

Beyond a frequency

By  Eric D'Oliveira and Karl Gostner

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Radio has both a position and a positioning in the media and entertainment world. The medium, the world's 2nd oldest, has consistently given clear evidence that sonic innovation and the wiring of sound orientation is healthier than ever before.



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Years ago, some anxious minds concluded that radio would bear disruption given the high rates of adoption of 'new media'. This honeymoon period saw revenues shift away as the global juggernauts gathered momentum, gobbling up ad revenue at unprecedented growth.



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Werner Lindemann 13 Feb 2018



Death of the radio star?

Streaming services entered the equation and the brands of Apple and Amazon appended the "music" to their star names and we began to seriously contemplate the death of the radio star. A Spotify account means you can choose your own playlist for the car trip to work. And, true, a podcast – perfectly matching your interests – can be bliss.

Neither, though, can offer the mix of live radio: the sense of the city around you, your neighbours waking up and ringing in, the serving of fresh news, the traffic snarl that will impede your journey, the issue on which everyone seems to have an opinion, and for which you will also now have an opinion by the time you get to work. There can be no doubt, digital has profoundly moved the game on. It is no longer just the radio world, it is also the world of audio as digital enables sound to be delivered in all sorts of packages to all sorts of devices.

Radio though has proven to be resilient. And different. With a compelling offering. With its intimate audiences and high trust levels, there's a reason we all occasionally participate and shout at the radio. On the radio, you are being addressed individually, so it's only fair that you should respond in kind.

That ability to connect to a single audience member yet still reach millions of listeners makes radio less intrusive than other platforms as listeners are able to control when they would like to listen to it with the switch or swipe of a button (or dial).

A multitude of studies recently conducted reveals that the 2018 UK radio market had a record year. Further, PWC predicts that the US radio market will have 4% CAGR growth until 2022. This is a steady growth in large and mature sectors with high levels of 'new media' adoption.



Radio's recipe for growth in 2019

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Underneath those figures, are three truths.

Three radio truths

The first, that **radio continues to deliver fantastic ROI for advertisers**. In the UK, commercial radio offers a 7.7 times ROI and although comprehensive studies are rarer in the South African context we see the commercial results that we deliver for our client. Results that keep them coming back.

A second and powerful statement is that **radio operators adapted**. Playing favourite tunes was no longer enough. We built personality brands, the self-same cultural insight that has powered much of Instagram.

We looked for new ways to deliver audio. The programmatic and effervescent nature of radio meant that we could do promotional activity that no other reach media type could and that when fully integrated with its deep social community platforms - digital and content - the results make for stellar broadcast. Audio consumption will continue to adapt accordingly, providing audiences with more sense of control, trust and intimacy.

The third and final reason, and the most important, is that **our audiences remain listening**. Technology and access to technology pose challenges. Smart speakers are irrevocably changing. At home. Listening habits for younger segments in the US and radio operators are working hard to be present in those spaces. South Africa is a long way off meaningful, smart speaker penetration but radio operators with market-leading aspirations will need to be there.

Yet, simultaneously Edison's Infinite Dial Report reveals in-car FM/AM listening remains immensely robust with more than 80% of US in-car audiences tuning into 'traditional' radio as their overwhelming first choice. Indeed, as a primary source of in-car listening, FM/AM radio has 4.7 times the reach of all online audio. South African numbers support that. Seven out of ten adults tune in to a radio station every day. Only one out of ten of you do not bother to do so over the course of the week.

Radio escapes definition

Radio defines us and provokes us. Yet escapes definition. It provides a single means for us to connect to any media type, creating relevant and authentic connections in a world where we often feel that as individuals we are not heard.

With story-telling at its core, radio has the power to provide listeners with a voice, give rise to big conversations and connect us to a greater cause. Now that is a disruptive technology.

ABOUT ERIC D'OLIVEIRA AND KARL GOSTNER

Eric D'Oliveira is the chief executive officer at Primedia Broadcasting. Karl Gostner is the chief operating officer of Primedia Broadcasting.
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