

Why commercial audio is growing and how advertisers can benefit

## Introduction

This study examines the drivers behind continued growth in the audio landscape - for both listeners and advertisers - identifying the reasons people listen to audio entertainment and understanding the opportunities these present for advertisers.

The report is built on two new proprietary research studies conducted on behalf of Radiocentre by independent research agency Differentology, who have extensive experience in developing audience and advertising effectiveness insight for all sectors within the commercial media industry.

Total commercial audio reach continues to grow
(adult weekly reach \%)

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Source RAJAR MIDAS
Commercial Radio, non-BBC podcasts. Ad funded (free subs) On-Demand music services

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## Key take-outs

Building on improved distribution, established and newer audio formats play complementary roles for listeners, enhancing the medium's relevance for all listener groups, leading to ongoing growth in the commercially-accessible audio audience.

1. The audio advertising opportunity is bigger than ever

75\% of UK adults now listen to commercial audio services for an average of 15 hours every week*.
Audience growth is driven through improved PHYSICAL \& MENTAL AVAILABILITY of audio, in the form of wider distribution (increased penetration of new devices) and enhanced relevance of audio in people's lives (meeting evolving needs).
2. Context-led occasions dominate share of total listening

The study reveals how listening is primarily driven by listener context over content (although it should be noted that they are not mutually exclusive concepts - content naturally plays a vital role in context-led listening choices), with context-driven occasions accounting for over $80 \%$ of weekly commercial audio listening time. This provides advertisers with a multitude of opportunities to engage mass audiences at relevant moments and benefit from boosted advertising performance as a result.
3. Need-states thinking can help hone audio planning practices for enhanced effects

Audiences have a wide range of needs that influence their media choices (e.g. being entertained, being informed, etc.). In this study, Audio is revealed now to fulfil seven specific need-states highly effectively. With each offering robust weekly reach and an average listening occasion lasting for 1-2 hours, audio need-states provide advertisers with powerful opportunities to reach critical mass audiences (as frequently as required) with enhanced relevance of messaging.
4. Live radio remains the lead audio format, complemented by evolving ondemand audio services

Radio leads listening time and delivers the highest reach within six out of the seven audio need-states, underpinning why it remains the most widely listened-to form of audio entertainment at a headline level - and, therefore, continues to play a crucial role for audio advertisers.
5. Audio needs and associated listening behaviour evolve with age

Needs driving listening behaviour/audio choices at a younger age aren't rigidly maintained over time. As listeners' lifestyles evolve (e.g. working, home-building), their listening behaviour adapts accordingly. In this context, despite perceived increased competition for share of ear, listening to Live Radio is projected to remain stable for the foreseeable future.

## Putting the learning into practice

The results of this study are evident: the audio communications opportunity has never been bigger or more sophisticated - providing advertisers with an opportunity to achieve mass reach, underpinned by varied and nuanced targeting capabilities.

How can marketers optimise these effects?

## 1. Increase audio's share of the overall media budget

With a significant bank of evidence across a wide range of metrics highlighting the powerful influence that audio (and radio in particular) can exert on behalf of advertisers, combined with a large and growing audience, it makes sense for advertisers to reconsider the share of budget they currently allocate to audio media. In this context, it's helpful to note the finding from Radiocentre's ROI Multiplier study which identified how raising radio's share of an advertising budget leads to a significant increase in overall campaign ROI.

## 2. Use Live Radio plus on-demand audio formats to maximise reach

This study demonstrates how Live Radio and on-demand services play complementary roles for the listener they can also do so for advertisers, especially in terms of maximising campaign reach. This is important because Radiocentre's Big Audio Datamine and ROI Multiplier studies both demonstrate the primacy of weekly reach in driving audio advertising effectiveness. The influence of reach on radio advertising outcomes is consistent across all product sectors/campaign scenarios, and can be explored in more depth using Radiocentre's Radio Planning Optimiser.

For advertisers using radio for brand-building purposes, adding on-demand audio services into the mix can help extend campaign reach significantly, especially amongst younger audiences. In the context of driving short-term response, on-demand audio can enhance targeting efficiencies alongside the activation-at-scale provided by radio's mass reach.
3. Explore audio need-states to hone media planning and creative strategies accordingly and further boost audio communication effectiveness
3.1 Use the Need-states Ready Reckoner to identify the most relevant need-state(s) in respect of specific brand, campaign, and communication objectives.
3.2 Use a range of audio formats, stations, days, and dayparts to maximise weekly reach (and therefore effectiveness) across the campaign. In this context, the lead role played by radio for listeners in terms of its reach and share of listening time within each need state, suggests that it should play a similarly central role for advertisers.
3.3 Consider contextually-sensitive creative development to reflect the specific nature of the need-state(s) being targeted to help boost communication effectiveness via:

- Activity congruence
- Mood congruence


## Background \& Objectives

In 2014, against the backdrop of growth in new on-demand audio formats, Radiocentre's Audio Now study set out to understand the role played by different audio services in people's lives - in particular, where they overlapped and how they differed. This deep-dive qualitative research project identified six consumer need-states where audio was revealed to play an important role: Help me escape; Lift my mood; Amplify the moment; Provide social currency; Broaden my horizons; Keep me in the loop.

In the eight years since Audio Now was published, there has been notable change in the context for audio, with two events in particular identified as exerting influence on audio listening behaviour:

1. The launch of the Amazon Echo in late 2016 (and other smart speakers since), combined with increased smartphone penetration, has helped make audio services easier to access.
2. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the take-up of hybrid working patterns for many office workers. Half of working adults now work from home at least one day a week or more ${ }^{1}$, many of whom perceive radio to be the perfect accompaniment to home-working ${ }^{2}$.
3. Source: Global 'Audience Insider', September 2022
4. Source: 'New Ways of Working, New ways of connecting', Radiocentre/DRG, February 2021

Alongside these interventions, total commercial audio listening - as measured by RAJAR MIDAS - has continued to grow since 2014. Important to note here that commercial audio refers to those services that advertisers can use to connect with audiences e.g. Commercial Radio, non-BBC podcasts, and non-paying/ad-funded subscribers to streamed music services.

Total commercial audio listening is growing...
Total weekly commercial audio listening hours (000s)


## Objectives

In this context, the ambition for this new study was to get a broader understanding of the drivers behind the growing generation of commercial audio listeners, specifically:

- Interrogate the 2014 need-states to understand if - and how - they have evolved
- Quantify the size of each need-state and how this varies by audience demographic
- Within each need-state, identify the nature of listening behaviour and the scale of listening to individual audio services
- Understand how advertisers can best harness the range of communication opportunities presented across need-states to develop more effective audio advertising campaigns.
- Get a sense of the future shape of audio listening.


## How the study was done

We appointed independent research agency Differentology and invested in two new proprietary studies to deliver against these objectives - both with a base of weekly commercial audio listeners, broadly representative in terms of age, gender, social grade, regional breakdown, and additionally profiled against RAJAR MIDAS in terms of commercial audio listening behaviour.


## 1 Qualitative phase

We started with a deep-dive auto-ethnographic qualitative project, recruiting twenty listeners to capture each and every moment they listened to audio across a week, explaining how and why, by videoing themselves on their smartphones.

The 'audio moments database' that was created from this consisted of over seven hours of video footage capturing the motivations behind each of 397 individual audio listening occasions. This was used to explore if and how our 2014 need-states had evolved, with the outputs also feeding into the development of the questionnaire for the quantitative phase.

## 2 Quantitative phase

For this we recruited 1,000 weekly commercial audio listeners to fill in a one-week diary capturing specific data about each individual listening occasion they participated in across the week.

This captured information relating to a total of almost 11,000 listening occasions, representing a total of just under half a million minutes of commercial listening. This robust and credible dataset allowed us to quantify the scale of individual need-states and the role of different audio formats within them.

# The findings in detail 



## 1. Growth in listening results from increased PHYSICAL \& MENTAL AVAILABILITY of audio

The explanation for continued growth in commercial audio audiences is best considered in the context of Byron Sharp's framework of how brands grow.

### 1.1 Increased 'Physical Availability' of audio (distribution)

The launch of the Amazon Echo in late 2016 (now found in $39 \%$ of UK homes), combined with a significant increase in smartphone penetration ( 9 in 10 adults now have instant access to a pocketful of audio, all within arm's reach), has helped make audio services more - and more seamlessly - accessible in and out the home, wherever people are and whatever they're doing. Research* highlights how the take-up of new technology (e.g. smart speakers) leads to an increase in listening to all forms of audio entertainment.

* Getting Vocal, Radiocentre/Differentology, May 2017

Increased penetration of new devices makes audio easier to access
Change in penetration of key audio devices since 2014


Source Ofcom Technology Tracker

### 1.2 Increased 'Mental Availability' of audio (salience)

Mental availability describes how many relevant reasons-to-buy are associated with a particular product or brand. Byron Sharp coined the term 'category entry points' to describe these reasons-to-buy; but we may also think about them in terms of consumer need-states.

The need-states are presented on two axes to provide a framework to better understand the drivers of listener behaviour:
i. SOCIAL-PERSONAL: our social needs concern how we relate to other people and/or the wider world rather than being purely about ourselves.
ii. CONTEXT-CONTENT: sometimes we makes choices based on specific content, but at other times it's all about where we are, who with, and what we're doing.

## Evolution in need-states makes audio entertainment more salient



The six consumer need-states identified in 2014 were rigorously interrogated during the qualitative phase of this new project, which confirmed their continuing relevance and importance to today's listener. This isn't overly surprising because underlying human motivations remain pretty consistent over time - evolution rather than revolution - and only then to adapt to ongoing transformation in people's daily lives. In the context of daily life being transformed, the qualitative research revealed how audio is now also being used to meet a brand-new need-state:
Keep Me Company.

This new need-state has emerged due to a growing need for companionship caused by changing living arrangements across the recent past, such as ongoing post-pandemic working patterns, coupled with a rise in economic hardship - all of which are impacting frequency of social contact. In this context, audio is felt to seamlessly offset feelings of loneliness and provide companionship when people are on their own, especially those working from home.

|  | NEED-STATE | SUMMARY | LISTENER COMMENTS |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |

Being associated with more reasons to listen in this way naturally equates to an increase in audio's mental availability (or salience) among listeners. This leads to more people turning more often to audio entertainment - resulting in an increase in overall listening.

## 2. Context-led occasions dominate share of commercial listening

At a fundamental level, the qualitative analysis reveals how four of the seven audio need-states are driven primarily by listener context over content (although it should be noted that they are not mutually exclusive concepts content naturally plays a vital role in context-led listening choices). To supplement this finding, the quantitative phase of the project provided us with data to quantify the relative size of the individual seven need-states, based on the share of total audio listening time each represents. This data is derived from the half million minutes of commercial audio listening that was captured across all respondents during the one-week diary task.


The numbers reveal how share of total listening is even-more skewed towards 'context-led' listening occasions, highlighting how people often use audio entertainment to meet needs motivated by circumstances and surroundings. This is partly driven by easy access to audio, wherever and whenever required, but also by the fact that audio is able to flex to fit around people's daily lives; and can be heard as intended, even when people are engaged in other tasks.

This flexibility of audio is underpinned by IPA Touchpoints data which reveals how nine-out-of-ten radio listening occasions are conducted in parallel with other activities. This unique characteristic of audio provides advertisers with a multitude of opportunities to engage mass audiences at relevant moments and benefit from boosted advertising performance* as a result.

## 3. Need-states-based planning offers enhanced communications opportunities for advertisers

Having established that listener context is the primary driver behind the majority of audio listening occasions, let's consider what opportunities this presents for marketers to further enhance advertising outcomes.

There are numerous studies (from both a radio and wider-advertising industry perspective) that highlight the influence of a range of different contextual factors on how effectively each individual instance of advertising communicates.

### 3.1 Editorial context

The impact of radio's editorial context on audio advertising processing was explored in Radiocentre's Emotional Multiplier study. This identified that radio's mood-boosting editorial effect extends into the ad break, enhancing engagement with advertising by $30 \%$ compared to when the ads were heard preceded by silence.

### 3.2 Listener context/activity congruence

Behavioural economics suggests how a brand's goals can be activated by situational cues that lead consumers to make decisions subconsciously.* Radiocentre's Hear and Now research study reveals how radio advertising that directly relates to tasks or activities that listeners are participating in benefits from significantly higher levels of engagement and memory processing. Further analysis shows how these effects are so powerful that they can turn average ads into star performers.
*Non-conscious goals and consumer choice/ Chartrand, Huber, Shiv, Tanner, 2008

Building on this insight, Radiocentre's Building ShelfAwareness study demonstrates how reaching people just prior to the point of purchase (i.e. in-car on their way to the supermarket) can deliver powerful short-term effects, helping brands to stand-out more on-shelf and increasing immediate purchase consideration.

### 3.3 Mood congruence

Mood congruence is important for future recall because memory encoding (and therefore earning a spot in a person's long-term memory) occurs best when the mood of the advertisement matches the person's mood at the time.*
*The Role of Emotions in Marketing/Bagozzi, Gopinath, Nyer, 1999

### 3.4 Campaign context

More broadly, at a campaign level, The Long and The Short of It (Binet and Field/IPA) highlights the importance of broad reach and strengthening emotional connection in delivering optimum advertising effects, especially for brand-building campaigns.

In How Brands Grow, Professor Byron Sharp highlights the importance of brands communicating with customers across a broad range of occasions and situations to help strengthen mental availability.

Radiocentre's Big Audio Datamine big-data radio effectiveness analysis, and accompanying planning tool (Radio Planning Optimiser), both establish the importance of optimising reach over frequency in delivering optimum results from audio campaigns.

Bearing all of these factors in mind when considering the specific nature of listening within each individual need-state, can help marketers and media planners identify which need-states offer the optimal communication opportunities relating to the nature of the individual campaign being planned. Once key need-states have been identified, media planning and creative strategies can be honed accordingly to enhance overall audio advertising outcomes.

Selecting one or more need-states, as appropriate, provides advertisers with a range of opportunities to engage mass audiences at relevant moments with congruent messaging.

### 3.5 Factors to consider when comparing relevance of individual need-states for different briefs:

- Weekly reach \%
- Average length of listening occasion
- Prevalent Listener mood
- Social context of listening
- Main location of listening
- Main activities being undertaken


Another key factor in establishing the value of different media channels and/or environments is how available the audience is to be reached on a regular basis. In this context, with weekly reach ranging from $12 \%$ up to $69 \%$ and the average listening occasion lasting for 1-2 hours, each need-state provides advertisers with strong opportunity to reach critical mass audiences and build frequency as required.

## 4. Live radio leads listening behaviour across the need-states

### 4.1 Live Radio and on-demand audio formats play complementary roles for listeners

Reviewing share of listening time by need-state for each form of audio entertainment provides a helpful structure for understanding the relative scale and defining characteristics of the different audio formats.

Live radio and on-demand audio formats play complementary roles for listeners


Combined base: 490,464 commercial listening minutes.

This analysis helps re-affirm how Live Radio and On-Demand audio services aren't directly competing for share-of-ear but actually playing complementary roles in listeners' lives, helping to grow the overall audio audience.

The distinctive nature of live linear radio and how it effectively serves every need-state (in comparison to podcasts and on-demand music services) underpins why the medium continues to lead commercial audio listening habits.

### 4.2 Radio has the highest weekly reach and share of listening time within 6/7 need-states

As the chart below demonstrates, Live Radio has the highest weekly reach by a number of multiples, dominating within all of the need-states except 'Broaden my Horizons', within which podcasts deliver the highest reach. Live Radio is also found to account for the greatest share of time spent listening within each need-state, again with the exception of Podcasts in 'Broaden my Horizons'.

Live radio has the highest weekly reach within 6/7 need-states
Weekly reach \% (proportion of listeners within each need-state reached by audio format)



Base: 490,464 commercial listening minutes

### 4.3 Radio leads time spent listening across all demographics

Despite the needs driving listening behaviour/audio choices varying by age, RAJAR MIDAS quantifies how Live Radio continues to lead time spent listening among all adults and younger audience groups.

Share of total commercial audio listening by format


In summary, with the highest reach and share of listening time across six out of the seven audio need-states, Live Radio remains the most widely listened-to form of audio entertainment - and, therefore, continues to play a crucial role for advertisers for all audiences.

## 5. Audio needs and associated listening behaviours evolve with age

Analysis of the share of total listening time within each need-state by demographic group reveals how the relevance of individual need-states evolves as listeners get older.

The chart below establishes the most prevalent drivers of listening for different demographic groups (relative to all adults). Within these broad trends, individual audio formats meet listeners' evolving needs in different ways.


Taken in combination, these factors help explain why audio listening choices vary across different demographic groups. Delving further into the audience data for different audio formats within individual need-states helps explain how listening patterns formed at a younger age aren't rigidly maintained as listeners become older and their lifestyles evolve. This is further evidenced by the continued headline growth in live commercial radio audiences despite the growing popularity of podcasts and streamed music services among younger audiences.

Put simply, as audiences' audio needs evolve in response to new working and/or domestic situations, so does the portfolio of audio formats they use to meet these needs. In this context, despite seemingly increased competition for share of ear, listening to Live Radio is projected to remain stable for the foreseeable future.

## Appendix



## Audio need-states ready reckoner

|  |  |  |  |  |  | KEY IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS <br> re: share of listening time/relative differences between need-states |  |  |  |  | SHARE OF TOTAL LISTENING <br> within need-state audio format |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | NEED-StATE | SUMMARY | SHARE OF OVERALL LISTENING TIME \% | AVERAGE WEEKLY REACH \% |  | MAIN LISTENING LOCATIONS | MAIN ACTIVITIES | SOCIAL CONTEXT | $\begin{aligned} & \text { PREVALENT } \\ & \text { MOOD } \end{aligned}$ | LISTENER COMMENTS | LIVE RADIO | ON-DEMAND Music SERVICES | PODCASTS |
|  | HELP ME <br> ESCAPE | Audio provides a sanctuary from the outside world to allow people to sitback and recharge | 10\% | 36\% | 74 mins | At Home, When Driving, Public transport | Relaxing, Browsing the internet, Commuting | Mainly Alone, Partner/ Spouse | Relaxed | "Something about listening to radio just takes everyday stress away, especially after work." | 65\% | 17\% | 18\% |
| 물 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { LIFTMY } \\ & \text { MOOD } \end{aligned}$ | Audio is an energiser/pick-me-up when listeners are engaged in other tasks or activities | 35\% | 69\% | 83 mins | At Home, At Work | Working/ Studying, HH Chores, Exercise | Mainly Alone, Colleagues | Happy, Energised, Uplifted | "I chose what I was listening to in the specific moment to really boost my spirits." | 73\% | 19\% | 9\% |
| $\begin{aligned} & \text { x } \\ & \stackrel{1}{2} \\ & 0 \\ & 0 \end{aligned}$ | KEEP ME <br> COMPANY | Audio provides companionship/a human voice when people are on their own | 26\% | 59\% | 78 mins | At Home, When Driving | Working/ Studying, Driving, HH Chores, Childcare | Mainly Alone, Children | Relaxed, Happy | "Radio for me is like a friend who's always there. I always listen/ have it on in the background." | 79\% | 10\% | 11\% |
|  | AMPLIFY THE MOMENT | Audio brings people together and sets the tone to make social occasions feel more special | 11\% | 29\% | 100 mins | At Work, When Driving At Home | Socialising, Eating/drinking, Shared travel, Working | Colleagues, Family, Friends | Happy, Feelgood, Relaxed | "It was my friend's 30 th... we listened to some music on a speaker, it amplified the social aspect \& made us feel in a party mood." <br> "When the radio is on at my mum's or when I've got friends round it creates a positive atmosphere." | 83\% | 14\% | 3\% |
|  | PROVIDE SOCIAL CURRENCY | Audio gives listeners new things to talk about and helps spark conversations | 3\% | 12\% | 98 mins | At Work | Socialising, Eating/drinking, Working | Colleagues, <br> Family, <br> Friends | Positive, Uplifted | "Radio can create talking points because of the social aspect with the show hosts." <br> "I enjoyed a podcast so much I recommended it to my friends." | 80\% | 9\% | 11\% |
| $\frac{5}{\frac{1}{2}}$ | BROADEN MY <br> HORIZONS | Audio introduces listeners to new topics of interest and helps them discover new music | 4\% | 14\% | 71 mins | At Home, Public transport | Relaxing, Browsing the internet, Hobbies | Mainly Alone | Interested, Positive, Uplifted | "I'll listen to podcasts to learn something new. The radio is good for when I'm not sure what I want to listen to. It also means I listen to music I might not normally come across." | 29\% | 9\% | 62\% |
| 0 | KEEP ME IN THE LOOP | Audio seamlessly keeps listeners connected to what's going on in the wider world. | 12\% | 33\% | 78 mins | At Home, When driving | Working, Commuting, HH Admin, Childcare | Alone, <br> Partner/ Spouse, Children | Informed, Energised, Positive | "The radio helped me feel more connected and up to date with what was going on in the world." | 76\% | 2\% | 21\% |

## References/helpful resources

RAJAR MIDAS
IPSOS

Radio Planning Optimiser

Planning tool, accessible via Radiocentre.org

## Big Audio Datamine

Radiocentre, Colourtext

## Radio: the ROI Multiplier

Radiocentre, Holmes and Cook

## Hear and Now

Radiocentre, Neuro-Insight

Building Shelf Awareness

Radiocentre, Shoppercentric

## Radio: the Emotional Multiplier

Radiocentre, Sparkler


## New ways of working, new ways of connecting

Radiocentre, DRG

## Global Audience Insider

Global, Differentology

## The Long \& the short of it

Binet and Field/IPA

## How Brands Grow

Professor Byron Sharp/Oxford University Press

The role of emotions in marketing
Bagozzi, Gopinath, Nyer/Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 1999

## Non-conscious goals and consumer choice

Chartrand, Huber, Shiv, Tanner/ Journal of Consumer Research, 2008

## Getting Vocal

Radiocentre, Differentology

## About Radiocentre

Radiocentre is the industry body for commercial radio, working on behalf of stakeholders who represent $90 \%$ of commercial radio in terms of listening and revenue.

To keep up to date with Radiocentre news:
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