

# The Spirit of Radio



Author: Tammy Greenberg, SVP/Business Development, RAB

Radio has long been known as a deeply personal, trusted and supportive partner for consumers, communities, and companies of all stripes. Fostering unity is part of the DNA of the more than 15,000 radio stations across the country. It is the spirit of radio.

## *Radio Unites*

During a time of great crisis, radio broadcasters provide the most reliable, relevant, and trusted local news and have helped local communities overcome challenges while becoming the critical link for how people can lend a hand. During the shutdown caused by the coronavirus, there were thousands of small businesses in markets across the country that remained open and desperately needed people to know that. Radio, of course, went above and beyond the call.

Radio emotionally connects with fans, supports the community, promotes businesses, and brings all the parties together during unsettling times. As America gets going again, radio remains a trusted companion and a force for good that unites communities.

## *Reliable Audience*

Consumer behavior shifted, and continues to shift, at lightning speed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis sparked concerns about the economy and worries about the physical and mental well-being of people's families and friends, with more and more folks wondering how they were going to purchase basic items, according to EY.

## *Partner Message*

The concerns have led to dramatic changes in consumer behavior, as millions of Americans hunkered down at home. The EY study adds that 39% of U.S. consumers are shopping online more often and 83% of affluent Americans are trying to stay healthy. A Mindshare study says 55% of consumers have purchased home workout gear.

Amid the changes, radio listening remains a bright spot for consumers, with three times more listeners turning to local radio than any other source, according to an [infographic](#) prepared by the Cox Media Group.

As the virus started to spread rapidly in mid-March, radio listenership maintained 96% of its reach and 90% of its average quarter hour audience across all demographics and ethnicities, per Nielsen data as displayed by a Katz Media Group [infographic](#).

The data also revealed that at the height of the work-from-home period — between the second week of March and the second week of April — out-of-home listening levels remained the dominant form of radio listening. The reason? Sixty percent of heavy AM/FM radio listeners who work outside their homes continued to do so and maintained their radio-listening habits.

During that same period, time spent on in-home listening increased 29% and at-home online listening jumped 61%. And the longer stay-at-home orders continued, the more people shifted to audio entertainment, according to MindShare's consumer insights study.

Those working from home during this period missed certain aspects of their commute. As noted once [before](#), a survey by CarInsurance.org found that the thing drivers missed most was audio in some form — listening to music, podcasts/audiobooks, and talk radio.

Daypart listening also shifted slightly, as more Americans slept in, but midday, evening, and total day radio listening levels have all retained more than 91% of prior audience levels.

As of late June, 42% of radio listeners listened to music on a different or new station more often and are tuning in the same or more regardless of work status, according to NuVoodoo. Specifically, 88% who are going to work outside their home, 89% who are working from home and 77% who are no longer working their regular jobs are all listening to radio the same or more.

According to Triton Digital data as [published](#) by the RAB, consumers are spending a significant amount of time listening to radio digitally. They're listening via an app (46% share in April), a computer (31% share in April), and smart speaker (23% share in April), in the home and via TV, Xfinity, [and](#) podcasts. The Myers Report, which tracks media spending, estimates that podcast advertising will grow 8% in 2020, one of the few platforms in positive territory among 21 media categories.

Brands are taking note, with podcast advertising up 7%, according to a Magellan AI [study](#) conducted on behalf of Westwood One. The study adds that many top podcast advertisers are also the biggest radio advertisers.

### *Reliable Source*

Consumers lean into their local radio station because they trust the content and the people who carry it. As part of a [survey](#) presented in partnership with the RAB, Jacobs Media Strategies asked respondents who they "completely trust" to provide legitimate answers and solutions to the coronavirus outbreak. Radio was second only to the [CDC](#) and National Institutes of Health in popularity. Further, 26% and 30% of respondents, respectively, indicated that radio personalities and their favorite morning shows are even more important during the COVID-19 crisis than they ever were.

### *Building a Bridge for Marketers*

A combination of historical and current research compiled by the RAB shows that brands that continue to deliver relevant storytelling across trusted communication channels as consumer behaviors change will be in a much better position as the economy regains its footing.

But in both good times and bad, marketers have the opportunity to fulfill the promise that consumers expect. Sixty percent of small business brands informed customers of new precautions being taken in response to the crisis, 46% offered different options to consumers, and 33% replaced hard sales messages with empathic ones, according to information presented by Borrell Associates during an RAB-sponsored webinar.

According to a separate Myers Report [study](#), radio across platforms delivers multiple, extremely attentive audiences in the communities where they live, work, and consume products. The brands that communicate creatively and send relevant messages are winning the race for consumer attention.

Top brands such as CVS, IHOP, Pizza Hut, T-Mobile, Taco Bell, Walgreens, and Kroger outperformed the ABX ([Advertising Benchmark Index](#)) norms for KPIs in a stunning array of ad scores.

The indices show that these brands exceed key metrics including awareness, message, reputation, and action by an average of 35% through their use of radio. The common themes among the high-scoring ads were providing relevant information on how to access the brands, special offers in light of the current situation, and an empathic tone. Notably, two of the highest-performing spots were delivered by local radio station personalities.

### *Planning for an Economic Revival*

As the status of the economy evolves, companies continue to shift their marketing message to reflect changing consumer needs. Borrell Associates has identified a three-part sequential messaging path for the new norm: “We’re open for business” (i.e., awareness/good news), “We’re COVID-19 compliant” (i.e., the company is safe and this is what it is doing for consumers), and “Have we got a deal for you” (i.e., offers to drive immediate traffic and sales).

The radio industry’s plans for an economic revival are to support businesses, people, and communities. Radio will do everything it can to continue to help the economy get back to where it needs to be in markets across the country.

“AM/FM radio is the soundtrack of America’s re-opening and reemergence,” said Tony Hereau, VP of cross-platform insights at Nielsen, in an article by Inside Radio. The article referred to a webinar in which Hereau discussed a recent Nielsen study showing that heavy radio listeners are key to driving commerce and supporting the economy since they’re more likely to go out and shop once COVID-19 eases in their market.

Radio will support national, regional, and local business and will continue to provide its listeners with the content they trust and rely on, the entertainment they want, the sports they crave, and the passion and humanity they need. The medium will also continue to innovate to deliver branded content the way consumers want it, whether over the air or via smart speaker, podcast, TV, and the next digital gadget to come.

“There’s something about the spirit of radio,” says Adam Grant, a creative director at digital agency AKQA. “It helps us all to know each other better and gives us a sense of purpose and community in a time where we need those things more than ever.”

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