratio, not based on music and not based on taste. Eventually, with lots of strategies and tweaking, we kept the one to one ratio and tweaked everything else and brought that listenership from 270 000 to about 370 000. That's when I took over. So when I took over, I said "na uh". I come from a music background and I believe music should be based on taste, appreciation, on what people feel and on how a song makes you feel. That's what it should be based on, not should be based on what you feel the ratio of the community should be. My God, they can't make a music decision based on ratios! It should be based on the knowledge of the music, knowledge of the product and of course, overall strategy. And then we did a piece of research and our research showed us that the 1:1 ratio is false; people want to hear a much larger ratio. They want to hear a much, much larger ratio. So I immediately initiated a slightly bigger ratio of, in some programmes, 2:1, two North Indian songs to one South Indian song. And in some programmes, 3:1. And it seems to have worked. But the future is not... I believe, is not going to be based on ratio at Lotus. And if we're gonna become an all-hot hit radio station that plays a commercial mix of music, it's gonna have to be based on listeners taste; that's what listeners want to hear, only what they want to hear. And that'll be based on research, it'll be based on maybe, possibly at the beginning, on our perception. But of course, we'll have to confirm with research. That's where we're going.

Sunita : As a community broadcaster, that's how I'm analysing Lotus now, broadcasting to a community of interest, which we've identified as the South African of Indian descent, because as a community broadcaster either you're broadcasting to a geographic community or a community of interest, what does Lotus regard as its responsibility to the community?

And how do you reflect this in your functioning? Your main responsibility, in the programming and functioning, how it's reflected.

Naresh : I think there's a three part definition, but in the main we're talking a mix between culture and language, not about English as a language, I'm talking about Indian languages. We're talking about a mix of culture in terms of the religion, in terms of the way of life, culture in terms of the different practices and all of those things that distinguish Indian South Africans from other groups in South Africa, culturally. And then, of course the Indian languages. So what we do is we use that and reflect that in our programming, so much so that we only play Indian music here, language-based Indian music. Whether it's popular music or film music, or religious music or whatever, it's pure Indian music, absolutely no English music whatsoever. That's the one way to do it. The other way to do it is that we do this in our language programmes where we have specific programmes dedicated to languages. And then, of course, the rest of them are merely Indian lifestyle type programmes, like the cookery programmes, the predictions, the women's issues, some of the youth programmes... are based on the Indian lifestyle as it was perceived. In the future of course, that's gonna be changed because the Indian community is changing as well. But in the main, that's how we're doing it right now.

Sunita . The IBA, the Independent Broadcasting Authority, which is responsible for regulation of broadcasting in South Africa, requires that, I'm quoting them, 'all sound broadcasting services dedicating more than 15% of their airtime schedule to the broadcasting of music, ensure that at least 20% of the music broadcast by them, is of South African origin'. In colloquial terms, it's termed as local music. How does Lotus conform to that mandate?

Naresh: Okay. The problem is, in South Africa there's no local music industry for Indian South Africans; it's non-existent. It doesn't exist. There's no infrastructure, there's no support by the state, there's no support from the broader community. So what you have is traditions of music that have originated in South Africa and have been based in the community to the point that there's no original music been ever produced in this country, of note. So what Lotus did in '80, I think it was early 1990... it decided to hire a music producer, a local music producer, to begin, to start a local music industry, to bring in bands, record them, give them airtime, all of those things. So much so that we were solely responsible for creating a semblance of an infrastructure that supported Indian music, Indian local music, to the point that we're able to from 0% to now almost play 15%. 20 is virtually impossible because even if we play all the songs over and over again, twice a day, three times a day, we still won't reach 20% because people don't want to listen to it. But we at least try and maintain a 15% mark-up and we justify this and we send this to the IBA. If you

want... if the authority demands 20% or more, then the authority must put their money where their mouth is and help support local music. But if they can't do it, then related structures must support local music, especially local Indian music, which has zero support from any organization.

Sunita : You mentioned earlier that 40% of Lotus's programmes is music and 60% is talk, approximately.

Naresh : No, no; the mix, the mix of talk to music, not the programming

Sunita : And talk shows?

Naresh : Yeah?

Sunita : It's the same thing? 60-40?

Naresh : No, no, you don't understand what I'm saying. The overall mix in the station is 40% music to 60% talk; the overall mix, not on a fifteen minutes by fifteen minutes basis.

Sunita : Okay! On to more general issues, what kind of a relationship does Lotus have with the SABC?

Naresh : The SABC, of course, is the mothership, is the umbrella body, the corporation. And Lotus is one of its brands. It's very much like South African Breweries with Castle Lager being one of its brands and Amstel being another one of its brands. That's purely what it is. In all other respects, all of the employees at Lotus are actually employees of the SABC. You don't work for Castle Lager, you work for the SA Breweries. Castle Lager is the brand that you're loyal to. So, the relationship is like any other working relationship; any other corporation with one of its brands. That's exactly how it operates.

Sunita : Okay. Considering that KZN has the highest density of South African Indians, at 9.4% at the moment...

Naresh: Of? 9.4% of what?

Sunita : The KZN population, 9.4% is Indian component and which is the highest among the other provinces, like Gauteng is at 2.2%. The majority of your listenership, which you said earlier, is within KZN. Your biggest threat at the moment lies from East Coast Radio, which is a regional commercial broadcaster. Right? And obviously you both are competing for audience as well as market share.

Naresh : Yeah!

Sunita : Now what influence does this threat from ECR have on your future programming? You said that you wished to head in a commercial way.

Naresh : Yes!

Sunita : And that is how you intend on directly taking on your competitor?

Naresh : Yeah! We fight them on the same platform. You see the problem is we are fighting a battle with different weapons. They've got adult contemporary Western music format and ours is, the potential, Indian music format. It's two different weapons. We can almost never fight them on that. What we've decided is to offer a choice to the listener. With Lotus, in the past you really didn't have a choice, you got a public broadcaster whether you liked it or not. Now we're offering you a commercial programme format, very much what East Coast is offering, a commercial programme format. Except one difference is we're offering you Indian music as opposed to adult contemporary Western music. So it's simply a choice. We cannot compete with them in any other areas; absolutely not, because the audience can never grow into the white market or the black market. And as long as we are targeting Indians, because our license stipulates that, you know, 'taking care of the needs of Indian South African'... so as long as that happens, we can't fight that battle. The battle has to be an internal one, amongst us and our listeners, and to try and gain more listeners. We offer them a choice and say 'this is what we're offering you, come to us for this; when you're through with East Coast, you can come back to us', or something like that. We haven't worked the strategy overall, how we're gonna attack it, but that's the direction in which it seems to be going.

Sunita : Okay, in terms of a SWOT analysis, what are Lotus's biggest strengths and weaknesses?

Naresh : If you ask me what's the one single strength here, if you give me one strength... let me give you one of each, right! The one single strength is music. Lotus's music is its biggest strength because it's playing a highly niche type of music. What's the one strongest weakness? Is it's music as well! Because while it attracts, it also marginalizes other people from listening. Unless people are acclimatized, acculturated, enculturated, all of those terms, into the lifestyle and the type of music, you'll never understand the music. So it's one of the biggest strengths we have, the biggest we have. What's the biggest opportunity? To maximize the music. And again, what's the threat? It's the music as well.

Sunita : So everything revolves around the music in Lotus?



Naresh : That's why I said the music is so pivotal for the station. It'll probably pave the way forward for us or it'll be the death of us.

Sunita : What does your gut instinct tell you?

Naresh : It will work, it will work! It may not work in leaps and bounds, but it will work.

Sunita : Where do you see Lotus FM five years from now?

Naresh : Where I see it? I see it belonging to the community. It's a community station, it should belong to the community. We're commercializing, of course, but I still think it's a community station. I think it should belong to the community.

Sunita : And your long-term and short-term goals?

Naresh : Oh, of course, to make the station viable financially, on a long-term basis. On a short-term basis, is to attempt to maximize the potential of our audience right now and where the station is at right now; to get to a point where we're comfortable with the numbers we have and where we can ensure some sort of growth. Yeah, yeah, that's where we are.

Sunita : Okay. You've studied the station when you joined, before you joined.

Naresh : Yes.

Sunita : And to any upcoming station, in your opinion, it is not possible, is it, to have elements of all three forms of broadcasting, while at the same time surviving and flourishing in a competitive environment? Do you think it's possible to do that? Do you regard them as watertight elements or can you mix public service with commercial? From your own experience, I mean, at Lotus?

Naresh : Yeah, I think it depends now what sort of... See, like now the difficulty with Lotus was it was part of the state broadcaster and because of that it had to do certain things. But suppose it was privately owned, it was a private organization, which had a certain license that demanded to do this and this, the potential for mixing could be there because you do somethings that work... elements of somethings that work and you do elements of somethings of that that work and elements of another area that work. So you take the best of all three because each... public broadcasting has got some, good like talk shows and current affairs, all great ideas. The problem when you force it down our listeners for hours at a time, they don't want it. But if you give them shortburst, two minutes, three minutes, in every five songs, it's suddenly very appealing, it's very palatable; it's

something to talk about. So yeah, you can mix. But like I said, it has to be within a very, I think...what's the word? It cannot happen in a confined operational stance; it has to be within a very, very, very strategic direction. That's how it has to happen; it has to be very, very strategic: take the best of everything. But it can be done; it's not impossible.

Sunita : Okay.

Naresh : Yeah! Great!

Sunita : One final question: What does Lotus FM define a South African Indian as?

Naresh : Lotus FM targets Indian South Africans who are South African by birth and who are of Indian origin; whose ancestral roots are in India. While the fact is that the majority of Indian South Africans do not speak any of the Indian languages, Lotus FM realizes that there does indeed exist a gap in the market that provides a cultural/linguistic/community service to individuals and groups who identify themselves strongly as being South African, but of Indian origin.

Sunita : Thank you!

Naresh : You're welcome.

## *APPENDIX A2*

**Transcribed Interview of Tansen Nepaul, Programmes Executive, Lotus FM**

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2000

Sunita : Tansen, when did you join Lotus?

Tansen : I joined Lotus about six years ago. Prior to that I was Music Production Specialist for the Facilities Department. In other words, I specialized in technically producing music for the SABC and that was for Indian, Zulu and Western music. Technical production basically means I was responsible for the actual recordings, digital recordings and mastering and final mix down and things like that. Thereafter, Lotus FM wanted a music producer; that was about six years ago, and my application was successful. I think, I might just mention, before that I was producing music for Lotus even before I joined them, on a freelance basis. So, I've been producing music for Lotus FM for about fifteen years. And I joined them six years ago as full-time Music Producer, and am now Programmes Executive.

Sunita : When you joined them as Music Producer six years ago, what was your basic job profile? What were you supposed to do?

Tansen : What had happened was... in South Africa, the Indian music industry is virtually non-existent. So what we needed to do was... A lot of groups used to come in and just record cover versions of film songs, religious songs or whatever. But nobody was actually producing anything that was typically South African Indian, Indian songs. So what we did was we decided to set this challenge to the community and ask them for lyrics in the five languages, i.e. Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Gujarati and Urdu. And we started this off not knowing exactly what the turnout or response would be like. Naturally, it did start off slow but after a while, after the Second Song Competition, we noticed that people really got into it and they realized 'here's a chance for them to do something like this', and what had happened was the lyrics started coming in and then we had our own, sort of professional people in each of these language groups, to have the lyrics checked so that it could be sufficiently good enough. So finally what had happened was, from the hundred that we received, we selected just about fifteen and we set it to music and we had a big bash at the end of the year; that kind of a thing, and we had an overall winner. But this encouraged a lot of the local song -writers, especially because they had never had an avenue before. A lot of them, you'll understand... Song -writers are not necessarily singers or performers. They would probably sit in the living rooms and find a way of writing lyrics. But that

was the end of it; it never went any further. So, this was an outlet for them and to date, we've done something like probably seventy-eight of these songs, in the five languages. That was what we did as far as South African music, original music, was concerned. But prior to that, we had a problem whereby although people were doing cover versions... We were recording groups that weren't professional enough to meet the standards of the SABC. So what we had done was we realized the other way around is to give these groups smaller recording performances. In other words, just record three or four items, the best from the demos, and we would give them an opportunity. But then, after research we found that there were far more artistes, like singers, you know, vocalists, in each of the languages, that belonged to the groups, that were very good, but the backing from the groups was inferior. On the other hand, we had very good singers that did not belong to any group. Then at that stage we realized what we should do to promote this, is form our own resident band. So, about fifteen years ago, that had group had started off; it was called Kamal Sangeeth. And the group was formed just so that we could give all those singers out there the opportunity for good music and to have the songs recorded for radio. That way we had very little wastage. In other words, when a regular group came and recorded eight songs, only two were playable on that. But with our process, every singer was weighted, we checked the quality of the singing; the musicians we had no problem because we selected the best of the musicians from different groups and in this way, if we recorded ten songs in a month, ten of them were playable. We ran that for about ten years. About five years ago we'd done the last of those. But we had recorded something like 600 songs, and from that 600, I would say, 550 are still currently being played.

Sunita : Can you name me some of the great singers existent today in South Africa, who recorded with you?

Tansen : I think I've performed with almost every popular artiste or well-known artiste in South Africa. Hard to remember all of them, but I would say Majid Joosab would be one of them, Ali Mia Chicktay... From the South Indian field, I would say Sunny Pillay, then there's Fauzia Banu, Shakiel Mehmood. And the style of music that we've concentrated on, wasn't anything in particular. In other words, we were the only group to cross the boundary of languages; we played for all artistes from different languages, and the calibre of musicians that we had, was suitable for any form of music. So in other words, they could play for a qawwali programme, fully, a total ghazal programme, a very poppy Hindi filmy kind of set-up. And the group was the only group, full group, that could perform Karnatic music and in that way, the group actually existed for a long time, and we were able to cover the spectrum of all artistes in this country. There's quite a few artistes; I can't remember all of them, but

we did also perform for international artistes. One of them was Pankaj Udhas, when he had come down for a private function. Well, the group didn't perform; I performed on my own with him, and he had his full set of musicians. But his keyboard players was left back at the airport for some reason; I think he had a problem with the passport. And so, when he came here, they searched around and they recommended me. I performed for him; I performed for quite a few of the South Indian artistes that have come down here in smaller groups. So I added musicians to that. I performed for quite a few London artistes that have come down to perform for the Gujarati Kendra. We're also the only group in South Africa, the full music group, that does dandiya-raas, and garba music, and we still do that; we can do a complete programme. We've performed for quite a few of those artistes from overseas that have come down for 'Naurtha' and things like that. Yeah, and the music era from there just blossomed me as I got into Lotus.

Sunita : Now you're saying this music production that commenced around fifteen years back, stopped at around five years back. So, what is the local music industry like now?

Tansen : Okay! When we had started Kamal Sangeeth, that was to provide professional backing for the artistes in South Africa. The reasoning there was to give these artistes the opportunity and a chance to be heard on a platform that was good enough for radio, and to meet their standards also. Once we developed that stage and we came to a point where we said, "Okay, we've got good music running", and our people could hear what is possible with the local music group, that is when we realized, 'enough of cover versions, let's do something original'. That's when the group went into this process of working with the song competition and then we started doing much more original stuff, and did away with cover versions after that. That process ran for about five competitions; it was done biannually, so it ran for about eight years. Every second year we had these programmes, and by the time we did the last one, we had so many lyricists participating in this programme, that each one of them, when they didn't make it or even if they did make it, ... they realized that they couldn't just leave aside these songs that they had been writing; they decided to go ahead and do something with it. So, they used to contact us and although they didn't make it in the competition, the lyrics were quite good. So we gave them advice and we also gave them a platform and an opportunity to have their songs recorded. In other words, they would have to get their own musicians; they would have to select their own singers. But we told them that if they would do a commercial album, and if they could do one-third of that album as originals, then Lotus FM will support in paying part of the studio fees and the engineer fees. Some of them have taken their own, such as Ashok Ramchunder; he wrote... Well, about a third of the songs from his album was his own.

So, Lotus FM got involved in that and supported him in actually paying for the studio time. Majid Jusab was another. Quite a few of the others had taken on the facility from Lotus FM; others took our advice and went about with the production, and went totally commercial on their own, without any ties. But we assisted them; we assisted those artistes by giving them airtime in terms of interviews, complete interviews where we would play their music. talk about their career and things like that. So, there was always some way that they would get some kind of exposure. And once we found that... we started slowly getting artistes moving out on their own and getting their own production done,... then we started tearing off our side because it's a very expensive process, and we can't be the icons of culture in this country; we can only be the catalyst to propagate something like this and start it off. And once we think the industry is starting to move in the right direction, that's when we have to pull away, simply because of financial restraints. And we find that now they are starting to very slowly but surely move in the direction of actually producing their own material. We don't get a lot, but we get something like, probably ten recordings in a year, that come through from artistes doing original stuff.

Sunita : Today you say you are the Programmes Executive at Lotus. Now, what does that entail?

Tansen : Okay! Firstly, the reasoning for moving away from Music Production is that we had to move away from Music Production simply because of financial restraints, again. The SABC, after its downsizing, realized that these productions are very expensive, and they couldn't support us in that way financially. So then, when I realized that there would come a time when complete financial backing would be taken away from such productions, the SABC management decided that I would attend certain courses to get more involved in management itself. So for the past couple of years, I've been involved in that way: assisting the station in promoting itself, in its visibility programmes, in its advertising campaign programmes, and basically all aspects of the administration. And once I gained enough experience in that, I felt it was necessary for my management to motivate for me to move out of Music Productions to something more administrative as a job description, so that it'll make my future more... what shall I say?... definite here. So, my present position is Programmes Executive and I am responsible for aspects of programming, working with DJs and the shift rosters. We are also presently working very hard on a new format, using a lot of research that we have done in the last eight months: music research, programming research, audience-driven research, and we're trying to put all this information together to decide what the new programming schedule should look like. A lot of that will also depend on the SABC Board; they

will determine whether we should go commercial, public broadcaster, or semi-commercial.

Sunita : How has Lotus's involvement in the community changed in the past six years, or ever since you joined? What it was before, what it is now.

Tansen : Lotus has always been very heavily involved in the community, with all kinds of community events. But the difference I made, I think, was... Especially in the Indian community, any festival or any event, is always celebrated with music. And even in our personal lives, be it the birth of a child, the naming of the child, the weddings, even the funerals, there's constantly music required for these kind of events. So naturally, when it comes to big events outside, huge fairs, charity fairs, whatever they may be, Lotus would get itself involved in these big productions as part of its visibility drive. But to become part of this event, it's not enough just to get there and show your faces or to say, "We are from Lotus"; you need events or productions to be put together on stage, that will dazzle the crowd and get them very interested. And most importantly, get them interested enough to get there in huge numbers. So for the last ten years, I've been actually organizing these events, whereby I've been bringing together musicians from all over the country, and bringing the best singers from wherever they may be. For example, The Royal Show; it is quite a big event and we bring about something like between 25 to 30 000 people that attend the function. To get that kind of response from the crowd, you need to bring in the best of the South African artistes, and you need to make sure that the event you're putting together there, is gonna be something very entertaining for them, and professional enough. The last one we did was at the Carnival City, which was quite an exquisite function. The venue could cater for something like four and a half thousand; we had about four and a half thousand people there, with a very good music and dance programme, together with Bhangra. So, my duty is actually to make sure that these events run smoothly and that the standards are always in keeping with the SABC's requirements. And most importantly, for us to make sure that those crowds of people attend these functions so that the community can always look at us for future events, and we can also make the most of it as visibility drive.

Sunita : Lotus is probably changing its profile from being public service/commercial/community, to, from what I've heard, most likely it'll be commercial.

Tansen : Yeah, well hopefully; that will depend on the SABC board! But I think we, as management, would like the station to run on a commercial basis, simply because it becomes much more competitive with other stations out there, other commercial stations out there that are actually stealing some of our listeners. If we become more competitive, programming can

follow suit and also, I think, one of the things that would happen, is the entire economical process that runs the station, would change. We would have much more flexibility in terms of offering clients better deals for advertising... people that really spend money on us. Right now, we have to follow the book rigidly because of the SABC's mandate. Yeah! Being commercial, we could do that and then, I think, from there that will be a stepping stone that will affect programming. We could have better competitions on air; competitions would also mean better prizes on air, you know, be it overseas trips, motor cars, or whatever. That, ultimately, will definitely have an impact on our programming; it will make it much more interesting for people. We would also not have to be totally answerable to all the cultural bodies out there. In other words, we wouldn't have to be the cultural icons in the community; we wouldn't have the responsibility of being the ones that propagate the language and the culture. I believe that should really be left in the hands of the professionals, and that is those cultural bodies. They should be the ones that are actually propagating that in the community. All we should be is an entertainment based radio station. We have community stations that come up all over the country; we have community stations in Durban, in Cape Town... there's quite a few in Cape Town, in Johannesburg. I believe that they should be the ones that have that cultural slant in their programming because they are there for the community, for a specific community. And, in each specific community, the cultural needs are very different. The cultural needs of people in Durban, and the cultural needs of the people in Cape Town, are uniquely different, and I think that is where those community stations can take care of that. And stations like us, that are national, should be commercially-driven, and our programming should also be commercially-driven, to make it viable. If we don't, I think we would definitely, from looking at trends... Our listenership is on the decline, especially in terms of the youngsters. The youngsters seem to be moving away to other commercial Western stations, and I don't believe it's just because of the music. I think it's because of the attitudes of commercial stations that they seem to identify with. We still have a very good following for our type of music. I think a simple answer to something like that, or the best way to find out if something like that is true, is to look at our film industry, especially Bollywood, and you will realize the response to it, ... to the movies, to the music, to videos and the entire industry around it, is very strong in this country. And, that is also supported quite a lot by youngsters, but yet, they are not listening to our station. So, we have to actually try and answer that, and we believe that the answer to that is having the station to follow a commercial format. If that does happen, I believe Lotus FM will have a very strong future.

Sunita : If you do go commercial, that means the type of music you play will also change, and the ratio.



Tansen : It doesn't have to. From our research, what we've realized is, yes, the ratio would change, but that ratio would meet the demands of our community. We're not saying that we would have to play Western music, simply because there are other stations out there playing it. It would make sense for us to play it, probably, but every station, even the Western station themselves, do not play all forms of Western music; some of them are just hip-hop, some of them are R & B, some of them are adult contemporary. So, if they've got a way of finding a niche in the market, then we would also do that and our niche in the market would be Indian music. So, we've realized our niche in the market would have to be Indian music, and now we have done research to show us exactly what type of Indian music. I can't give out that information now, simply because we need that for our new programming strategy. But we would definitely use that information and work out a ratio in terms of different types of music, i.e. be it North or South, and in the North and South categories, what type of music. We have the filmy music, which dominates our music scene, then we have the pop, then we have different type of albums, religious music. We would just have to determine exactly how we're going to play this on the station. But yes, that will just be programming. I don't think we would affect the music. But what may change, like I said, is general programming; the educational kind of programming would change. Our community is quite highly literate, our educational programmes take on different... Well, the type of educational programmes we'll do, will be very different from any other radio station, simply because we have a highly literate community and we don't need the 'A B C's' of education; we just need to identify what they need to know. Our talk programme seems to work very well in fulfilling a lot of those needs.

Sunita : So your main target audience, if you go commercial, will be the younger market?

Tansen : No, it wouldn't be, simply because the younger market is very fickle minded. It is very, very difficult to find out exactly what it is that they want. What we've realized is that, even if we play the kind of music that they are listening to on other commercial stations... we realized that even if we play exactly the kind of music that they're listening to on those stations... they wouldn't want to listen to that music on Lotus FM. There is something about their kind of culture in their environment with friends and universities, and things like that; they feel they have to be in it by listening to certain radio stations. It is their own kind of culture that they identify with, and we've also realized it is something that doesn't last very long. Once they pass that stage of being students and get into working environments, their lifestyles change and most of them, when they get married, tend to come back to their cultural roots. So, we've

realized we can get those youngsters because they will be coming back to us. And then, from research we found that the most stable market we've got is the twenty-five to the grave. So, basically, our programming in future will be catering for the twenty-five to thirty-nine year old, and we know the fringe listeners will always be there. We most likely will be targeting that market. It is also a market that has money, a very good disposable income... they are working class people and they've got the money to spend. I mean, you could advertise a product and they'd be interested in anything . have the money to purchase those products. Students don't have a very big disposable income, so that would be risky.

Sunita : Okay' Thank you!

Tansen : That's it? Alright!

## *APPENDIX A3*

### **Transcribed Interview of Vimla Frank, Marketing Manager, Lotus FM**

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2000

Sunita : Vimla, when did you join Lotus FM?

Vimla : I joined Lotus FM in 1991. Do you want a specific date?

Sunita : No.

Vimla : Okay. Yeah, 1991.

Sunita : What did you join Lotus as? What were you at that time?

Vimla : A junior secretary.

Sunita : 1991? Nine years back?

Vimla : Yeah, nine years ago.

Sunita : What was Lotus like at that time? What was its profile?

Vimla : Okay. When I joined Lotus, Fakir Hassen was Station Manager. The station was very community-driven, 100% community-driven; the commercial element was 'by the way'. There wasn't this huge drive or need to produce a profit and to be commercial on a huge scale. So, the station was run mainly by community needs and that is how it was driven.

Sunita : Okay, and what did your job profile entail that time?

Vimla : As Junior Secretary, I was secretary to Fakir Hassen, and basically, it was administrative, working with him, ensuring that his task was made easier. And it involved a lot of computer work, a lot of organizing, etc. But nothing on the scale of what I moved into when I moved to PR.

Sunita : And that was when?

Vimla : Okay. I moved to PR in '95, and as PRO, my role changed completely, and suddenly I was responsible for literally shaping the station in terms of where we were at, through eventing, through competitions, through image building, liaison with the press,... and literally setting the station according to the vision and the mission of the station.

Sunita : Tell me, how did you go about doing that? How did you present Lotus as a people's station?

Vimla : Firstly, what we did was, we identified that Lotus needed to go on a huge visibility drive. By then, there was already talk about the station being commercial, and being less community-driven and more commercially-driven. And the seeds of that were sown completely when Khalik Sheriff joined us in '96. Of course, Khalik was an announcer here before he became Station Manager. So, the transition when Khalik was here, was to a more commercial fitting, and in light of that and my role as PRO, we identified this huge visibility programme. So, we undertook many activities, and the activities had a wide-ranging sphere. We went from doing ordinary things like Outside Broadcasts at shopping centres, through to huge shows, and that's when we introduced things like the bhangra concept; we took the Lotus FM showband on the road, and we built on a very solid base that Fakir had left behind. We built and raised the station to the status it is at now, and that's what we achieved. And we did it mainly through taking the station and the people behind the station, to the people. It was a drive that was called 'Taking Lotus FM to the People' That's when we changed the name from Radio Lotus to Lotus FM, and we turned it into what it is, as it is right now.

Sunita : And today, you're the Marketing Manager?

Vimla : Okay, I've been Marketing Manager for a year, since August last year... just more than a year, and it hasn't been a job description that's changed very much from PRO to Marketing Manager, only because Lotus FM is run by a very, very small staff contingent. So we don't have huge departments here. So I don't run a Marketing Department where I would have a PRO under me and a PR assistant, and things like that. So, the station is run very much on a one-man-per-department basis. In that sense, that is what I was doing as PRO anyway, and that hasn't changed majorly.

Sunita : Today when you go out to the people, when you go into the community, how do you market Lotus? What do you say Lotus is?

Vimla : Okay. Lotus FM is a commercially-driven public broadcaster belonging to the SABC, and that is exactly how we market it... That yes, the community has a say... yes, the community decides which way we could go, perhaps in programming, etc.,... But we are also very commercially-driven; we've got to find ways of making a profit. So, whereas previously we would initiate an event and would try to absorb some of the cost, we can't afford to do that anymore. So, now we would actually charge. We would charge a welfare organization a certain rate and a commercial organization, a different rate, to do what we used to do for

welfare organizations, free of charge before. So that's how the focus has changed. So, when you ask me how do we market it? We market it on different policies, we market it on different opportunities. So, we take the elements of the station, like an O.B., like an Eastern Extravaganza, like a Bhangra... We tailor-make a campaign for different people, different organizations. If a client comes to me and says, "I'm launching a store and I would like Lotus FM to be there", then we would look at an Outside Broadcast. If a client comes to me and tells me, "We're a welfare organization, we're doing a fair to raise funds", then I would recommend perhaps the Eastern Extravaganza, or the Bhangra, or maybe all three, and if they can afford to pay the package, then we would do it. If you get a commercial organization that comes to you and says, "Okay, we're doing this, but we're a commercial organization", then they would have to pay a bigger fee. So that's how we literally market the station. But the idea is to keep the people, the listeners, entertained all of the time. And as part of the marketing section, we take eventing as a separate money making wing for the station. Then, we also have the building of the profile of the DJs. So, you have this group of people, and there's no one ace-out DJ at Lotus FM. So, you don't take one person and make them the star person at Lotus FM, because every single DJ is equal and every single DJ is a personality on its own. That may change, who knows, if we become a personality-driven station. Then you'll find that specific people will have a higher profile as opposed to others; that is what happens with 100% commercial stations, where you get a DJ standing out on their own. So with us, we don't do that; we market all our DJs on the same level. Infact, we market every single person at Lotus FM as a personality, because the community that we serve is very closed. We're not a station that reaches out to mass communities; we reach out to a niche community, to the Indian community. And they have a specific lifestyle; they have specific wants and needs, and the mix of Westernization and the Eastern element is now so absolutely clear. Previously, with our community, we had this blurring of lines, where you had a very ultra-Indian community, and the Western element was here and there... you could get it in snatches. It would manifest itself, maybe, in terms of dress, but ultimately, the food and the music, and what you did in terms of going to the movies, etc., was dominated by Indian influence. These days it's not like that. Now, the Western influence is stronger than the Eastern influence, and if you take that in the context of radio, you are now facing great competition because the Western stations are now your direct competition. You can have a hundred Indian stations open up, and they wouldn't be as much competition to you as a Western station. And that's the unique situation Lotus FM faces. So, combating that aspect of competition means that you now have to go into a Western dominated environment and fight them with an Eastern station. So how do you do that? You start absorbing Western influences into what you're doing. So, you'd find that on Lotus FM, the programmes are very

Westernized; even though we play Indian music, you'll find the elements of talk, what the DJs say and how they say it, and things that we do as a station, has a very huge Western influence

Sunita : Tell me, what are some of the major events that Lotus has staged, by which you're directly reaching into the community? Some major events you can give me examples of? I know you've got the 140 years celebration coming up.

Vimla : When you say major events, are you talking about whatever we've done or are you talking about what has happened in the past year?

Sunita : I'm talking about things that you have done.

Vimla : Things that we have done, okay. I think one of our strongest roles as a radio station... also very unique, very, very unique, because there isn't a South African Indian music industry... there is not for the Indian community... So, Lotus found itself as not just the station that played the music, but we suddenly had to produce the music. And we created something called 'The Lotus FM Song-Writing Contest', and that was done on the basis of encouraging people to write Indian music. We did a competition around that concept, and then they won prizes. But, the idea was to literally build the South African base. And so, every second year we would have, guaranteed, fifteen songs; three songs in each of the languages, because we cater for the five languages. So, we'd have fifteen songs guaranteed, that we can add to the station's local music base. And that was very, very well appreciated; it was something that the community looked forward to. I think that concept has now been scrapped because we're not doing anything this year; this would have been the Song Contest year. Then, we've done huge things linked to other radio stations, and linked to the SABC: the Freedom concerts, and when we had Madiba's release... we did things like that. Another big marketing initiative, going away from an event, was when we staged the Coup as a Station, and we were the only Station that had Nelson Mandela on the station, for an hour. And he had never granted a one-hour interview to any other radio station in the country. But at his request, he came on to Lotus. And he did that because he valued the Indian vote and he valued the Indian community, and he showed it. And that was his way of showing it. And which better platform were you gonna get, than Lotus? So, he used that. That was also a milestone. Then, when we went through the transformation of Lotus FM from one of the regular SABC stations into this PBS station, in 1995,... then we had the Radio Lotus Transformation Committee set up by the SABC and SABC Board, and they decided which way we would go. So, we used to be a music-driven station, and then in 1995, we moved from music-driven station to a station that had to inculcate things like talk, sport, women's issues,

youth issues... we had to go with current affairs, things that the station would never usually focus on. Those were elements we had to now bring into the station. So, we launched the station on that basis. And the event that drew the biggest crowd ever for the station, where 40 000 people came together at one venue and danced till they dropped till 2:00 in the morning, was our launch function to launch the Lotus FM Bhangra Bash... to have our birthday celebration and a Freedom celebration... everything rolled into one. And that was in 1996 in Phoenix. And the Rydalvale Grounds couldn't hold the crowd. That was so huge! So, that worked very well. Then, we actually helped the Chatsworth Fair; the Aryan Benevolent Home Council approached us and we set up the ABH Radio Lotus Chatsworth Fair; it used to be called that. And for eight years, we were the anchor, media sponsor of that fair, and we set it up. And we had some huge showings of that. The Song Contest and the ABH Fair Eastern Extravaganza, used to be done in conjunction with our sister programme on TV. Unlike Lotus, there isn't a TV channel for the Indians in South Africa. So, you have a TV programme that's given, like, two or three hours, dependent on how it is structured then. At that time, it was a two-hour programme, the *Eastern Mosaic*... and it wasn't called *Eastern Mosaic* at that time; it was called *Impressions*. And *Impressions* and Radio Lotus used to host the Radio Lotus Song Contest, and *Impressions* and Lotus used to host this huge simulcast extravaganza, at the fair, and they used to play it on TV. It was fantastic the way the community used to support it. Those are some of the initiatives that we've done. In the past year, we haven't done anything on that huge a scale. We've had our regular events that would pull crowds of between 10 and 15 000, but we haven't done anything extraordinary, anything that has stood out. Maybe we're going into that phase now, because we're launching, for the first time, the Lotus FM book, and we've never launched a book before. This is linked to the programme; *The Best of the Weekend Lift-Off*. So, maybe that's a different way of marketing the station and eventing it.

Sunita : Okay. With great competition and threat from rival stations, how is Lotus FM's marketing strategy going to change?

Vimla : We're in the process of finalizing strategy for the station. The marketing strategy can only come into place one direction has been set for the station. Right now, that direction doesn't exist. Right now, we are literally in limbo; we are coasting on what we were before and we are coasting on things that just come up on a daily basis. Until the strategy is in place, until you know that we changing the station from 'A' to 'B', and 'B' has these needs, and we now have to focus the station's marketing in that direction, you can't come up with a plan. So, we don't, at the moment, have a plan of action to combat competition; we have a plan of action that sustains the station out there. The plan, I think, right

now, is just to keep us afloat until we get the go-ahead from the powers that be that say, "Okay now, Lotus FM is gonna be this or that or that", and we're in that process right now. So I can't give you a forward thinking plan. I can only tell you where we're at right now. As soon as we have got the strategy in place, and it's been accepted, then the marketing plan goes boom, right into action. Then we say, "Right, this is where we're at, this is what we're going to do... we need to do various things". We will come up with new concepts, new ideas and then we start pushing. Then we start going on an anti-competition drive. Right now, we just need to ensure our survival as the station we are

Sunita : Okay, one more thing about reaching into the community. We're reading about this hundred and forty years of the arrival of the Indians in South Africa, and Lotus is planning something at the Bay of Plenty.

Vimla : Okay, Lotus is not planning Lotus, because of budget constraints, very seldom goes out and spends money on doing huge events. We do what is known as piggy-backing; we will get an organization that will approach us and say, "We would like Lotus to come in on this". Okay? For example, this production of *Taal*, that's gonna happen at the Playhouse; an extravaganza of Indian classical dance and music. Now, they come to me and they say, "We would like to do this", or I hear about it and I phone them and say, "Lotus can get involved in this; it's an excellent opportunity". So, we look for opportunities and then we say, "We will come in as media's partner on this basis", and we set up a contract and then we publicize the event; we don't put it together. So, in the same way, the Bay of Plenty event, to mark the 1860 arrival, is an event initiated by one of the different organizations arranging different activities, and that organization is putting the event together, and they've approached Lotus. And we took a decision as management, that the 1860 arrival is important. Okay? And we will associate ourselves with any organization that is doing something that is not going to be for commercial gain. We will associate with any organization that's doing something that's community-driven; and this is a community-driven initiative. So, we are media partners, so we publicize the event and we participate in the event in terms of DJs being present at the different events. But we don't do the actual legwork, as to putting in the event together; we give input. I am involved as Marketing Manager; any initiative Lotus gets involved in, I get involved in on a planning basis. So, I give input on that because we have very high standards at the station, and we've got to ensure that those standards are met. And it's my daily job to ensure that whoever comes to us and says, "We want to be a partner", has to be prepared to meet the standards we set. So, that is part of my job. So, that function is coming up this weekend, and it's gonna be lots of different things; they've got religious groups involved, they've got language groups involved, they've got entertainment groups



involved... musicians, band, singers, dancers... they're going to have fireworks display, they're going to have different people come in and give speeches, and all those things are going to happen. But, it is done on the basis of our standard, but their initiative.

Sunita : Alright!

Vimla : Is that it?

Sunita : That's it. Thank you!

Vimla : You're welcome, Sunita.

## APPENDIX A4

Transcribed Interview of Mrs Amravathi Maistry, Presenter – *Sungeetha Nilayamu*,  
Lotus FM

Date: 17 October, 2000

- Sunita : Your full name and the programme(s) you present.
- Amravathi : My name is Amravathi Maistry and the programme I present is called *Sungeetha Nilayamu*.
- Sunita : Okay. When did you join Lotus FM?
- Amravathi : Twelve years ago, Sunita.
- Sunita : Okay! And have you been presenting *Sungeetha Nilayamu* since then itself, I mean?
- Amravathi : Yes; just that the title of the programme was different, but it's basically the same programme.
- Sunita : What was it called that time?
- Amravathi : It was first called *Telegu Treasure House* and then it was called *Namaskaram*. And just from recently, not about four years now, we call it *Sungeetha Nilayamu*.
- Sunita : Okay, what does *Sungeetha Nilayamu* mean and how did you decide on the name as being so?
- Amravathi : *Sungeetha Nilayamu* in Telegu means 'a house of music'.
- Sunita : Okay, it's Telegu...
- Amravathi : Telegu music.
- Sunita : And how did you decide to bring it from the old name of *Namaskaram* to...
- Amravathi : No, no, it wasn't our decision; it was management.
- Sunita : Management?
- Amravathi : Management decided to change the name of the programme.

- Sunita : To what? Make it more culturally viable or what?
- Amravathi : Probably that's what he had in mind.
- Sunita : And what kind of people or community does the programme target? What kind of people?
- Amravathi : Okay! To start off with, Sunita, you must know that Telegu community is very small in South Africa; we're about the lowest. And I think, basically we reach more of the over thirty-fives (35's).
- Sunita : Over thirty-fives?
- Amravathi : Yeah. The younger people are more into English music; I think every language group has this problem, but I think it's a little more serious in the Telegu community. And targeting, I think, over the thirty-five years.
- Sunita : Okay. And what kind of a programme would you classify *Sungeetha Nilayamu* as: cultural, religious, mixed; what kind is it?
- Amravathi : Well, mixed because it's very cultural for one thing because we have all the ... any functions that come up in the course of the year, we have talks on those things. And, what did you say, else?
- Sunita : It's religious? I mean...
- Amravathi : Yeah, absolutely religious. Religious and cultural in the way that we speak mostly in the vernacular; I speak mostly in Telegu, and in English, but lots in Telegu. And the music for the two hours, is only Telegu music.
- Sunita : And you produce your show?
- Amravathi : Yes, I compile my own music and I present the programme.
- Sunita : How do you decide on what music to play?
- Amravathi : Well, I try my level best not to repeat music, for one thing. I do have a section where I, for example now, have pop music as well, remix, I do, but not much of it. And then I also have Karnatic music for half an hour because I have a lot of people that listen to Karnatic music and for half an hour every Tuesday evening, I have Karnatic music. And then I play semi-classical, and I play re-mixed versions that we have, like for the first hour or so.

Sunita : Okay, these re-mixed versions that you have, are you by any chance, through this re-mixed version, trying to get the younger age group Telegu listeners to come in?

Amravathi : Absolutely, absolutely!

Sunita : Alright! And to what extent do you involve your listeners in your programme? What is their contribution?

Amravathi : We have a listener's choice. I have a slot called 'Let's Learn', where I teach Telegu for a few minutes and actually the listeners don't get involved in it, but I do have this. And listener's choice, they send me a fax or something to say what music they would like, and I play their music.

Sunita : Okay. And feedback from the listeners? Do they write to you, send you faxes and do you like take their views into account when, let's say, compiling your show one week in advance?

Amravathi : Yes I do, I do. I would say this much, maybe I'm ashamed to say it: the feedback is not as good as I would like it to be, but you do get the odd people that write in and phone-in and things like that.

Sunita : Okay! The songs on your show... you said you play pop, re-mix, film songs obviously...

Amravathi : Classical, film hits, love songs.

Sunita : Okay, and to what extent does your programme also feature local content, like South African local singers singing in Telegu?

Amravathi : We do have a feature on that and we don't have many local Telegu songs in our library, but what we do have, I do play them. I do play local music.

Sunita : And what about the availability of the music in Lotus? Telegu music – is there a lot of it or do you have trouble getting hold of Telegu music?

Amravathi : Yeah, we used to have a lot of trouble before, you know, and the latest music, we never used to get the latest music. But now it's not as bad. Yeah, we're getting some very new music.

Sunita : So when new music comes in, are you asked to come and go through it, listen to the CDs or cassettes? Or is it done by the music library?

Amravathi : It's done by the librarians.

Sunita : And then you play it on your show?

Amravathi : Yeah.

Sunita : Okay, and you say you present in English as well as Telegu, mostly in Telegu?

Amravathi : I speak in English and in Telegu, yes!

Sunita : What percentage of your programme, would you say, is talk and how much is music-driven?

Amravathi : Much more music, much more music; say 75%.

Sunita : Music-driven?

Amravathi : Yeah, I would say.

Sunita : *Sungeetha Nilayamu*, what is the aim of your show? I mean, it's to...

Amravathi : To get the Telegu... Telegu music is lovely, let me tell you that. Music is lovely, right? So, it's to get the people to appreciate; like Karnatic music is not everybody's cup of tea.

Sunita : True.

Amravathi : Karnatic is classical, right? It's not everybody's cup of tea, but I notice now there's a lot of people that are enjoying this slot on Karnatic music. Yeah. And I would like more people to sort of appreciate it. See, there's great composers like Swami Tyagaraja, Bhadrachara Ramdas; their music, their lyrics, is something else.

Sunita : Okay, you mentioned that a very small proportion of the community is Telegu.

Amravathi : Yes.

Sunita : As per the feedback you get, whatever little faxes or e-mails coming to you, are they mostly from the KZN province or maybe Gauteng and Cape Town?

Amravathi : KZN.

Sunita : Mostly KZN?

Amravathi : KZN, little bit of Gauteng. There's a few people that call in from Gauteng, but mostly from KZN.

Sunita : Okay, and how has the content of your programme changed over the years? I mean, in the past twelve years that you've been at Lotus FM, how has the content of the show changed? I mean, have the features been the same or with changing times have you brought about new features?

Amravathi : No, there's a few new features. We never had 'Listener's Choice' and 'Let's Learn' and things like that. These are new features on the programme.

Sunita : And what further changes do you plan on bringing on the programme, if there are going to be any changes?

Amravathi : We don't plan on that, you see.

Sunita : Okay, you may not plan that, but let's say if you were given to continue with the show, there might be some changes you would want to bring about, like maybe get listeners to call in and talk to you.

Amravathi : Right; that's what I would like. I'd like more listener involvement; that's something I would like very much, which if ever I'm asked to say, I would say that I'd like listener involvement. And something that I don't have on my programme, that I would like, is competitions. Competitions where, maybe that will arouse the interest in the listeners as well, you see. And maybe listenership will grow that way.

Sunita : Continuing, I want to ask you, you get two hours in one week?

Amravathi : It's a two hour programme, yes.

Sunita : Do you think that's enough for the kind of programme you're doing?

Amravathi : Two hours for the evening, that's fine at a stretch, but not for the week.

Sunita : Not for the week?

Amravathi : Not for the week, not for the week! But I don't think more than two hours at a time would be suitable, but like another day probably in the week.

Sunita : Like twice a week for two hours?

Amravathi : Yeah.

Sunita : And how much time do you spend producing your show? I'm sure you prepare one week in advance.

Amravathi : Yes I do, I always come in and do my homework. Okay!

Sunita : And how much of your time does that take?

Amravathi : About three hours.

Sunita : To produce the show?

Amravathi : Yeah, because I've got to listen to the songs, you see. And then we don't want repetition; I don't want to repeat what I played the week before last, for example. Maybe I would do it if I don't come and check the songs, check with my scripts and things like that. So a lot of work goes into it, Sunita.

Sunita : And your show is completely scripted?

Amravathi : Not completely, just talk.

Sunita : Now the 'Let's Learn' part, where you teach the listeners the language, how do you decide on... I mean, expressions or...

Amravathi : You see, I was doing words, just words. Sometime back we did sentences. But it's two weeks now I'm doing a story, a little story, a short story.

Sunita : So what, you say it in Telegu?

Amravathi : Not the whole story! Half, I go half. I go to a point where I think it's suitable for me to stop, and then I continue it next week

Sunita : So do you say it in Telegu?

Amravathi : I say it in Telegu and I tell them in English, yes.

Sunita : Okay now there must be some people, your listeners, who call you while you're doing your show. Now when they do call you, if they do, do they speak to you in English or do they try conversing with you in Telegu?

Amravathi : Some of them talk in Telegu and I have a lot of them calling while my programme is on, to tell me that they're enjoying the music. So, some of them talk in Telegu, some of them speak in English. Another thing

I'd like to tell you: not only the Telegu people listen to the programme, there's a lot of Gujarati people because of the fact that... you know, Ram Bhajans and all is in everybody's thing, you see.

Sunita : Yes, yes.

Amravathi : So I have a cross section of people listening to the programme.

Sunita : And overall what has your experience been so far at Lotus? You love what you do?

Amravathi : Wonderful! I love music. I come from a family that's very musically inclined, I've got a sister that's a classical singer. So this is something that I just love.

Sunita : Okay.

Amravathi : A lot of people ask me how come I'm still so young, I'm twelve years... when I started here, I looked the same. I said, "it's the music" (laughs)

Sunita : I guess that's one thing that keeps our culture alive, it's the music.

Amravathi : And also culture, right, true.

Sunita : Well, thank you!

Amravathi : Thank you Sunita.

Sunita : Thank you so much – *Sungeetha Nilayamu*.

Amravathi : Namaskaram to you!



## APPENDIX A5

### Transcribed Interview of Hamesh Seegobin, Record Librarian, SABC & Music Compiler of *Tamasha*

Date: 18 October, 2000

Sunita : *Tamasha* –what kind of music do you play on the programme?

Hamesh : Firstly, it's local; some of it local, some of it international. It's basically Chutney, Bhojpuri and Nagaara.

Sunita : Okay. And what kind of people, do you think, listen to this programme? Or what kind of listeners are you targeting via this *Tamasha*?

Hamesh : It will be difficult for me to say. I mean, me being so young, I'd say anybody that understands that music or enjoys that kind of music, will listen to it. So I wouldn't say it's targeted at any age group or anything like that, because I started listening to this music from the age of about twelve.

Sunita : Now this kind of music, you won't exactly classify it as being Hindi or Tamil language-wise? It's a mixture, I'd say.

Hamesh : Well, at the moment if you look at the market, based on language if you look at it, about 90% of the music that I have, is mainly Hindi language, but there are several local artistes that, you know, convert it into the Tamil vernacular, whatever.

Sunita : Okay, you compile the music for *Tamasha*. It's just a totally music-driven show, right? And there's no talk, I mean except for the presenter who's introducing the songs?

Hamesh : That's right.

Sunita : On what basis do you decide what songs to play and which artiste's song to play?

Hamesh : What I normally do is... there is, I wouldn't say a lot of Chutney, Nagaara or Bhojpuri music that we have in this country. So it's very difficult for me to have like a programme with different artistes every week, you know. So as far as possible, I try not to repeat songs. But what I normally do, is I give the programme a 50-50% content: 50% international artistes, 50% local artistes. So that's how I base by programmes every week, and there are female artistes as well that sing this kind of music. So, it's a mixture;

it all depends on what my mood is like and whatever it is, that's how I compile the programme.

Sunita : And how often do you face a problem of songs being repeated on a week-to-week basis?

Hamesh : Well, not very often. You know, maybe you might hear it every third week or something like that, which I try not to do as far as possible. But maybe the artiste you will hear, but not that very same song. So that's how I go about doing the programme.

Sunita : Okay, I know you're not the presenter but somebody else presents the programme. But are you aware of feedback from listeners; people calling in and asking for a particular song that was played? And do you get feedback from listeners about what they think?

Hamesh : What we normally do... I mean I've seen a few faxes that came which JJ showed to me and I normally get calls on a Monday morning saying that there was a certain song played, where is it available although we do make mention that most of the music is from a certain store. So yeah, we do get feedback from them. You do get people phoning and saying, "listen, we hear this artiste all the time" and whatever. And I've got to explain to them that this is the music that we have and I mean, if I've got more music, I will play it. So yeah, we do get feedback from the people out there.

Sunita : Do you think there's a big market out there for this kind of music?

Hamesh : I would say yeah, if it's advertised properly and maybe if we have another time slot, it might go even better. Because if you look at a Saturday night, most of the people are getting ready between 7:00 and 8:00 to go to the clubs and to go wherever, and there's a wedding on or there's some function and things like that. So if maybe we had another time slot, definitely we'll have a wider or more listenership for that programme.

Sunita : Okay, one final question I want to ask you: what is it about this Chutney and Nagaara music that makes it so different from the movie songs that one hears during the normal course of the day on Lotus FM?

Hamesh : Basically, if you listen to the songs and if you listen to the meanings, you'll understand. There is a song that actually speaks about real life happenings like family conflicts, in other words mother-in-law is not liking daughter-in-law or whatever. And then there is another song which is my favorite, where they sing about 'doosar ke dhanwa'. In other words, where you will never progress if you live off somebody else's wealth. In other words, if you steal from somebody you will not progress in life, and

that kind of thing. So, you know, those songs are based on real life happenings, day-to-day life things. And then the music that goes with it, it's not like you're listening to electronic instruments and whatever. There they've the actual Nagaara itself, the tabla, the dholak and whatever. So, I like that kind of music; I've grown up with it basically and I was a singer once upon a time. So that's it.

Sunita : Okay! Thank you!

Hamesh: You're welcome

## *APPENDIX A6*

**Transcribed Interview of Raeesa Mohamed Malek, Announcer/Producer, Lotus FM**

Date: 18 October, 2000

Sunita : Your designation at Lotus FM, Raeesa.

Raeesa : My designation is Announcer/Producer.

Sunita : You present a programmed called *Online*.

Raeesa : Yes.

Sunita : And what kind of a programme is that?

Raeesa : It's a basic talk show format; it's also a listener phone-in and it's a help-line. Okay? So, we used to do a straight talk show in the past and we realized that what people really needed was help in different areas. So what we're doing now, is, on Monday to Friday we have different categories; like Monday we have medical, Tuesday we have legal, Wednesday psychiatry, etc. And we have a doctor, different specialists in the studio each week, for example for *Medical Online*, talking about a different disease. And then we get people phoning-in with questions.

Sunita : What kind of an age group or community are you targeting by this programme? Basically, what kind of age group do you think is listening to this programme?

Raeesa : Six to sixty! It's very broad. I think Lotus itself has a very wide target market and well, I don't target my show towards children at all. It's definitely for an adult market. But as far as age-wise goes and so far as adults are concerned, that's pretty wide.

Sunita : Okay, how do you decide the topics that you're going to talk about?

Raeesa : Well, I have those specific categories, as I said. So, I work within those and I just try and think. For example, for *Medical*, look at different illnesses, diseases; *Legal*, I look at, you know, different problems, legal issues and problems that people might have and want to talk about. And I get information from talking to people, from newspapers, from e-mails that listeners send me, and also phone calls. You know, people phone and say, "Can you please talk about this?" So I get a lot of my ideas from there as well.

- Sunita : So there's a lot of feedback on your show from listeners?
- Raeesa : I don't know what is a lot, but I do get a fair amount; yes.
- Sunita : It's a community-orientated programme, I would say. There's a lot of community involvement in your show, isn't it? Because you said that sometimes they suggest topics or they say 'talk about this' and of course, you decide then.
- Raeesa : Yes.
- Sunita : How much of your time goes into the production of the show?
- Raeesa : I'd say it takes at least a couple of hours a day and sometimes, say one or two days I don't come into the office during the day, it means doubling up on another day. This week, I've been in everyday. It's Wednesday today; I've been in everyday and I've spent a few hours everyday, you know, producing, which means trying to get hold of people because everyday I have to have a guest, it's a help-line and I need an expert in the studio. So trying to get hold of the appropriate person, the best person for the show, for the topic, booking them in, getting confirmation, and then of course, working through the information because I have to prepare for each show. So, I need to prepare questions, I need to know what I'm talking about. I can't just go in cold, not know anything about the topic, you know.
- Sunita : The *Online* programme was started last year November after Naresh joined and Lotus came out with a new look, a different format?
- Raeesa : Yes.
- Sunita : You said you felt there was a need before the programme came on, to get listener involvement, and how do you think this programme has actually helped you and the community; in what ways?
- Raeesa : It gives a great sense of achievement when you know that you've actually helped someone, even if it's just one person per show, you know, you get someone who... Well, you know what, it's much more than just one person because by virtue of the number of calls we get and you have a guest in the studio; they have a problem, they have a question and it's dealt with immediately. So that's great! But it also goes further than that when you get calls after the show and they say, "I heard your show and this is my story", and then you know if you provide them with numbers or contact people and then they manage to get their problem sorted out, they manage to get help from there, it's wonderful because then you know that you're really doing something positive.

Sunita : Do you feel that two hours per day, five days a week, is enough time in what you're doing?

Raeesa : No, it's an hour and a half.

Sunita : Sorry, an hour and a half, 8:30 to 10:00.

Raeesa : I must admit that sometimes it's too long because you get certain issues that might be the kind of issues that people need the most help on, but they don't want to talk about it. So what happens is I do a programme like rape or child abuse, and people who are affected by that don't want to talk about it; they don't want to come out; so, we don't get any calls. So we're sitting there for an hour and a half, with a guest opposite... Well, I'm sitting there with a guest opposite me and we have to sustain that topic for an hour and a half and really, after forty-five minutes, you run out of questions, you know, and if you don't get calls, it's tough. And it's a difficult situation because you can't deal with it by not doing the topic; one has to talk about those issues and yet you do understand if people don't want to phone and talk about things like that. Sometimes it's not long enough because there are some things like pensions and grants and water leaks and things like that, that everyone wants to talk about. And then you don't have enough time.

Sunita : From the time the programme started, *Online*, last year November, till now, did you feel that initially not so many people used to call in; they were hesitant; but then obviously, the number of phone calls and people calling in has increased and people are more forthcoming now in coming on the air and asking their questions?

Raeesa : You see, you can't really look at November last year because before that we had *Viewpoint*, and *Viewpoint* tackled the same issues. Although it wasn't a daily thing, we could handle other topics as well. But we did have shows where we talked about rape and people came on. I can say that when *Viewpoint* first started, which was five years ago, yes, it was very quiet. And it was actually a process of education for people to realize that it's okay to talk about these things and to open up and share their experiences. Definitely, there has been an improvement in that over the years; not just from November last year.

Sunita : So the basic difference between your *Viewpoint* and your *Online*, is that you've actually got a specialist in the studio who's there to answer any queries that your listeners have?

Raeesa : Absolutely! Yes!

Sunita : And how long have you been at Lotus?

Raeesa : Five years.

Sunita : And you have been doing a talk show ever since you joined Lotus?

Raeesa : I started with current affairs, talk show and I was doing both. Since November last year, I'm doing just the talk show, not current affairs.

Sunita : Where do you see Lotus FM five years from now?

Raeesa : We will have... what's the Indian population for the...

Sunita : In KZN it's 9.6%, in the country, 2.6%...

Raeesa : Okay, in the country it's over a million. I think we should have almost a million listeners and with lots of advertising and great music and lots of events and people just going crazy about Lotus FM.

Sunita : Thank you Raeesa Mohamed Malek.

Raeesa : Thank you.

## APPENDIX A7

### Transcribed Interview of Saffee Siddiqui, Presenter – *Guldasta*, *Qawwali Hour*, Lotus FM

Date: 18 October, 2000

- Sunita : How long have you been at Lotus FM? Since when?
- Saffee : With this Lotus FM, I personally am for about three years, just short of three years, I would imagine, I think. But then I'm just talking about Lotus FM, not SABC.
- Sunita : Okay, but you were with the SABC before that?
- Saffee : Oh, right from the beginning. I don't think you were anywhere around...
- Sunita : Born that time?
- Saffee : Let's put it that way, yeah!
- Sunita : Okay, you do two programmes basically: *Guldasta* and the *Qawwali Hour*.
- Saffee : Right.
- Sunita : So I'm going to ask you about *Guldasta* first. You've been presenting *Guldasta* since what, the past three years or just recently?
- Saffee : Yeah, just about that; yes, yes.
- Sunita : Okay, did you give the programme its name? *Guldasta*, was it named by you?
- Saffee : I think, I can't remember...but there was a choice. It used to be called something else before and then... no, I don't think I gave it *Guldasta*. But it's a beautiful name though; it's a bouquet.
- Sunita : What does 'guldasta' mean?
- Saffee : 'Gul' means flower; it's a Persian word. 'Dasta' also means... it's a Persian word, and 'Guldasta' means a flower in the hand, and a flower in the hand is a bouquet. And so, that's how I call it; the bouquet of flowers, which is, in my case... when I normally introduce my programme, I will say, "Now here's a bouquet of ghazals and songs in Urdu", Urdu –



orientated. Obviously it's targeted for the Urdu language or something with Urdu in it.

Sunita : Okay, so that will probably be the Muslim community.

Saffee : Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sunita : Okay. What kind of songs do you play on your show?

Saffee : Mainly ghazals. My programme is not a religious programme, even though I do start my first number with a divine number or something. But otherwise it's basically love – ghazals; just that kind of poetry in Urdu. But today, you know, with the Hindustani, what we call the Hindustani, which is a combination of Urdu and Hindi, is a totally language itself. So sometime you listen to a film song from India and you ask yourself, "Is it Hindi or Urdu?" And you'll say, "No, it's Urdu, no, it's Hindi". So, I have accepted certain songs from films, which has a certain standard or style of ghazals. Ghazals has its own style of composition that is not set on musical notes; it's set on just metres of lines and so I concentrate mainly on the songs like 'dulhe ka sehra suhana lagta hai'. Now that's a ghazal; you can see the metres are equal and it goes all over like that. So, that's how I select. Then, it must be sort of Urdu orientated. So that's my programme. In my programme, like I said, it's Urdu, but it caters for all age groups. I have a bit of classic, a bit of standard ghazals, the ghazals of the type of Ghalib era or the Moghul times, from those days. And I have ghazals for modern people, ghazals by modern writers like Javed Akhtar or Gulzar, people like that. And my whole idea is not only the listeners must enjoy the show but they must also learn the Urdu, whereby I got a format called 'Suno Seekho', listen and learn, and that song is requested by the listener to be played and they want to know what it means, which I do that, and of course, the listeners learn from there. And I know it's quite successful because a lot of people tell me that, you know; they have compiled a little dictionary of words that they have picked up from this kind of thing. And to me, that is achievement in the sense of the whole idea of educating our people with our language. Talking about language, I don't want them to lose touch with their mother tongue, whichever it is, whether it is Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil and Telegu. I'm happy that Lotus has accommodated all these five languages and I've very proudly on many occasions, in many functions... you know, I am involved in a lot of cultural work., told the world that ours is the only station in the continent to broadcast in all to all eight or nine languages, and no other station broadcasts what we do from Lotus FM.

Sunita : So you speak in Urdu on your show? Totally?

Saffee : Almost.

Sunita : Almost?

Saffee : I do of course, accommodate English, and some of my listeners speak in Gujarati, you know. I speak quite a bit of Hindi, but mainly Urdu and a bit of English.

Sunita : And a bit of English, okay! The music for your show, is it easy for you to get the kind of songs you need, or do you have to look hard?

Saffee : No, I have to look hard. They're not easily available unlike the film songs, which are produced practically every week: new songs, that is. With us, we have to keep dragging, keep looking, keep searching and my listeners help me so much. I've just left a parcel in the studio now; it just came downstairs. A friend of mine from Cape Town sends me three beautiful ghazals, you know, and they themselves want to see that the rest of South Africa must enjoy this ghazal because it's not obtainable here. So it's a type of specialized programme in the sense that you don't get it easily in the market; you have to hunt for it.

Sunita : So there's a lot of listener involvement in your programme?

Saffee : Very much, they're there. I'm very happy to say and what makes me happy, Sunita, is that all, the Gujarati speaking, the Hindi speaking and the Urdu speaking .. You will be surprised I get more correspondence from non-Urdu speaking people than Urdu speaking people. And that makes me happy because that's what I want to do. Because it is a language, it should be understood by all of us. Like I understand Hindi, why can't the Hindi fellow understand Urdu? Likewise Gujarati, if I can speak, read and write Gujarati, why can't the Gujarati person, you know, that kind of attitude. Unfortunately I can't say the same thing about the southern languages. So therefore, I am little bit out of touch with those two languages.

Sunita : So the age group of the predominant listeners who listen to you, is ranging from teenager or probably the...

Saffee : I would think the majority are twenty-five onwards. I've got a nice group of campus... I call them the Campus Cats, and it's building up in a coffee shop in Cape Town, and I met these youngsters who will gather on a Wednesday evening at a coffee - house in the gardens in Cape Town... just Cape Town University. They will go there for their coffee and have their pictures and call what you like, and they've got this little transistor and they listen. And I play numbers that will suit them: beatty numbers, but Urdu words. I will not select a song with an English word in it, but will have the beat, because to me, music is everybody's property. I won't say,

“Nah, now that’s Islamic music”; no, will not say. But we are talking about *Guldasta*. If we talk about qawwali, then I would say, “Right, now this is qawwali and qawwali is not that.” So therefore I will say now, “This is reserved for qawwali”.

Sunita : Okay so let’s talk about your *Qawwali Hour*, which you present. How would you define a ‘qawwali’? What is a qawwali?

Saffee : Qawwali is spiritual hymns that started about six seven hundred years ago from Delhi, at the time of the Moghuls and those people. And it started from a disciple for his Guru, a Saint who passed away, and these disciples were so saddened by his loss that they used to sit and cry and sing these pleads, “Allah ho” and all that kind of thing that created the hymns of qawwali. And it was followed-up by all the disciples in that area and then they used to sing for their Guru, for the Saint. And someday it went to another one, to another one and consequently it went out, out of the shrines into the public halls. Like here in South Africa, you take Khwaja Saheb who is in Ajmer; they have a great function for Khwaja Saheb, who’s from India, every year. But not everybody can go there. So what they do, they have that similar type of function here in South Africa, and they will sing hymns and songs like they would sing there at the shrine. So that’s how the qawwali came: from shrines, outside the shrines. And then it travelled to Bombay and the films took over. So, they include these qawwalis; but you will notice that... You take a film like *Fiza*. In *Fiza*, they’ve got their qawwali scene with the background of Haji Ali, which is a shrine. So it relates to Haji Ali; but then it doesn’t confine itself there. The tune of qawwali, the rhythm, the table and the harmonium, is all property of the qawwali; the clapping recognizes it.

Sunita : And it’s quite beaty!

Saffee : Very beaty! And it has been adapted for modern... Like you say this song ‘dulhe ka sehra suhana lagta hai’, it’s got a qawwali beat, but it’s not a holy song; it is a modern song.

Sunita : True.

Saffee : So that’s how qawwali got it. But obviously you will ask, and it is, basically a Muslim orientated thing. But today if you go to Bombay, it is becoming a universal thing because they sing non-Islamic numbers in that beaty tune of qawwali, like in ‘tunisa nahin dekha’ and all that, where Rishi Kapoor or somebody, they sing, you know; qawwali beat, but modern songs.

Sunita : But it’s got a very deep meaning.

- Saffee : Very deep, very, very deep! That is something. I mean if you come to a qawwali mehphil, what we call a qawwali function, and the qawwals are sitting and these people will sit on the floor. And when they start, they get into a trance and then they get carried away. If you listen to Nusrat numbers, he will repeat one word about fifteen to thirty times. Why? Because the man down there is gone, so you got to sing otherwise he'll get a heart attack, he may die. So they've got to sing as many times as his body asks him. You know he'll go like that (moves head from side to side)... there in another world. It's very spiritual.
- Sunita : Now as compared to *Guldasta*, which features ghazals, and ghazals cannot be classified as either being totally Hindi or Urdu, because we have seen even normal 'filmy' songs that have got a word of Urdu that comes in between, qawwali you'll say is strictly Urdu, the language?
- Saffee : No, no.
- Sunita : No?
- Saffee : It started as a Bhojpuri, very much you know. 'Saajan ki galiyaan humke na bhaye', these were the words the qawwali started with in Delhi. Amri Khusro wrote the first composition in 'Chaap Tilak', then pure Hindi plus Bhojpuri Hindi. But gradually when Urdu came into being and it sort of altered the qawwali words into Urdu words, the beat remained, but the words began to change and today it became Urdu. But it's not necessarily Urdu, Urdu qawwali yes, but there's a lot of Hindi in it, but other Hindi... aawat hai, jaawat hai, saiyaan ke panghat pe, you know... that kind of words are used in qawwali.
- Sunita : They say that Hindi is a very expressive language, right? But would you agree with me when I say that when it comes to qawwali, the meaning that the Urdu words bring out, unless you don't understand it, you'll never understand the meaning of the qawwali?
- Saffee : No, no, I quite agree with you; absolutely! You have to know the language and for that sake, any language, if you want to appreciate a good song, and qawwali is sung to express. He will demand, he will say, "Sunitaji, suniye (listen)! Sher suniye!" The singer will say, "Saffee bhai, sher suniye!" Now he expects you to react and he says, "woh deewna gaya mehphil mein (that lover went into the gathering). Phir kya hua (then what happened)?" The audience will say, "Kya hua (what happened)?" Then he'll answer. Qawwali comes from the word 'qawl'. Qawl is an Arabic word; it means talk. Now the disciple was talking to his Guru and that qawl, that talking, became qawwali. So here the singers, they talk to the audience, and if the audience doesn't respond, they just sit like that. The fellow will get up and go, he says, "No good singing here because

they're not replying". But if you come to a qawwali mehphil, you must see how the crowd will react: "Wah wah (wow)! Kya baat hai (Well said)! Phir se bolo (say it again)!" These are the words... 'please' or throw money or do whatever you like, you know. And then he will tease you, he's talking 'zara parda hatado' (unlift the veil), you know, that kind of thing. It's very expressive, very expressive. But you've got to understand it.

Sunita : Do you do some talking on the show, the qawwali show, or is it basically music-driven?

Saffee : No, I do a bit of introduction. At some time I'll say, " This song you are about to hear is related to Saint (so and so) from Ajmer (or from Baghdad or from whatever)"; a little background to that or something about the singer... "He's the son of the famous Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan", so things like that; mainly introduction. But in *Guldasta* I do talk and tell them about the words, the language, selected song for the week that's requested by them, and then give them a detailed meaning of all the major words in the song and then play the song. And in *Guldasta* also, we have that classical corner where I play eight minutes classical numbers just to keep the old people happy. Like I say, it's a bouquet of flowers; so it's mainly not just Urdu only, but music wise too, I'll give them everything. I call it 'Campus Corner' and there I play very modern numbers. Like I'm going to play a Nusrat number tonight and it's very beauty music, re-mix you know; but just to keep the youngsters happy.

Sunita : Yeah, so I guess to draw also that market into your listenership.

Saffee : That's it; exactly!

Sunita : And the feedback you get on the *Qawwali* programme? What do you get: faxes, e-mails?

Saffee : I get e-mails, I get faxes, but telephones, oh... "Saffee bhai, you know (this) and (that)". Oh amazing; up from Lusaka, from Botswana; I get calls from there.

Sunita : The ones listening via satellite.

Saffee : Yeah! Harare, I get calls from there... "Saffee bhai, I've got (so and so) qawwal, I'm going to send it to you." Because they know that they went to India, they've got it, nobody will have it in South Africa. But they want it to be shared, which is a good thing because you know it's 'our station'; "Lotus is for everybody. If I got it what am I going to do? Let the world listen to it." So they send it to me; that's what happens.

- Sunita : In one week for the *Guldasta*, you get two hours. *Qawwali*, it's one hour in a week. Do you feel that enough time or...
- Saffee : Not for *Qawwali*.
- Sunita : Not for *Qawwali*?
- Saffee : And the only reason I think... it's so cruel. You know Sunita, the qawwali is something that starts slow and the tempo builds up and then people are beginning to do that (moves head from side to side) and then the clapping, and then the big part comes. This takes about fifteen minutes just to warm itself up. And then I've got to watch one hour. I've got to finish. So I've got to fade it off at times; can't finish the whole song. No qawwali is three or four minutes long.
- Sunita : That's what I wanted to ask you. Usually a song will be around four to five minutes long and you can play about eight or nine songs in one hour. But how many qawwalis, on an average, can you play in that one hour programme?
- Saffee : Five.
- Sunita : Maximum?
- Saffee : Hmm! It's so sad because there's so many different subjects, materials, but I can't play and I got to look at that... "huh, eleven minutes something, huh, fourteen minutes something; I can't do that". I trade them away. I must justify, you know, simple things like 'Fatima ki chudiyaan'... you know, her bracelet; there are stories behind this whole scene. People want to know 'why you don't play this story or this story?' I can't because if I play that, twenty-two minutes gone on just one song. It may not be everybody's cup of tea, you know, and then somebody says, "Oh, so long! It's so this, so that." Somebody will say that just when it's getting warmed up, you want to close. It's sad for *Qawwali*. But for *Guldasta*, I'm quite happy with two hours. In my mind, if I judge my own thing by the telephone calls, I don't think people get bored with the programme. And it could do with another half an hour or so, you know; I'd love it. But for *Qawwali*, definitely another one hour and then we could really play music.
- Sunita : So I guess that because of the duration of a qawwali, you don't very often repeat songs; the qawwals, is that what you call them?
- Saffee : Qawwals, yeah!
- Sunita : You don't very often repeat from like, a week to week basis... because there's so much and the time is so little, you must not be repeating too often?

Saffee : Yeah, yeah! Now you got the Indian qawwals and the Pakistani qawwals, you see... And the Indian qawwals are very much Urdu orientated and the Pakistani qawwals, are very much Punjabi influenced. So you know, that has taken a lead time to influence the listeners because Punjabi was foreign to them a few years back but now gradually they're beginning to accept Punjabi as part of our system, on Lotus, with the bhangras and all that kind of thing. And this is of course with qawwali. Majority of Pakistani singers are Punjabi speaking, so they have those Punjabi dialogues, Punjabi shers, in their songs. So therefore, I've got to differentiate between... I don't play pure Punjabi songs and yet quite a number of CDs that come from Pakistan, are Punjabi songs. I can't play Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan if majority of my listeners don't understand, because it's Punjabi, I can't play it. That's my drawback there.

Sunita : Are there local South African singers who sing qawwalis?

Saffee : Hmm! Quite a few!

Sunita : And how much of your programme, do you include local music; local qawwalis?

Saffee : You see, my problem is getting their material. You see, their material...and quite often they give me their cassette, but the quality is not nice and they're not in the same stages of cutting out CDs or something like that. But there are lots and I do play... in every programme, I must play one or two local ones but they're sort of repeated because I haven't got any, unless I go out of my way and get the tapes... 'cause every week there's a qawwali programme somewhere. In Durban, without any shadow of doubt, if you and I took a drive and we went to Phoenix and Chatsworth alone, just say only in Phoenix and Chatsworth... I will tell you that there are, at least twenty places where there's a qawwali programme going on, because every Muslim wedding or every religious function, what we call 'milaad' and things like that, must have qawwali. And in every home there will be a qawwali group singing; 90% of them are local... some places, some overseas people; they will come from Pakistan and their peer. But what I'm saying is that qawwali is so popular with the community, just like the chutney and all that musical shows they have before the wedding, the Hindu wedding... they must have a marquee and they must have some band playing there. So, qawwali is part of the Muslim wedding, always, and they are beginning also in Cape Town and Johannesburg. There are groups and... once a year we have these Saints, here called Badshah Peer and Sufi Saheb, and they have these huge gatherings every year and there, qawwals from all parts of South Africa, must come and a whole night's session goes on; just like in India, you

know. So, qawwali is very popular with our people in South Africa, at this stage. Any other questions?

Sunita : No, I think you've told me everything I need to know about the programmes you present.

Saffee : Thank you.

Sunita : Thank you so much.

Saffee : My pleasure. All the best for you!

Sunita : Thank you!



## APPENDIX A8

### Transcribed Interview of Fahim Jamadar and Sureshnie Govender, Presenters – *Spice-a-Delic*, Lotus FM

Date: 19 October, 2000

Sunita : Sureshnie, you've been doing *Spice-a-Delic*, since?

Sureshnie : I've been doing *Spice-a-Delic* since November 1<sup>st</sup>, last year, because the programme had changed; the station got a new chain of programmes, so I got to anchor the show myself. I was previously on *Rave-Wave*. So anyway, the show started last year November; it was *Spice-a-Delic* then and it was just myself anchoring. The name came about where we were talking about names... the whole staff, and they were messing around, not messing around. Basically, they were just brainstorming ideas on what a show should be called. None of us had had like a formal name or anything, but people were saying "Why don't you call this x,y and z", just going through programmes and I don't know how *Spice-a-Delic* came about, but it did, and it stuck.

Sunita : Were you producing your own show or was it being produced by someone else?

Sureshnie : Uhm, in the first.. Well, ideally the show was supposed to have a producer, but what happened is that our producer somehow eventually lost ties with *Spice-a-Delic*. That's the honest truth. So, I took on the show by myself, in terms of ideas. We had already decided, instead of... like for example, they call us 'hot clock', we decided what kind of features are gonna be on the show. So with her we had brainstormed ideas... okay, like two o'clock we'll have the news, at ten past we'll do a feature, at half past we'll do fashion on Monday, Tuesday be earth-matters. We had ideas for that, Monday to Friday. So, a basic programme schedule idea had already been drawn up between us. So that's how I was following it. So eventually, it was just me putting in things and me taking out stuff, or just getting interviews. That's how the show started coming about.

Sunita : *Spice-a-Delic* is a programme that's targeting the youth?

Sureshnie: Yeah, that's right; ideally, sixteen to twenty-four.

Fahim : Ideally, but actually we target all ages, you know, from kids... six, seven, eight year old kids, to adults, to old people you know, the aged- sixty seventy over.

- Sureshnie : When we go out, I've got old people saying that they influence or they encourage their kids to listen to our shows and they are great fans of the show because they're looking for something light and entertaining.
- Sunita : So, do you think *Spice-a-Delic*, the name, is one that's suitable for the market that you're targeting? Does it give it a 'youthish' name, as you would call it?
- Fahim : *Spice-a-Delic* is quite a youthish name.
- Sureshnie : Variety is the spice of life. We're catering for all of them, so we're giving them something of the best.
- Fahim : Yeah! See, that's what we've come up with now; variety being the spice of life, we have a variety. The music varies from re-mixes, hot stuff to... if we're in the mood, we'll play slow, romantic ballads or whatever.
- Sunita : And golden oldies?
- Fahim : Yeah, golden oldies; anything. So, we have a whole mix of stuff in one show. So we cater for everyone, you know, whether it's talk shows... You know, we get teenagers calling us, okay? And we get old people calling us for the same talk show, for the same topic, and we discuss stuff which affects people, not only kids or youth, you know.. stuff like that.
- Sunita : When did you join and start co-anchoring *Spice-a-Delic*?
- Fahim : I started in April this year.
- Sunita : Okay, has your show changed, Sureshnie, from what it was when you started in November, to what it is after Fahim joined in?
- Sureshnie : Yeah! Initially, it was just myself, obviously. Physically there's two people now. But in terms of... it's more exciting when there's two of us. Before it was just me talking about opinions. For example, 'Teen-Talk', it would have been just me giving my opinion and then looking for listeners and all. Teen-Talk now... Fahim has a different opinion, I have a different opinion and the listener out there is getting a mix of both. And now with Fahim, it's a different dynamic; he's brought in like a different feel and vibe to the show.
- Fahim : I think it's different from the, you know, everyday shows, where there's one person presenting. Here it's more like... often we get feedback from people who say, "Hey, we like listening into you all". Do you know? It's like they're listening into our conversations. And often we decipher the difference between, 'hey, now we're presenting' – "this song comes off so and so", whatever movie or whatever. And then we have own

conversations, where we talk and our whole way of talking is different then. When we're talking, we're messing around with each other on air. And we found that most people find that interesting; they're listening in to our conversation; it gives them a sense of eaves dropping. That's what they find interesting.

Sureshnie : It's like we welcome them into our lives.

Fahim : And we've created, on the show, our own style and our own way of presenting; it's different from the normal way throughout the day.

Sunita : Okay, what are the features on your show that are youth-oriented features?

Sureshnie : Monday to Friday at 2:30... Okay, 2:30 on Monday we've got Catwalk, which is... all the youth are into fashion and fashion's important; we have them know that we are in it or observing it. Tuesday we try to bring an environmental feature, environmental awareness, that's Earth Matters. Wednesday, it's the jukebox feature, called What's Jamming on the Jukebox, where young people can write and tell us about themselves, kind of like a pen-pal. And they can choose three songs. It's quite exciting. Thursday is Teen Beauty Scene where we talk about tips for the body and soul, and all of that. And Friday.. we divide Fridays between 2:20 which is Popcorn and Soda: what's happening on the movie scene, where they can go check out north-side, south-side and also what's happening in Hollywood. And we do Megabytes, which is a great internet feature; we talk about all the latest websites, what you can download, what's exciting, because most of the teenagers and youth have their hands on the mouse already, and they're interested in all of that. Monday to Friday we also do a sports update by sorting in Docky to come and tell us that. We have an older audience... people wanna know what's happening cricket-wise, they wanna know what's happening in the tennis scene. So that happens every single day at 2:45. We've introduced brand new features but before that, the Teen Talk feature was cut down to a bit. So between twenty past and twenty to, Monday to Friday, that is after three o'clock, we have... Monday, Wednesday, Friday, we talk about a topic; Tuesday and Thursday is dedications again. One of the brand new features that Fahim brought in both on Monday and Tuesday, is the Yes-No game and the And game, which is probably the greatest crowd-puller for us where people love it. It's thinking on their feet and being excited about not saying yet, not saying no, and talking about things without saying the word 'and'. Okay, we also have the fan-mail feature where people write in to us every single day. We read out their e-mails and their fan-mails and letters, and it gives them a sense of, you know, 'we belong to the show'; that you're a part of it and we're reading... Even if it's bad comments or even if its good comments, most of the time it's good comments, but when there are bad comments we don't censor it; we read it. And if there is something about

other jocks mentioned, we don't say, 'okay, that doesn't work in our programme' or 'we can't mention that'; it doesn't work like that. Whatever it is, if it's with Asha or anyone, management, we mention it because it's what fan-mail is all about. Because they don't touch with those jocks, they feel we are the link between them.

Fahim : I think, and we have, also given most of the Lotus FM jocks' lots of mileage in our show, 'cause we speak about everyone, you know. I mean we've had profiles done on everyone and we talk about everyone on the show.

Sureshnie : Or we include them even in our games where.. do you recognize it... most people don't really know, possibly, even the early morning DJs. They don't see enough of them. So, at least we talk about them; it makes them test to... 'Listen, I'm gonna go back and listen to that DJ' because Sureshnie and Fahim talked about him and I have no clue about him. Those are those who don't have access to the website. We talk about the website every single day; we've got a brand new website. We mention all the DJs, go through their profiles, and they go, 'Hey you know', 'Wow, I never knew that so and so liked that kind of cool drink; when I come to visit them at the SABC, I'll bring that cool drink'. And we talk about where we are, "come visit us down here". Even if you're in Johannesburg... people came from Johannesburg; they've come to say they feel welcomed. We've given that even in that kind of sense.

Sunita : The topics on your Teen-Talk, what are they based around? I mean do you get, sometimes, fan-mail saying, "Could you please talk about this, take views on this"?

Sureshnie : Yeah!

Sunita : Or do you like also look at what's current and what's happening, on your Teen-Talk topics?

Fahim : We always look at what's current and what's happening. There are those topics which you'd have to talk about, like drugs, sex before marriage, rape, date rape, all those things. But often we use our own experiences. It's like we start off our Teen-Talk as a conversation where, "Hey! You know what happened? I was driving along and I saw something that happened", and we go on talking about that and then we open it up to the public that 'what do you think about this? Give us a call and talk to us'. And often what we do is, before we even go on, we have planned that I would be for it and Sureshnie would be against it or I would be against it and Sureshnie would be for it. So we have all the opinions, the opposing views. They might not be my belief... I may not think that short skirts cause rape, but I might say that on air, just to cause conflict, okay?

- Sureshnie : Or introduce a third angle, which is pretty important.
- Fahim : Yeah, okay! And then people would start phoning. . "I agree with Fahim" or "I agree with Sureshnie", and it would go on
- Surita : And you also have your fans writing in to you and saying 'please talk about this topic or issues or anything'.
- Fahim : Yeah.
- Sureshnie : Even them phoning and saying, 'I like that... I don't like that'. There are a lot of off-air callers, who say, "No, we don't want to go on air", whatever. But people will say, "There are our problems". And even by listening to their problems, we get ideas for our future topics. We're not in high school, we don't even know. we can say "When we were in school", but that's like three or four or five years ago. What happened then and which schools we've been to is completely different to what's happening now. And the kids have changed and the dynamics have changed, which means we have to be on the pulse all the time. When the feedback with the letters that we get, or e-mail, or by... you know, 'this is what happened' and 'by the way, you know I'm having a problem at home with...', so you think about, 'okay, problems at home; what's happening with parents and kids, is there a problem with bridging the gap in terms of communication... let's talk about that. If we don't make it a proper Teen-Talk feature, we start it in terms of a phone-poll where we say, "What do you think about kids and parents: are they a lost cause or can it be built? You know, typical yes-no, what do you think?"- just to get an idea. And we give advice, even our thoughts. When we leave the show, we always have a quote or some kind of inspiration during the show where people tune in... probably having a bad day, they say, "True, what a nice thing to say". That makes you feel happy. We try to make them part of our family, as if you all are having a conversation with the two of us.
- Fahim : As we're speaking, we've got a fax, okay? The person says that 'people would be insane if they miss out on all the fun'. Just one person, one listener, what do they say about the show? They say it's 'awesome, wonderful, mind-blowing, funkified, the coolest show around', all that stuff. I think why people would say that; cause our show is not like conventional radio. If we're playing a song and in the middle of the song we think 'this song is boring', we cut it off, straightaway. You know, we'll cut off the song and say, "Do you like that?" And Sureshnie will say, "Eh now that wasn't so hot!" and we cut it off and go on to the next thing. And it's not like song-advert-song-advert-song-advert; that's the usual way of radio. I mean, in usual shows it's like that. Ours, I think... in between the song we feel like saying something and then we'll start it and

say. "Hey, you know what?" 'This, this, this' and go on. And often we try to make our intros, where we catch people, very different. Everyday we try and intro the show in a different way; everyday we try to come up with a different intro.

Sureshnie : But what works is that we don't practice it. We don't go out and say 'we're gonna start the show like this'... suddenly you have an idea, 'why don't we do this', whatever. But when we get in the studio, I don't know what happens. If I come in running or he comes in late, whatever, we just go immediately and I think that device of putting the mic on – very scary, 'cause once it's on, that's when your whole focusing starts. Then you'll think, 'okay, now we're talking money, we're talking seconds... dead-air, start talking'. And it naturally just comes in where you just be yourself. You can practice your lines and say, 'I'm gonna say this, this and this... sounds excellent, good words, good phrase... I'll speak very slowly'. But when we get in the studio and the mic goes on or the button goes on, something just happens, and that's what's nice. People know 'they are real people talking'; people can't tell. They think you practice the pause.

Fahim : It's like, for example, yesterday... we were playing a jingle. In the middle of the jingle, accidentally, mistakenly, Sureshnie put it off. Okay? She put it off and she didn't know now what to do. She's looking for another jingle and what to do. And I just leaned over, put the mic on and said, "Hey, what the heck are you up to? What are you doing, huh?" And that was the intro, you know. I said, "How can you do something like that? We're supposed to start the show and you caused the whole intro of the show." And you know, we're going on and then we just started. So we just do it right there; no thinking or talking, just go.

Sureshnie : So, if there's a mistake, we cover it up really well.

Fahim : But you see, what happens is that we also have to be able to understand each other and work well together, because I wouldn't do that with someone else 'cause that person might take offense to it. Because now we're on air... all of a sudden she was there controlling, I leaned over, put the mic on and said "hey", and started taking off with her on air. Someone else would say, "Hey, how can you embarrass me like that on air?" She understands that this is part of the whole show. Because there are listeners who sometimes think that we are fighting with each other, but we're not fighting, we're messing around; we're doing this for the show, you know. I get ticked off with her or she gets ticked off with me or we go on and insult each other or whatever, and people think that we are really fighting.

Sureshnie : And they phone in to apologize...wanting me to apologize, or him to apologize, whatever. They get so involved; we're a part of them. We even have people saying to us, when we go to OB's, that they even start

cooking at two o'clock or they'll finish, or if the radio is in the kitchen they'll start to because they can enjoy it, have a good laugh, dance in the kitchen, whatever utensils in the hand and just enjoy it, because it's all about that. It's like we bring the kids together because their mom's in the kitchen, they want to eat food... they all come together and they listen to the show together. So it's kind of like a magnet for them. So when we do fight, then they get more emotional than we do, like 'hey, it's just a joke' and you can't explain it to a listener that it's a joke because... 'But he said this and the way he said it, when you heard it, how did you feel?' Just the other day, I think... There are five little kids, very little children, seven-year olds possibly, who, for the past three days were coming to the studio, outside, and we were just looking and kept waving. So Fahim was like "These five little boys are always coming". The next day I got a call saying, "Was Fahim jealous?" I mean, 'who are the little kids? They're just boys; I must tell him that'; things like that where we don't take notice of it. Six months back we may have said something about an issue... somebody remembers it; he sees us at an outside broadcast, he'll say, "Hey you know, I appreciate what you said". We're thinking, 'what did we say then?'

Fahim : Yeah, yeah.

Sureshnic : It changes all the time. Unfortunately we can't hold back to the past because every day things are changing; the way we're thinking is changing; it is important, which is probably why *Spice-a-Delic* works. We can't hold on to conservative ideas. Lotus is associated with conservative Indians. We seem as the upper class of an Indian, of another Indian, comparatively to Radio Phoenix or Hindvani or all the other Indian Radio stations. We're seen as 'oh that's the proper way of doing it'. But we've also got to understand that Lotus wants to change its image from older to a younger market. We need young people because at the end of the day, we're using numbers, we're using money, we're using revenue. So, putting people like us on the show possibly brings in some kind of listenership; shows that we have real people in the show, people who have fun, who like life, who enjoy life, you know.

Sumita : Okay, tell me quickly once again about the kind of music you play on your show.

Fahim : Well, basically we concentrate on re-mixes, okay. But, it doesn't have to be a re-mix song; it can be a fast song. So, it's just to keep that vibe going. The show is very vibey, so we don't play any slow or romantic songs, or whatever. If there is a need or there's a new popular song, which is slow, then we play it. But majority of the songs that we play on the show is, I would say, all fast vibey stuff.

Sureshnie : And people associate the show with bhangra, with re-mixes, with the new stuff. They've always seen us bringing in the new stuff because we always say, "We bring it first".

Fahim : And we always do bring it first!

Sunita : Okay! Finally, any changes that you would like to bring about in the show, for the future?

Sureshnie : I'm bringing in another co-host as well, to make me tea.

Fahim : I'm bringing in a sexier co-host. No seriously, there can be changes all the time, but we need to secure in where the show is going.

Sunita : Do you have, features-wise, any changes you want to bring about? Any features you want to bring about?

Sureshnie : Yeah, gossip features are big. At times we can be very serious and say two lines... how to reach and strike a balance. We've got to see where the show is going to. We've got to make sure that we cater to a serious audience and a fun audience. So I think, one day we always think we're only doing youth; we can't think like that because we know for a fact that we've got different ages. So we wanna bring features that are more serious, possibly more features where... people just wanna hear gossip, which is what people want to hear. Young people wanna talk about "hey, you know what happened to Britney Spears, you heard what happened to Madonna" or "you know what happened to Salman or Preity" or whatever... keep them interested in Indian artistes, in Indian people, in India, in the country, in our culture, in our traditions... Bring that kind of thing – serious, funny, as long as we maintain our interest, because that's what keeps us alive. That's what keeps Lotus FM alive, I think.

Fahim : Now, I'm happy with the way the show is, although I feel that... Changes I would like is better stings, better jingles, you know, to just have that slightly cutting edge above the rest. But content-wise, feature-wise... Everyday, after we come out from the show, we two discuss the show... what went wrong, what was good. And everyday there's feedback; we get feedback every single day. So when there's something wrong, we're aware of it and we try and change it straightaway. But feature-wise, content-wise, I'm quite happy with it. Yeah! I would just like to have that touch of professionalism where we have better jingles, more, hipper, funkier jingles, you know, and stings just to put in there, put in here, where the whole complete package just has that professional touch to it.



Sureshnie: Also remember, in our specific show... one can't supercede the next. It can, in terms of, 'hey, that's a hot show', whatever, but you've got to have kind of unison; it must flow.

Fahim : Unison?

Sureshnie : Continuity; that's the word. But also unison- you're together; you're united. You can't sound totally different and then suddenly back to normal. It's got to maintain some kind of flow, otherwise it's too jagged and too jarred; doesn't make sense. You must be able to identify Lotus with that, in terms of 'if we're gonna use all these things, it must be something where everyone else now is moving up and changing their programmes', which I think, if the station's gonna change to a commercial format or whatever... In December we'll know, we'll have the interim idea about what they want, what they expect and then hopefully we can be better than we started with... the grand scheme of things.

Sunita : Okay, thank you. Thanks Sureshnie.

Fahim : Thanks.

Sureshnie : It's not a problem.

# *APPENDIX B*

E-mail Correspondence of ex-  
LOTUS FM staff member,  
Amitha Anand

Read Message

Hi

Reply | Reply All | Forward | as attachment ▼

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- Choose Folder - ▼ Mov

Date: Tue, 19 Oct 1999 06:51:49 +0100

Add Addresses

To: Sunni <sunhibaby@yahoo.com>

From: Howard Hughes <HowardH@Businessdial.net> | Block address

Subject: Re: REGARDING LOTUS FM Ref. Omesh Authar

Dear Sunita

Please accept my apologies for not replying sooner - my husband and I only flew back from Mallorca over the week-end and then began the routine of unpacking, settling back in and tidying up. Now back to work. I will attempt to answer your questions about Lotus as best I can - let's see how we fare??

1. Driving Force? - I find this question open to more than one interpretation.

I'd prefer to look at the helmsman - in this case helmswoman, Isabel van de

Linde, a veteran broadcaster who was appointed manager.

Isabel comes to my mind, when I think about the birth of Lotus. We called

her Mother Lotus - she transcended racial and cultural barriers and was single minded in ensuring the station a success.

I did not see her as a 'White Woman' trying to run an Indian station - to

me she was simply a hugely talented woman who deeply cared about this child

called Radio Lotus and who did a marvellous job launching it.

2. Why Radio Lotus? - Why indeed?? What does Lotus bring to your mind????

Yes - it takes us back to our roots - heritage. A link with India. It's the

national flower of Mother India. The Lotus is so beautiful. It is durable

and tenacious at the same time has that air of fragility. It blooms regal

and mythical in the muddiest of waters.

Can you imagine our pride in it??!

3. Birth reason? - Quiet but determined campaigning by the Community. Then

there was Radio Truro, an independent station broadcasting on not-so-good

shortwave reception - output from outside South Africa - Swaziland and also

managed by a White woman.

Then there was South Africa's national broadcaster - the SABC which monopolised the FM crystal-clear frequencies.

There was the massive money-spinning Radio Zulu, and regional and national

stations in English and Afrikaans, but nothing our so called Indian Community

could identify with.

Surely by this time (early eighties!!) we deserved something we could call our

own? Something more than just the limited weekly Sunday morning broadcast,

and subsequently 'Kaleidoscope' on the air for two hours on the spare transmitters

of Radio 2000???

Momentum for Radio Lotus built up hereon - I think.

4. Objectives? - Entertain and inform. Right from the start, we were determined to be a people station, staying in touch with our community's needs. It was their station and we wanted the community's involvement in Baby Lotus. We wanted Radio Lotus to be interactive with its audience, we succeeded.

5. Staff members and presenters? - The Manager, her secretary. A kind of PRO.

Two controllers, specially recruited for Lotus, four presenters, one programme compiler, and a log typist (me)! Just Lotus staff.

6. National broadcaster? - No. Broadcast time was limited initially; so was transmission areas. This was because of the demographics. Week-days to most parts of the then Natal and certain areas in the then Transvaal. The largest concentration of Indians were in Natal, followed by the Transvaal.

So it was only natural that the heart of Lotus was in Natal.

Lotus retained 'Kaleidoscope' the only National broadcast - still went out

Sunday nights on Lotus's transmitters plus that of Radio 2000. We then spilled beyond our National borders.

7. Target audience? Lotus was in the very enviable position in that it transcended age and sex barriers. From children to grandparents. Then women emerged the stronger and longer listeners, followed by children.

8. Programming decisions? Again demographics. And intensive market research

as much as continuous consultations with community representatives and group

leaders. Through this consultative process with community, group leaders, five major South African Indian languages were identified viz. Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati and Telegu and the music mainly was programmed

around these groups.

English was the broadcast medium because the Indian South African, irrespective from which community he/she came, understood this language. It

was a unifying factor which brought together listeners from all these communities. Music and the English broadcast medium overcame the cultural barriers - or so I'd like to think.

9. Music and library? If I remember correctly, the community to a certain extent again came forward with their record donations towards our library!!

Music was also purchased from established record dealers in Durban.

By the time Lotus launched, we were positively bulging with records and tapes in the library - a wide selection, popular Hindi and Tamil, Devotionals, Geets and Ghazals, Naths and Nazms, we carded and categorised

and had the library up and sails at full mast by the 8th January 1983. The

library was an integral part of Lotus - it had the beat in the heart of Radio Lotus.

10. Location? In the pulse of the South African Indian Community - Durban.

It had to be so - because of our community density here. The studio was and still is in the SABC building in Old Fort Road.

11. Technical establishment? Vastly so. Radio Lotus fell under the vast infrastructure of the SABC and had and still has at its disposal, access to all its resources plus it was launched on the superior FM frequency. It also had specially recruited journalists in the newsroom and whatever we needed to ensure quality broadcast, we had at our disposal. What a launching pad. We wanted a superior, quality station, we made happen... until the ugly head of politics interfered ...

12. Name change? I was not there when this happened ... but at a guess I'd say for easier identification? Perhaps. As I see it the SABC as I knew it in the early eighties has come a long way. Today IBA (Independent Broadcasting Authority) decides on transmitter and frequency allocations. The airwaves have opened up. More radio stations, on more FM frequencies, and with it competition. So it is important to remember the name and where it is on the dial eg. 94/95 East Coast FM. Lotus does not have this advantage, because it has several frequencies in as many areas. Let's face it Lotus FM does sound somewhat trendy and it sounds beautiful - try saying it ALOUD - LOTUS FM!

Well here we are Sunita - it's kind of how I remember it. Attempting to answer your questions has made me pretty nostalgic. Anyway hope it helps you in whatever way. Good luck and best wishes in your thesis. If you need any further info, you might like to try both Anitha Soojansingh and Sergie Naidoo, as well as BK Chinnah. I'm sure someone there would be kind enough to point you in their direction. Again sorry for not replying sooner - hope this has not come too late.

God Bless  
Amitha

# APPENDIX C

POST Newspaper articles:

Tolsi, N. 'KZN radio gets a boost'  
10/11/99-13/11/99

Hassen, F. 'Indian radio channels  
beam into South Africa' 15/11/00-  
18/11/00

---

# KZN radio gets a boost

NIREN TOLSI

VIDEO might have "killed the radio star" as the old song goes but according to the latest Radio Audience Measurement Survey (RAMS) figures that certainly doesn't apply to KwaZulu Natal.

East Coast Radio, Lotus FM and local community station Radio Phoenix have shown listenership increases for the period July to September this year.

East Coast gained 221 000 new listeners; Lotus FM 30 000 and Radio Phoenix 4 000.

East Coast's managing director, Mr Omar Essack, was delighted with the growth in the station's listenership from 628 000 to 849 000 in KwaZulu Natal. "The rise in listenership was due to a lot of hard work and research by everybody involved with the station.

"Our Indian listeners have increased from 260 000 to 295 000 and we've found that many who used to tune in as fringe listeners are now loyal listeners."

The figures also revealed a dramatic increase in the station's African listenership, which grew by a phenomenal 61% from 161 000 to 259 000 listeners.

Lotus FM's listenership increased by 30 000 - from 374 000 to 404 000, an increase of eight percent. Station manager Mr Naresh Veeran said: "We are excited about the 30 000 increase in listenership, but will continue to target further growth areas and try to meet the needs of our listeners."

Radio Phoenix's listeners increased from 107 000 to 111 000 listeners, the highest in the station's three years of existence. The station was also among the top four of the most listened to community radio stations in the country. Commenting on his station's grip on 30% of the total community radio listenership, Radio Phoenix's station manager, Mr Shanil Singh, said: "Our gratitude goes to advertisers, educational institutions, listeners and organisations who have made this possible."

---

# Indian radio channels beam into South Africa

FAKIR HASSEN

FOUR Indian radio stations and an Islamic station from across the world have suddenly become accessible to South Africans as an unexpected spin-off from a dream to bring education through radio to the remotest areas of the globe.

For almost a decade, Radio Lotus (now Lotus FMO), dominated the airwaves for local Indian listeners until the advent of community radio stations.

Now there will be even more choices, although they will not have much or possibly any local content.

An American company, Worldspace, which began a project several years ago to make radio programmes by satellite available to every corner of the globe, recently began its full transmissions in Africa as well.

As Worldspace began signing up content providers, it found tremendous interest from a whole range of radio stations which found that they could now easily expand their audience base beyond their borders.

Forty radio stations are available to South Africans.

There is no subscription charge for these services and no

legal restrictions on receiving them. The only cost will be the purchase of a portable satellite receiver, which is no larger than an average radio/cassette combination. Each set comes with a built-in satellite dish which can be removed and adjusted for crystal-clear reception.

The four stations of interest to Indian listeners are Sunrise Radio, based in London, Metro East FM, based in Nairobi, Kenya, Radio Asia, based in Paris and India3, beaming directly from India.

There is also Channel Islam and a number of other stations featuring a variety of music, talk shows, educational programmes and news.

## Exclusively Tamil

While the other three Indian stations use mainly English and Hindi, Radio Asia broadcasts exclusively Tamil programmes featuring news, dramas, talk shows and music aimed at Tamil-speaking Indian expatriates all over the world.

"This is the first time that full-time Tamil programming will be available to South African audiences, and we expect that there will be good support for it from the South African Tamil

community," said Ms Ndo Nyembezi, the marketing manager for Worldspace in Johannesburg.

She said that Worldspace had no intention to compete with existing stations like Lotus FM and community radio stations East Wave Radio and Radio Phoenix, but hoped that it could complement what these stations were already doing.

Lotus FM's station manager, Dr Naresh Veeran, said that although he had not listened to these stations yet, he was confident that listeners would remain loyal to Lotus FM because of its policy of working for and with the community that it serves, and also because of its commitment to local content.

Ms Nyembezi said that for a limited period, Worldspace receivers, which were being manufactured by four leading Japanese electronics manufacturers, would be sold at half-price in South Africa, starting at R999.

She said that was all that was necessary to receive these stations.

Some of the receivers also allow users to tune into local FM and AM stations, as well as link to computers for downloads.



# *APPENDIX D*

*Radio Audience  
Measurement Survey  
(RAMS) Figures*

# TOTAL POPULATION

<u>PAST 7 DAYS</u>	May/Jun '00	Feb/Mar '00	May/Jun '99
NB: Latest figures not comparable to previous figures; look at percentage penetration for direct comparisons.			
LOTUS FM	388 000	397 000	374 000
EAST COAST RADIO	1094 000	1066 000	628 000
5FM	1225 000	1323 000	967 000
RADIO PHOENIX	71 000	83 000	82 000
EAST WAVE	20 000	17 000	11 000

# INDIAN POPULATION

<u>PAST 7 DAYS</u>	May/Jun '00	Feb/Mar '00	May/Jun '99
<p>NB: Latest figures not comparable to previous figures; look at percentage penetration for direct comparisons.</p>			
LOTUS FM	372 000	367 000	350 000
EAST COAST RADIO	328 000	330 000	237 000
5FM	85 000	99 000	68 000
RADIO PHOENIX	71 000	83 000	82 000

# TOTAL POPULATION AVERAGE DAY

<u>MONDAY - FRIDAY</u>	May/Jun '00	Feb/Mar '00	May/Jun '99
<p>NB: Latest figures not comparable to previous figures; look at percentage penetration for direct comparisons.</p>			
LOTUS FM	276 000	282 000	264 000
EAST COAST RADIO	693 000	683 000	401 000
5FM	732 000	758 000	627 000
RADIO PHOENIX	39 000	43 000	42 000
EAST WAVE	10 000	8 000	5 000

# INDIAN POPULATION AVERAGE DAY

<u>MONDAY - FRIDAY</u>	May/Jun '00	Feb/Mar '00	May/Jun '99
<p>NB: Latest figures not comparable to previous figures; look at percentage penetration for direct comparisons.</p>			
LOTUS FM	267 000	267 000	252 000
EAST COAST RADIO	237 000	233 000	150 000
5FM	44 000	48 000	33 000
RADIO PHOENIX	39 000	43 000	42 000

# TOTAL POPULATION AVERAGE DAY

<u>SATURDAY</u>	May/Jun '00	Feb/Mar '00	May/Jun '99
<p>NB: Latest figures not comparable to previous figures; look at percentage penetration for direct comparisons.</p>			
LOTUS FM	273 000	261 000	271 000
EAST COAST RADIO	575 000	607 000	351 000
5FM	677 000	643 000	540 000
RADIO PHOENIX	37 000	50 000	51 000
EAST WAVE	9 000	6 000	4 000

# INDIAN POPULATION AVERAGE DAY

<u>SATURDAY</u>	May/Jun '00	Feb/Mar '00	May/Jun '99
<p>NB: Latest figures not comparable to previous figures; look at percentage penetration for direct comparisons.</p>			
LOTUS FM	266 000	248 000	254 000
EAST COAST RADIO	215 000	212 000	111 000
5FM	45 000	48 000	43 000
RADIO PHOENIX	37 000	50 000	51 000

# TOTAL POPULATION AVERAGE DAY

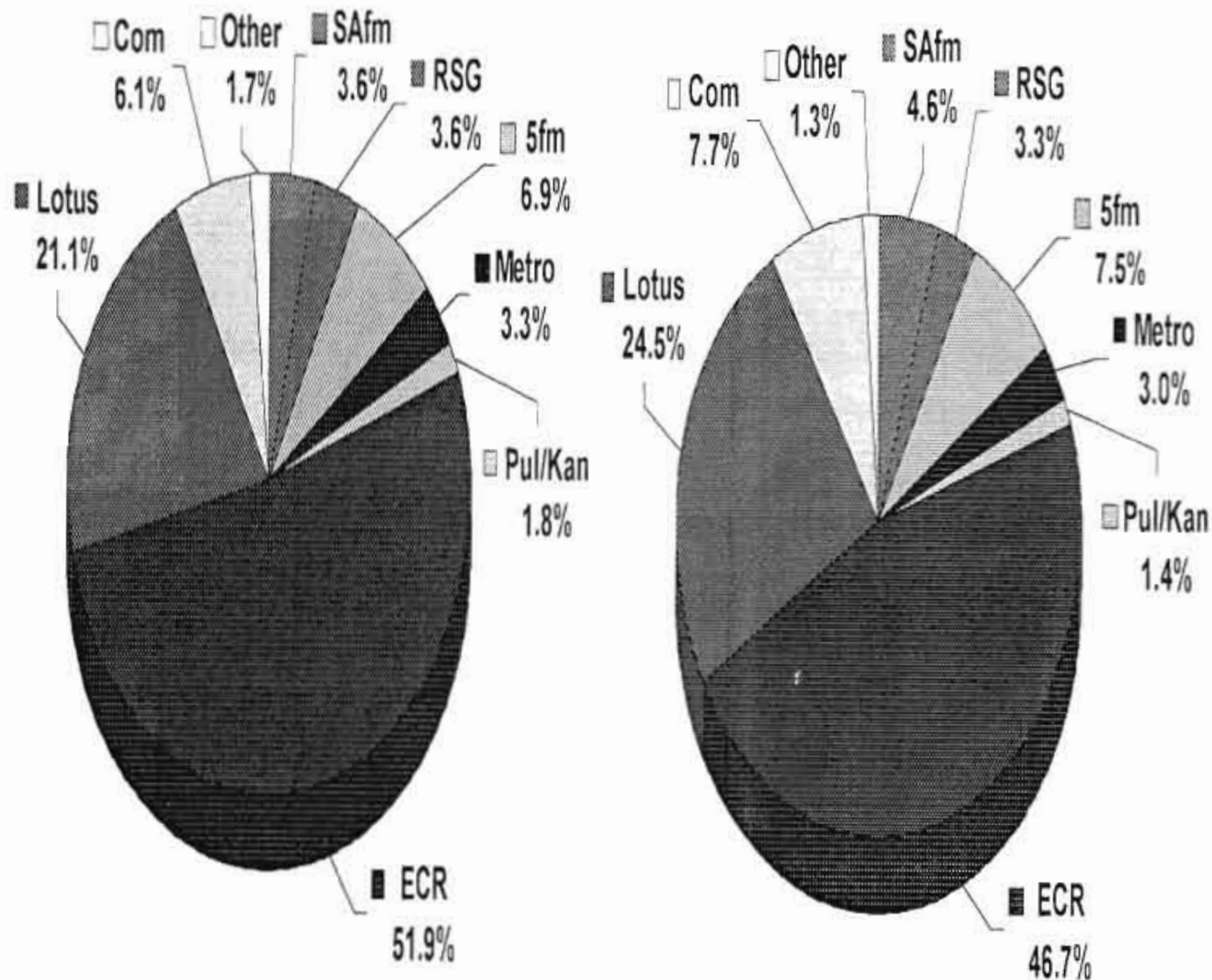
<u>SUNDAY</u>	May/Jun '00	Feb/Mar '00	May/Jun '99
<p>NB: Latest figures not comparable to previous figures; look at percentage penetration for direct comparisons.</p>			
LOTUS FM	254 000	249 000	232 000
EAST COAST RADIO	551 000	609 000	310 000
5FM	532 000	538 000	462 000
RADIO PHOENIX	40 000	53 000	45 000
EAST WAVE	9 000	6 000	10 000



# INDIAN POPULATION AVERAGE DAY

<u>SUNDAY</u>	May/Jun '00	Feb/Mar '00	May/Jun '99
<p>NB: Latest figures not comparable to previous figures; look at percentage penetration for direct comparisons.</p>			
LOTUS FM	242 000	236 000	222 000
EAST COAST RADIO	171 000	191 000	116 000
5FM	40 000	40 000	31 000
RADIO PHOENIX	40 000	53 000	45 000

# KwaZulu-Natal Radio Shares - English/Afrikaans - Ave Mon-Fri



Feb/March '00

May/June '00

% Gross ¼ hours

# *APPENDIX E*

*SABC Editorial Code*

## Editorial Code of the SABC

The Board and Management of the SABC have affirmed their commitment to the principle of Editorial Independence and to an Editorial Code of Ethics. For the purpose of this Code, it is understood that the authority for editorial decisions vests in the editorial staff.

- We shall report, contextualise, and present news honestly by striving to disclose all essential facts and by not suppressing relevant, available facts, or distorting by wrong or improper emphasis.
- We shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do our utmost to avoid promoting such discrimination based on gender, race, language, culture, political persuasion, class, sexual orientation, religious belief, marital status, physical or mental disability.
- We shall evaluate information solely on merit, and shall not allow advertising, commercial, political or personal considerations to influence our editorial decisions.
- We shall respect the legitimate rights to privacy of individuals and shall do nothing which entails intrusion into private grief and distress unless justified by overriding considerations of public interest.
- We shall take due care and be sensitive in the presentation of brutality, violence, atrocities and personal grief.
- We shall seek balance through the presentation as far as possible of relevant viewpoints on matters of importance. This requirement may not always be reached within a single programme or news bulletin but should be achieved within a reasonable period.
- We shall prevail on news merit and judgement in reaching editorial decisions. Fairness does not require editorial staff to be unquestioning, or the Corporation to give all sides of an issue the same amount of time.
- We shall be enterprising in perceiving,

pursuing and presenting, issues, which affect society and the individual, in serving the public's right to know.

- We shall be free from obligation to any interest group and shall be committed to the public's right to know the truth.
- We shall not accept gifts, favours, free travel, special treatment or privileges, which may compromise our integrity and any such offer shall be disclosed.
- We shall identify ourselves and our employers before obtaining any information for broadcast. As a general rule, journalism should be conducted openly. Covert methods must be employed only with due regard to their legality and to considerations such as fairness and invasion of privacy, and whether the information to be obtained is of such significance as to warrant being made public but is unavailable by other means.
- We shall not disclose confidential sources of information.
- We shall do our utmost to correct timeously any information broadcast and found to be prejudicially inaccurate.
- We shall foster open dialogue with our viewers and listeners, as we are accountable to the public for our reports.

# APPENDIX F

*Sunday Times* articles:

Gangaram, S. 'Iron lady with...'  
November 7, 1999 - pg. 7

Govender, P. 'LOTUS FM shake-up'  
March 4, 2001 - pg. 1

Naidu, B. 'Radio stations getting...'  
March 4, 2001 - pg. 1

**C**ONTROVERSIAL Devi Sankaree Govender is firing up the airwaves again after a seven-month break from radio.

The feisty host of *Viewpoint* on Lotus FM, known for her no-nonsense approach to talk radio, returned to the hot seat this week.

Govender, 27, described by one listener as "the Iron Lady with a golden voice" is delighted to be back behind the microphone.

Umzinto-raised and University of Natal-educated Govender says her spell of absence from radio was difficult.

"Once radio is in your blood, it is there for ever. I knew when I did my last show at Lotus all those months ago that I would be back, but I didn't know when or on which station," said Govender.

"Coming back this week was like *ohé vu* — it seemed like I had never left."

Govender, who is also involved in television as host of *Eye to Eye*, an in-depth talk show that focuses on the Indian community, on Eastern Mosaic on SABC 1, joined the *Sunday Times* as women's features editor in February.

"I first started writing a column for the paper last year, and that was more terrifying than radio and television put together. People would be able to read what I had written years from now, and I didn't have much writing experience, but I couldn't let the opportunity pass me by," she said.

Govender, who began hosting *Viewpoint* in 1996, seven months after its inception in October 1995, saw the programme grow from strength to strength in the four years that she was at the helm.

"When I started, people were afraid to talk about issues. Now they are eager to share their problems. They have learnt from those brave enough to talk openly about their experiences. Now people find it easier to talk."

The programme taught her valuable lessons. "It started changing the way I looked at things. I realised, too, that there were different different ways of looking at things."

"You don't need a university degree to have common sense. I know it may sound clichéd, but the best way to learn is from the university of life."

Notorious for cutting off callers Govender doesn't have time for people who don't know what they are talking about. "There is no time to waste on people who are waxing lyrical on a subject about which they don't have the vaguest idea," she said.

The programme would continue to tackle topics that interest the community, like empowerment for women and men and motivational issues, she said.

Govender was thrilled to hear familiar voices calling in this week. She knows some ardent listeners by their names, among them Tony, Mrs Junkie, Pam from Newlands West, Krish Govender and Runga Pather.

As one who came to Durban from what she describes as a small town that didn't even have robots

10 years ago, she is surprised that she was able to make it in the "big city", which was initially a culture shock and an eye-opener.

"The old-fashioned values I learnt from the small close-knit community in my home town have helped me to develop into a confident and determined person."

In her third year of study for a BA degree in speech and drama she decided to find a part-time job.

"My first job was as an assistant at the university library. Then I sent my CV to radio stations and pro-

duction houses — I was even prepared to sweep studio floors."

She received a call from then-programme manager at Lotus, Sergio Naidoo, for an audition, which she thought she had failed dismally. "I couldn't pronounce the Tamil and Hindi song titles, but two days later he called me for another audition, and I got into the Lotus training programme. I presented the Friday music show."

At the same time, she completed her honours degree and a higher diploma in education through

Lalisa. She taught speech and drama, English, home economics and Afrikaans at two high schools.

Working in three different media at the same time was "amazing", but she said she wouldn't have been able to manage without the support of her family and fiancé Perumal Moodley.

With award-winning theatre personality Krijay Govender, she will co-host a morning breakfast show, starting today from 7 to 10 on Lotus FM. Called *Breakfast in Bed*, the hosts will pitch up at the

studio in their pyjamas.

"It will be a mix of everything from news in the Sunday papers to an advice corner. We will have features called *Cereal Killer*, with telephone pranks aimed at personalities, and *On the Shelf*, a radio dating game," says Govender.

Krijay says she is thrilled at the prospect of being on radio.

"I'm working with the diva of radio and that's what's so exciting. Devi is a strong personality and it will be both a learning and a challenging experience for me."



**RIDING THE WAVES:**

The 'Iron Lady' of radio, Devi Sankaree Govender, was back in the hot seat at Lotus FM this week

Picture: JACKIE CLAUSEN

## Iron Lady with the golden voice back behind the mike

# Lotus FM

# shake-up

PREGA GOVENDER

**F**OUR popular Lotus FM presenters will be taken off the air and some freelance DJs face the axe in a shake-up aimed at turning the public broadcaster into a fully fledged commercial radio station.

Stalwarts JJ Mathura, Zahia Ahmed, Raessa Malek and Krishnan Nair, who collectively have about 40 years' broadcasting experience, are expected to be redeployed to posts in which they will be involved only in production.

Other major changes, earmarked for the beginning of April, include a substantial reduction of the one-hour current affairs morning programme, "Newsbreak", the introduction of some new presenters and shifting Devi Sankar Govender's talk show, "Viewpoint", from an afternoon to an evening slot.

The station's music content is also set to increase radically from 40% to about 70%.

Station manager Naresh Veeran said the new DJs, who



**RAESSA MALEK**  
To become a producer



**NARESH VEERAN**  
New profile for station



**JJ MATHURA**  
Radio stalwart

are at present being trained, were expected to fit into the station's new profile of delivering quality entertainment and information.

Mathura hosted the Saturday afternoon programme "Pages from my Diary", and Ahmed presented the three-hour weekday music programme "It's your call". Malek was in charge of a 90-minute weekday helpline programme, "Online", and Nair presented

the four-hour weekday graveyard shift, "Curtain Call".

Veeran said the four would, instead, be producing shows, jingles and features so that Lotus FM could create its own in-house production team.

"It's a step up for them into managerial roles. But they will not have their own shows. These will now be hosted by freelancers."

Veeran said at least 90% of listeners indicated they

wanted more music. "We are working on a refined playlist and will be playing only the best."

He said the programme "Newsbreak" was an SABC product which they planned to repackage.

"We want the programme to have broader appeal. It will not continue in its current format and it does not have to occupy a one-hour time slot.

"In the past, we had music

fitting into talk formats. Now we will be swapping it around to have talk fitting into the music format.

"There will be much more information, prizes and giveaways," he said.

Veeran said there was some anxiety among some staff members.

"The possibility of some people going does exist, but I can't give you names right now.

"Some may lose their on-air profile, but it does not mean they will be losing their jobs. Their skills could be used elsewhere on the station."

He said freelance presenters knew since November last year that Lotus FM was refining its programme format.

"They knew their contracts would not be automatically renewed.

"Quality is something we are not prepared to compromise, especially in terms of our listenership. We exist purely because of our listenership," Veeran added.

Malek said she was looking forward to her new role as producer. "I have no further comment," she added.



BUDDY NAIDU

## Radio stations getting it right

TWO KwaZulu-Natal radio stations who are at loggerheads have both increased their listenership, according to the latest figures released by the South African Advertising Research Foundation.

P4 Radio's fortunes have soared since it improved on its

smooth adult contemporary jazz format last year.

After a 73% increase in June, the station has again surged, with 294 000 listeners tuning in daily. The latest figure represents an 85% increase.

Meanwhile, rivals East Coast Radio, after achieving

the million mark last year, has attracted another 125 000 listeners. Some 1.24 million now tune in daily.

The stations will face each other at a hearing called by the broadcasting watchdog, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa

(Icasa), in Gauteng on Friday.

The hearing follows a complaint about P4's format.

Lotus FM, despite an extra 80 000 listeners, is going ahead with plans for a revamped format, which will see an increase in its music content from 40% to about 70%.

Embattled community station Radio Phoenix, at present off air owing to a late application for a temporary licence, had retained its 100 000 listenership.

The station will learn its fate at a hearing which takes place on Thursday.

# *APPENDIX G*

East Wave Radio  
(Johannesburg)

Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies

Faculty of Human Sciences

Durban 4041 South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 2505

Facsimile +27 (0)31 260 1519

e-mail: [ccms@unb.und.ac.za](mailto:ccms@unb.und.ac.za)

<http://www.und.ac.za/und/ccms/fintro.html>

To : Mr Chan Nanoo  
Station Manager  
East Wave Radio  
Johannesburg

Fax No: (011) 854 4414

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2000

Dear Mr Nanoo,

I am a Master's student at the University of Natal, Durban, and am currently doing my thesis on radio stations broadcasting to the Indian community in South Africa. I am specifically looking at Community radio stations, and would be very grateful to you if you could kindly provide me with some basic information on your station

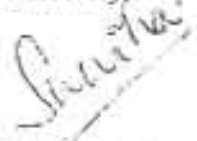
I would much appreciate it if you could kindly answer the following questions for me, in relation to East Wave Radio.

- 1) What type of community is East Wave Radio catering for? (If you can elaborate here on the religious and cultural nature of the community)
- 2) What are the various types of programmes aired on East Wave Radio? (For example, what kind of talk shows, cultural shows, religious shows, music-shows, etc.)
- 3) What kind of music does the station play: Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, etc.?
- 4) What is your broadcast region (footprint)?

These are just basic questions that will help me understand what kind of a community your station is serving in Johannesburg

I do hope to hear from you at an early date and would like to thank you for your kind co-operation.

Sincerely,



Sunita Kaihar  
Master's Student  
Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies

## FAX COVER

TO: SUNETA KAIHAR  
FAX: 031 260-1519  
DATE: 30 NOVEMBER 2000  
FROM: EASTWAVE RADIO  
TEL: 011 854-4451  
FAX: 011 854-4414

NO. OF PAGES: 1 INCL COVER

---

HEREWITH INFORMATION REQUIRED BY YOU.

- (1) INDIAN COMMUNITY.....HINDU, MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN....INDIAN HERITAGE.
- (2) MEDICAL, LEGAL, FINANCIAL, MUNICIPAL SERVICES ISSUES, REPRESENTATIVES FROM RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS BOTH LOCALLY AND ABROAD, VISITING SINGERS AND FILM ACTORS FROM INDIA.
- (3) HINDI FILM SONGS, BRAJANS, GHAZALS, CLASSICAL MUSIC.... URDU, QUWALIS....TAMIL CLASSICAL AND FILM SONGS.
- (4) LENASIA AND SURROUNDING AREAS WITHIN A RADIUS OF APPROXIMATELY 30KMS.

THANK YOU,  
CHAN NANOO.

# *APPENDIX H*

*voice of the Cape  
(Cape Town)*



Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies  
Faculty of Human Sciences  
Durban 4041 South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 2505

Facsimile +27 (0)31 260 1519

e-mail: [ccms@mtb.und.ac.za](mailto:ccms@mtb.und.ac.za)

<http://www.und.ac.za/und/ccms/intro.html>

To: Ahmed Rylands  
Station Manager  
Voice of the Cape  
Cape Town

Fax No. (021) 422 2828

Date: 22 November, 2000

Dear Sir,

My name is Sunita Kaihar and I am a Master's student at the Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies at the University of Natal, Durban. I am currently writing my thesis on community radio stations in South Africa, and would like some basic information on Voice of the Cape. I would much appreciate your providing me with the answers to the following questions, in order for me to have a basic understanding of your radio station, Voice of the Cape.

- 1) When did Voice of the Cape come about? (The month and year would suffice)
- 2) Who is Voice of the Cape's target audience? Is the Station serving a geographic community or a community of interest? What religious or cultural group is the station catering for?
- 3) What is the medium of broadcast at Voice of the Cape?
- 4) What are the various types of programmes aired on the Station? If you could kindly throw light on the type of music played, the different talk shows, etc.
- 5) What is the footprint of the Station?
- 6) And if possible, what is the approximate listenership of the Station?

I would be highly obliged if you would be so kind enough to reply to me by early next-week. I am pressed for time and do apologize for the inconvenience caused in requesting a reply at an early date.

I would like to thank you for your co-operation and look forward to an early reply on your end.

Sincerely,

Sunita Kaihar  
Master's Student

## THE VOICE OF THE CAPE STATION PROFILE

**T**HE Voice of the Cape is a Muslim radio station in Cape Town with an Islamic ethos, its overall aim being to broadcast to the broader South African community.

VOC broadcasts geographically - on 100,4 FM Stereo in the Cape Metropolitan area and 95,8 FM in the Boland area. It broadcasts on alternate days but in the Boland on 95,8 FM on a daily basis.

VOC has been rated by organisations such as the Marketing Mix as the third most popular station in the Western Cape after Radio Good Hope and KFM, a testimony to its effectiveness as a community station amongst the commercials.

Recent AMPS ratings have our listenership figures varying between 100000 and 200000. We actually feel our audience is a lot higher than these figures. We believe we are the top community radio station in the Western Cape. Our program content varies from religious to current affairs to light listening. We have regular news bulletins, phone-ins, live interviews and actuality, issue-driven programs.

We offer advertisers a unique niche market as we know the face of our listeners down to the clothes they wear, the food they eat, the places they shop, the goods they buy and even their daily routine. Our potential market is 500,000 (there are believed to be over three quarters of a million Muslims in Cape Town and the Western Cape.)


In addition, our response to phone-ins - particularly on topical issues - reveals significant broader community participation.

The station finances itself solely through its advertising revenue and another unique feature is that VOC has the most amount of OB'S (outside broadcasts) than any other station in the country, averaging two to three per week. This takes the station to the community.

VOC has live broadcasts from mosques, shopping malls, fetes, bazaars; functions, and has even gone live from places such as Robben Island, Bosnia, Libya, Turkey, the US, Parliament and Saudi Arabia, giving listeners live coverage of the Hajj or pilgrimage.

We feel that VOC with its reasonable rates and accessible, identifiable audience is a good place to advertise. We look forward to doing business with you.

## VOICE OF THE CAPE - FACT FILE

 MUSLIM station with an Islamic ethos but broadcasting to the wider South African community as part of its mission....

- On 100,4 FM stereo Cape Town Metropolitan area and 95,8 FM Boland (Western Cape)...
- Broadcast footprint is from Vredenburg (West Coast) to Malmesbury, Paarl, Worcester and Stellenbosch (Boland), Southern and Central Peninsula, as far as Strand, and the City Bowl...
- Over 110,000 listeners daily...
- First on air March 1995 (special events licence for Ramadan) and since 1<sup>st</sup> September 1995...
- Regarded as one of the top three radio stations in the Western Cape...
- As we have a well-defined niche market, the station has shaken the commercial stations in terms of the revenue they felt taken from them. The VOICE OF THE CAPE has amongst its advertisers businesses like Coke, Pick n' Pay, Clicks, Clarins Cosmetics, Nando's, Subway and leading national advertisers in South Africa. We look at ourselves as a community station regarded as first class competition to any successful commercial station.
- Regarded as one of the top community stations in the western Cape..
- Nine news bulletins daily...plus...current affairs, chat shows...and ..a wide range of programmes ranging from the religious to the light - hearted 24 hours a day....

PHYSICAL ADDRESS: 25 - 27 JAMIESON STREET, CAPE TOWN, 8001

POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 16210, VLAEBERG, 8018

E-MAIL: [VOC@MWEB.CO.ZA](mailto:VOC@MWEB.CO.ZA)

TEL: 021 - 4222835

FAX: 021 - 4222828



# *APPENDIX I*

Radio 786  
(Cape Town)

To: Ameen Ahmed  
Station Manager  
Radio 786  
Cape Town

Fax No. (021) 699 0786

Date: 22 November, 2000

Dear Sir,

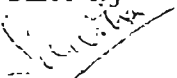
My name is Sunita Kaihar and I am a Master's student at the Graduate Programme in Cultural and Media Studies, at the University of Natal, Durban. I am currently writing my thesis on community radio stations in South Africa, and would like some basic information on Radio 786. I would much appreciate your providing me with the answers to the following questions, in order for me to have a basic understanding of Radio 786.

- 1) When did Radio 786 come about? (The month and year would suffice)
- 2) Who is Radio 786's target audience? Is the Station serving a geographic community or a community of interest? What religious or cultural group is the station catering for?
- 3) What is the medium of broadcast at Radio 786?
- 4) What are the various types of programmes aired on Radio 786? If you could kindly throw light on the type of music played, the different talk shows, etc.
- 5) What is the footprint of the Station?
- 6) And if possible, what is the approximate listenership of the Station?

I would be highly obliged if you would be so kind enough to reply to me by early next-week. I am pressed for time and do apologize for the inconvenience caused in requesting a reply at an early date.

I would like to thank you for your co-operation and look forward to an early reply on your end.

Sincerely,



Sunita Kaihar  
Master's Student

# The Birth of Radio 786

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF RADIO 786

In March 1994 two hundred and fifty Muslim organisations came together at the Peninsula Technicon in Bellville (Cape Town) to form the Islamic Unity Convention (IUC). The IUC was formed to unite Muslims and to represent the interests of the Muslims and their organisations locally, regionally and nationally. Its formation was widely publicised in the press (both commercial and Muslim media).

One of the major issues discussed at the Founding Convention of the IUC (Peninsula Technicon, 18-20 March 1994) was the lack of access by the Muslim community to the electronic media. Radio 786 was established pursuant to a resolution unanimously adopted at the Founding Convention. In November 1994 the National Council of the IUC applied to the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) for a temporary community radio broadcasting licence for the Muslim community.

At the 1995 AGM of the IUC (University of the Western Cape, 24-26 June 1995) various workshops were held including a workshop on the establishment of Radio 786. The latter workshop was attended by school teachers, social workers, madrassah teachers, women, sportspersons, youth, religious leaders, doctors, librarians, business people and so forth. Amongst the issues workshopped were suggestions for programmes, problems facing the Muslim community, assistance the community can provide, etc. At various stages public calls were made to the entire community to participate and help build Radio 786.

Radio 786 began broadcasting several 3 hour pilot programmes from the 1st September 1995 until 23 September 1995. The 25th September 1995 marks the official launch of Radio 786, from which date it broadcast a full day's programme and has done so ever since.

It was against the above background that Radio 786 was officially launched on 25 September 1995 at the Vygieskraal Sports Stadium, Athlone.

Proceedings commenced at 7.00am and terminated at 5.00pm, but our broadcasting continued until 12.00 midnight. The launch was attended by 30 000 people both Muslim and Christian. This was truly a community affair with a variety of stalls, plays by local Madressahs, a march pass by a local brigade, various speakers, a heart rendering recitation by four-year old Radiah Bouwa, poetry, and many more activities.

One of the themes of the launch was the remembrance of South Africa's martyrs, those who made the new South Africa possible. Amongst the many speakers who paid tribute to the martyrs were:

- \* Prof Itumeleng Jerry Mosala, lecturer in Religious Studies at UCT,
- \* Stephen Biko Jnr, son of the late Steve Bantu Biko,
- \* Drs Mohamed Haroon, son of the late Imam Abdullah Haroon, and
- \* Rebecca Truter, mother of Christopher Truter, one of the first pupils to be killed in the Western Cape during the 1976 uprising.

The community and the IUC had achieved a major feat, on 25 September 1995, Radio 786 had its first 19 hour broadcast !!! This after we had unofficially commenced broadcasting several 3 hour pilot programmes from the 1st September 1995.

Successive Conventions of the IUC have instructed the National Council to continue the process to obtain a permanent radio licence. The Bi-Annual General Meeting held on 7-9 November 1997 unanimously resolved that the National Council of the IUC be mandated to apply for a permanent radio licence for Radio 786. An overview of the Conventions of the IUC indicate that the discussion about Radio 786 bears public scrutiny and accountability.

# RADIO 786 - STATION AND AUDIENCE PROFILE

FREQUENCY	:	100.4 FM
RADIUS	:	45km
COVERAGE AREAS	:	Cape Metropole including the Southern & Northern Suburbs. Also reaches Atlantis, Boland and the West Coast.
CONTENT	:	News & current affairs, women's issues, arts & literature, weather, sport, education, health, youth, environmental issues, theology, music, programmes for the whole family.
FORMAT OF PROGRAMMES	:	Radio 786 is primarily talk radio. Music is only used as fillers between programmes (less than 5%). The format of the programmes vary: phone-ins, panel discussions, factual programmes, talks/lectures, documentaries and request & messages. Weekends incorporate Outside Broadcasts.
BROADCAST HRS	:	05:00 - 24:00 every broadcasting day.
ADVERTISING RESTRICTIONS	:	Tobacco, Alcohol, Gambling, non-Kosher / non-Halal Foodstuffs, Pornographic books/films, etc.
COMMUNITY	:	Primarily the Muslim community, which is estimated to be about 750 000 in the Western Cape. Programmes are of such a nature that they cater for listeners of all denominations.
LISTENERSHIP	:	<b>RAMS:</b> Radio 786 has shown a solid growth in listenership since its inception in 1995. The RAMS figures have shown the station to have grown from 61 000 listeners in June 1996 to 135 000 listeners in June 2000.  <b>Social Events:</b> Radio 786 averages an attendance of 30 000 at its outdoor events. 60 000 people signed a petition to support its application for a permanent radio licence.
DEMOGRAPHICS	:	Radio 786's audience is cosmopolitan, urbanised and multi-lingual (Predominantly English and Afrikaans, and to a lesser degree Xhosa, Arabic and Urdu).  <b>LSM (Living Standard Measures):</b> More than 52% of the listeners fall in the LSM 7 & 8 groups, indicating a relatively wealthy, sophisticated, educated listenership.  <b>Age:</b> The largest proportion (+/- 50%) of the audience is in the 25-45 age group, with 26% in the age group 16-24.  <b>Gender:</b> Radio 786 has an even balance between male and female listeners with a marked increased female listenership during mid-morning.

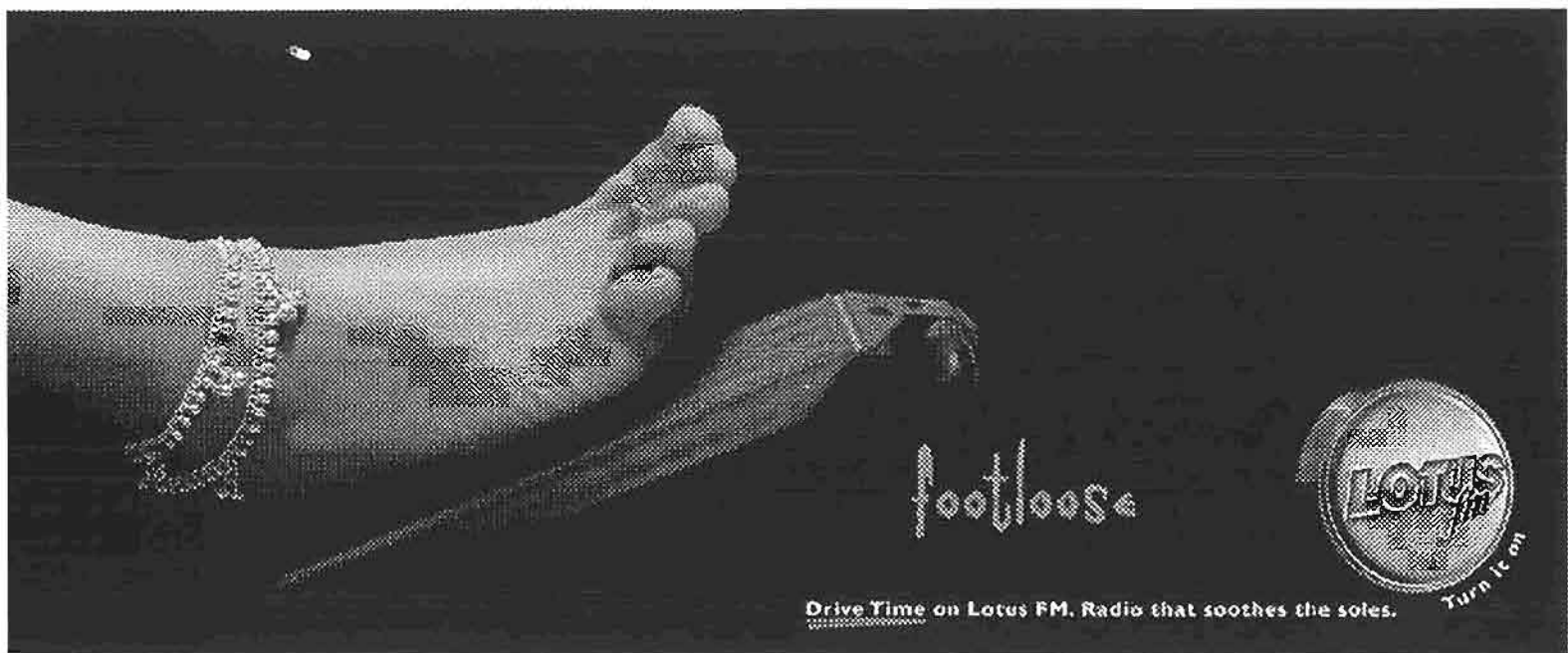
Administration  
 (0)21 699 1786  
 (0)21 699 0786  
[radio786.co.za](http://radio786.co.za)  
  
 Advertising  
 (0)21 699 0929  
 (0)21 699 0505  
[advertising@radio786.co.za](mailto:advertising@radio786.co.za)  
  
 Main Road  
 Gardens Estate  
 Box 364  
 Maitland 7764  
 Cape Town  
 South Africa  
  
[radio786.co.za](http://radio786.co.za)



..... discerning, dissenting, never disappointing!

# *APPENDIX J*

LOTUS FM Adverts



footloose



Drive Time on Lotus FM. Radio that soothes the soles.

Turn it on



if mom doesn't like it, give us a ring



Youth Radio on Lorus FM. Radio to talk back to.