

Radio remains strong, despite online audio consumption increase

By  Danette Breitenbach

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Radio remains strong in South Africa, despite the increase in online audio consumption, demonstrating that the medium can accommodate many different audio platforms.



CAPTION: Source: © Andrea Flacquadro [pexels](#)

This is according the latest *The Infinite Dial 2022 South Africa* report which looks at digital audio, mobile, smart speaker ownership, podcast consumption, and social media usage among South Africans age 15+ living within the major metro commercial areas, covering the upper two of the three SEM Supergroups (or upper three of the five SEM Clusters) in the eight largest metro areas of South Africa.

The report was commissioned by the National Association of Broadcasters South Africa (NAB), sponsored by Triton Digital, and produced in association with The Broadcast Research Council of South Africa (BRC).

“We hope this data that shows robust growth in audio consumption motivates advertisers to consider all of these various audiences,” says Larry Rosin, president of Edison Research, who recently shared the report at an online event.

Listening though online audio growth

The report found that in 2021, 69% of the surveyed 15+ population listen to AM/FM radio weekly. In 2019 this was 68%.

“While this might only be 1% up from 2019, what is important to note here is that this shows that despite the growth of digital consumption, it is not taking away from the reach of radio,” says Rosin.

Traditional radio ownership is still very high as 94% of the surveyed 15+ population own at least one radio.

But digital consumption is happening, with 61% of the South African Major Metro population age 15 and older have listened to online audio in the last month, from 39% in 2019 - an increase of 56%.

“This is a major growth, making online audio a mainstream activity, approaching international levels,” says Rosin.

The average time listening to online audio is six hours and 20 minutes in 2021 compared to six hours and eight minutes in 2019. Rosin says this shows that not only are more people engaging with online audio, but they also are consuming a lot more online audio.

When it comes to online audio, YouTube is streaks ahead of all other online audio platforms. Car listening through a mobile device also increased from 15% in 2019 to 34% in 2021.

Radio listening at home also expanded to non-radio devices as 64% of the surveyed 15+ population reported listening to radio at home on a non-radio device – an increase from 44% in the prior survey.

In relation to this, the study also found that ownership of a tablet has grown dramatically from 11% in 2019 to 21% in 2021. Ownership of a smart speaker also grew dramatically from 12% in 2019 to 32% in 2021.

“Covid did mean that people spent more time indoors and had to find other distractions and this could be the reason for why many of these dynamic changes occurred, but this is not proven,” comments Rosin.



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Podcasting

Podcasting awareness jumped from 22% in 2019 to 48% in 2021. However, the country still lags behind the US where 78% of the population surveyed are aware of podcasting.

“South Africa is also has the lowest awareness compared to other countries*. This means there is lots of room for growth,” says Rosin.

“While we have seen a rapid catch up in the percentage of people surveyed who have listened to a podcast in 2019 (19%) to 36% in 2021, again South Africa is still behind the US and other countries we compare it to,” he adds.

The same is true for monthly listening, with the figures showing lots of growth, but still lagging globally. “However, we are seeing good adoption of the medium, but then we are starting with a low base,” says Rosin.

The younger generation are big adopters of the podcast with 51% of the age group between 15 to 34 years of age listening to podcasts.

“This is consistent with what we are seeing across the world. This is a good profile if you are selling against these podcasts.

This figure is also closer to the US and other countries,” he explains.



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On average the surveyed population is listening to an average of four to five podcasts in the last week, which is similar to other countries, with 34% listening several times a month.

“There is lots of habitual podcast listening in South Africa, similar to other countries it is compared to,” says Rosin.

Commenting on the report, BRC’s CEO, Gary Whitaker says: “The digital listening data still provides advertisers and media agencies with a rich research additive to traditional radio listening.”

You can access the full report [here](#)

*Australia, Canada and the UK

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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