

“MUSIC . . . CAN NAME THE UNNAMEABLE AND COMMUNICATE THE
UNKNOWABLE.” - LEONARD BERNSTEIN

AUDIO : THE NEW VISUAL



by Geniene Preston, CEO, SA Commuter Radio

“Maybe storytelling belongs in audio - a short story is the length of a commute. That can be a sacred spot where you have the ear of the reader without having to compete with other media like games or TV” Paolo Bacigalupi

The quotes can go on and on about audio being the theatre of the mind and the power of audio. But in the last few years nothing has grown faster, become more prevalent than audio. In all its glory. As children we listened to the radio and radio when it left the floor and became portable, took the 60’s to another level. Sport and story telling became a reason to carry anything from a Ghetto Blaster to a tiny Walkman, from a transistor radio to a Boom box.

The sound crackled and swished its way through the airwaves and signals were terrible except if you lived in a big city. The aerials ranged from wire coathangers to wiring wrapped up the curtains and up the chimney. Remote communication was here to stay.

Car Radios were a hit in the 1930’s when car tunes was somewhat life before mobile technology. The designer stereos available in today’s cars—be they luxury sedans or cheap sporty coupes—have 80 years of development behind them. Here’s a look at the landmark advancements in car radios that evolved into today’s iPod hookups and satellite radio. ([read more here about the history of car radios](#)).

And then the advent of movies, television, mobile technology and of course YouTube and Tik Tok arrived. What they didn't tell you was how much data it required and that once your expensive screen was cracked it was hard to see. Those were just the hardware issues related to video and visual messaging.

Anyone with a good voice and a great subject, can record a podcast. But not everyone can create a video worth watching or a movie. Its expensive and requires a great big team. Recording audio means you can do it anywhere and at any time. And before we knew it radio has made a come back. But not in the old style. In the new wave of online radio and online worldwide directories that give us access to material from all corners of the globe

The theatre of the mind is back with all its great memories and now we are making new ones. Online radio beats FM or regular radio because of its lack of borders. Its ability to reach so many more people who have a love for one hobby or one subject. Those who are disabled or unable to get around, can enjoy audio whilst sitting in the garden or out in the car. Everyone has the ability to listen while walking, driving or catching a train. Just going for a walk now means you can continue to listen to your favourite program and binge watching now becomes binging but without blocking the rest of the world out.



Forbes Magazines recently published a study which said that "In this era of media fragmentation radio has a higher weekly reach than TV or digital media photo.. (click here for the full article). Broadcast radio was the first electronic medium. The first broadcast occurred nearly 100 years ago, when Pittsburgh's KDKA aired the returns of the 1920 Presidential election. Since then, despite the launch of rival electronic media such as television and the Internet, radio has been thriving. The average American adult still listens for 1 hour and 45 minutes each day.

According to Nielsen's Total Audience Report, in third quarter 2018 AM/FM radio reached 92% of adults 18+ each week. In spite of other audio choices, the reach of AM/FM radio has remained consistent. By comparison, in the past year, the weekly reach of live/time shifted television dropped from 88% to 86%. The disparity in weekly reach among adults 18-34, a popular advertising target, is even greater. AM/FM radio reaches 91% of the age group, compared to 73% for live/time shifted television. AM/FM radio also has a broader reach than all online search sites, social media and e-commerce websites.

While television has fragmented into various video platforms with millions of “cord cutters,” radio has also been facing competition for listeners. Nowadays, there are streaming audio providers such as Pandora and Spotify, SiriusXM satellite radio, smart speakers, music channels on YouTube and podcasts.

Nonetheless, a recent Pew Study says radio ranks second to television as a primary source for local news. Despite YouTube and streaming audio providers Pandora and Spotify, broadcast radio remains a popular source among teens and young adults for discovering new music.

So why is the reach of radio still strong? Suzanne Grimes, the President of Westwood One and EVP Corporate Marketing at Cumulus Media, says, “Radio is thriving because it has not been caught up in the maelstrom of the at-home media explosion and distraction. Nearly three quarters of all AM/FM radio listening continues to occur outside the home, in-car and at work.” AM/FM radio remains the most popular audio source in cars. Grimes, in citing the U.S. Census, states, “86% of American commuters still get to work in a car or truck and many of them (89%) travel alone.” Grimes asserts the emergence of such streaming services as Pandora and Spotify have replaced compact disks and songs purchased on iTunes as a consumer’s “box of music;” it has not impacted time spent with radio.

"Audio is having a moment, thanks in part to the pandemic".

Which proves that people want a wider choice than their local radio stations can offer. They want to listen to stories and perhaps a news broadcast every now and again. Or just enjoy a webinar online without having to login from their laptop. After spending a day at the laptop whether at the office or at home (as has been the case with the recent Covid Pandemic) its great to relax in the garden or in the lounge without the TV but simply the radio or series of podcasts playing in the background.

According to Spotify in a recent study, “The hunt for attention by Cari Kesten, Spotify It seems our days are getting longer and our attention spans are getting shorter. With a constant flow of emails, texts, and social media, and an equally demanding deluge of offerings from traditional media,

it’s rare to see content that breaks through the clutter and captures our attention. In the midst of this cacophony, we’re continuously flooded with messages from brands vying to be seen and heard. One estimate states Americans are exposed to 4,000 and 10,000 ads per day. Attention has become a precious resource in high demand. And although marketers have started to focus on attention, many are still not thinking about attention in all its forms.

For instance, most research about attention studies the many forms of visual imagery that bombard us every day. In the analysis of linear and digital video, marketers might include audio as a derivative ingredient in an ad, but fail to consider audio alone. When it comes to attention, there is growing evidence that our ears deserve as much study as our eyes. That’s why it’s crucial to identify connections with your audience through sight and sound whether interconnected or as independent formats.



AUDIO IS A POWERFUL WAY TO REACH CUSTOMERS, AND DOING IT RIGHT CAN INCREASE CONNECTION, PERSONALIZATION, AND PRODUCTIVITY. LEARN HOW BRANDED AUDIO CONTENT CAN HELP CREATE ENGAGING ONLINE EXPERIENCES IN THE NEW NORMAL AND BEYOND.

And while audiences may be found in reach and frequencies, attention is found in environments. The Attention Economy, a new way of evaluating how we buy and sell, invites the industry to take a step forward and evaluate not just the ad space you buy, but the environment you're reaching. At Spotify, we strongly believe that your audience's environment matters, and would argue not all impressions are created equal. It's for this reason Spotify will be contributing to Dentsu's Phase II of Attention Economy research, showcasing our high-quality environment and investigating how digital audio drives attention.

The past decade was dominated by the proliferation of visual media, which has led us to a moment of reflection as people are starting to show signs of screen fatigue and are shifting their attention to audio. Fifty-six percent of Gen Zs and millennials agree that audio is an escape from too much visual stimulation. The percentage of Americans who listen to streaming audio has doubled since 2012. And with the rise of podcasts, smart speakers, and connected cars, it's not surprising—audio is now a companion to our daily lives. Watching a video or scrolling through Instagram locks us to our screens, but we can listen to music or a podcast while doing the dishes, riding the train, or even working. What's more, audio enhances these screenless experiences, offering more moments for marketers to connect. This is why audio should be a larger part of the conversation.

Audio is flexible, ubiquitous and unique in its ability to follow a user throughout their day. Spotify's users listen across devices for an average of 2.6 hours per day. Studies show that people use music to regulate their moods and emotions more than for any other purpose. People use music to run faster, get through breakups, and take them back to their favourite memories.

[Read more about this study by clicking here...](#)

In light of all the research and new studies, Xactavent launched not only its generic channel, SA Commuter Radio, streamed to South Africans living locally and abroad as well as in various outlets such as hospitals, pubs, lifestyle living facilities and other public domains, but it also has launched 16 new channels for special interest groups.

Special interest groups such as History, Shopping, Gaming and even uncomfortable conversations (with gender based violence rearing its ugly head during the pandemic audio has proved that it can reach people where the privacy of head phones means the abuser cannot switch the victim from finding the right help) all have found a niche for worldwide listeners. In a country where disadvantaged communities cannot access virtual education, audio finds its way into headphones. In most communities the older children look after the younger ones and are unable to spend time on line looking at a small screen. With audio they need only headphones and the printed work can be delivered to their home or their home based study group. Cracked screens and cheaper phones also mean less data and therefore again audio saves the day.

When it comes to advertising and brand awareness, the new online stream gives more value and with no clock for drive time or nap time, there is a wider scope for those wanting to get on the media rainbow.

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AUDIO IS HAVING A MOMENT, THANKS IN PART TO THE PANDEMIC. AT HOME MOST, IF NOT ALL OF THE DAY, CONSUMER CONSUMPTION HABITS ARE UNEXPECTEDLY SWITCHING UP DRAMATICALLY, WITH AUDIO CONTENT AND LISTENERSHIP RAPIDLY ON THE RISE, AND ENGAGEMENT SURGING. TO STAY CONNECTED AND INFORMED, THOSE SHELTERING AT HOME ARE SPENDING THEIR DAYS KEPT COMPANY BY PODCASTS AND MUSIC.



SA COMMUTER RADIO
Live · Love · Listen
www.sacommuter.com

It's a hands-free medium that can move with them throughout their day, listened to anywhere and anytime. In a crowded content landscape, the promise of audio is a powerful one. It expands the reach of your marketing significantly, attracting listeners who simply prefer audio content, or who can't use other forms of content.

Portable and versatile, audio offers brands a unique way to cut through the visual clutter and increase personalization, convenience, and loyalty with meaningful content. And consumers are very willing to listen up.

According to Nielsen, four out of ten households have more than one smart speaker, and in a typical week, 90% use it for music, while 68% are listening to news. In the last month, 37% have listened to a podcast in the last month, 24% listen weekly, and 16 million people in the U.S. are avid fans. [Click here to follow the story....](#)



SA Commuter started back in 2010 and has since risen to the ranks of online Radio. It has now grown to extend to special interest channels all launching within the month of September 2021.

[Click here to download the app](#) or here to visit the website www.sacommuter.com

It is with great thanks to all of those who walked this journey with me that we are now able to begin a new one. A great way to reach more listeners and educate so many that need both to be educated and entertained.

Contact me if you want to be a part of this digital revolution.
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