

Radio's new relevance

Because it is real-time, social and mobile, radio can act as a multimedia centrifuge to a wide variety of new media and traditional platforms.

Today's content consumer is much more connected and informed than ever before and constantly in motion. So to market to the consumer, you need to know what he is doing.

Speaking at the recent Radio Forum South Africa 2008 held in Johannesburg, Anice Hassim of Immedia maintained that as consumers move increasingly to mobile, online and social networks, radio emerges as the only traditional medium that co-exists in this digital 'bubble' with seamless, real-time relevance. "Unlike other media, radio does not have to prick this bubble to gain attention as the consumer is quite prepared to carry radio in the bubble with them. However, the challenge is preparing radio for the YouTube generation and this means seeing radio as a co-existent (rather than a competitor) with these platforms."

The consumer's behaviour has changed thanks to online and mobile, with connectivity leading to a blurring between life and expectations. "For instance," continued Hassim, "when



CO-EXISTENCE – Anice Hassim


you send an e-mail, you expect an immediate response. Consequently, you start compressing time. If you unplug a connected consumer, then he has problems because he has no access to information. There is a new dynamic

called 'disconnect anxiety', which is a feeling of panic when the Internet goes down. So much of what we do today is because of being connected to this online grid. But when it goes down you can always turn to radio. It is one of the few media that can co-exist with all the others."

Because the consumer is now a more real-time consumer, the advertiser has to communicate faster with him. "The advantage of radio, unlike print, is that it is real-time. So when you look at evolving your radio platforms you need to do it radio-centrally and ask what your radio station does and how new media lets you do better radio. Digitising your radio station gives you new connections and opportunities. Radio comprises content and communities of listeners, so you have to make sure your listeners can make use of the opportunities offered by the new technologies. Radio adds a lot of vitality to these other platforms."

Hassim stressed that radio presenting is no longer one-way. The presenter has to be a content choreographer, slicing and dicing all the platforms and serving

up the best. He must seamlessly move the discussion from on-air to online to mobile and vice versa. "Radio is almost unrivalled in terms of reporting on the day. You can phone the station any time to comment on load shedding, for example, and to explore issues of the day. The fact that radio can react immediately allows marketing strategists to do in-campaign analysis rather than post-campaign analysis. So you can measure the effectiveness of the campaign on the spot and do outcomes-based campaigns, as long as the presenter is in the loop. With a radio campaign you can see in the first day if it's not working and can fix it accordingly."

In conclusion Hassim responded to the opinion many people have that the new technologies make radio less popular. "They've discounted the fact that radio has fundamental resonance to human beings. For the longest time we've muffled the voice of the listener. Now, with all the new platforms out there listeners can send SMS or pictures via MMS. A morning radio show can now live the whole day." 

The unique medium

Radio is the only medium which has no graphics and is consumed differently from other media. Its great strength is that it reaches out to all audiences.

"Therefore radio has a unique contribution to make in today's consumer world," continued marketing consultant Andrew Ingram of Radar Consulting who spoke at the recent Radio Forum South Africa held in Johannesburg. "In this day and age of high definition TV, Internet and mobile, there is a perception problem around radio as advertisers don't know how effective it can be. There is also a perception out there that only housewives and bored teenagers listen to the radio. However, a survey conducted by Radio Advertising Bureau (RAB) UK showed that radio reached two-thirds of business people. Radio share has now moved from 2% to 7% in the UK."

Education and stimulation are needed to get people to tap into radio, such as sending audio files to people

and arranging visits to radio stations.

Ingram talked about the many nicknames of radio: 'the blind medium' (ie. it has no pictures); 'the subliminal medium' (ie. radio goes in the side door of the brain); and 'the intimate medium' and / or 'the friend medium'. Said Ingram: "In a way, the last one is the most important for broadcasters. If you ask listeners in every country if radio is their friend, they will all say yes. Radio acts as a little support system for the listener."

Another nickname for radio is 'the frequency medium'; on average a TV viewer will see a campaign on TV once or twice a week, while a radio ad will be played three or four times a week. "The downside of a frequent radio ad is that it gets boring, so radio is not good for jokey or patronising commercials because then the listener starts to question the brand," commented Ingram.

He went on to another old name for radio – 'the multiplier medium' (ie. if you have TV and add radio, it has a



POSITIVE PERCEPTION – Andrew Ingram

multiplier effect). "Research from Bram International shows that a radio ad is 60% as effective as a TV ad. The average TV commercial scores five whereas a radio ad scores three. "This makes sense if you consider that a TV ad is exposed to a person who is sitting in front of his set, concentrating, whereas the listener has the radio on in the background while he is doing something else. Further, a TV ad is a mix of audio and visuals and has a much bigger budget than a radio ad, which is one-seventh the price of a TV ad."

Just as radio and TV give advertisers

the multiplier effect, so too does radio multiply the effect of the press. Ingram quoted a study which found that newspapers scored only 25% brand recall, while newspapers combined with radio scored 70%. Brand recall on the Internet was very low at 6%, as people tend to click out of Internet ads. However, Internet when coupled with radio went up to 27%.

In trying to define the role of radio in today's media-infested world, Ingram said the biggest clue was how people listen to it. "Listeners are always doing something else. But this raises a worry in advertisers who question whether consumers will notice their ads if they're not listening properly. The truth is that listeners zone in and out of things if they hear them more than once. However, you'll automatically listen to something new because of the brain's natural radar."

According to Clark Chapman Research into low ad avoidance conducted in 2005, radio has only 16% ad avoidance compared to TV's 44%. Forty-two percent of all ads are hard avoidance, 42% are inattentive and 16% are engaged. Direct mail has 62% hard avoidance; Internet banners 65% and Internet pop-ups 73%. 