The Survival of Radio

As the years go by, we see technology advancing in ways we never imagined possible as kids. Even something as simple as how we entertain ourselves while driving has come so far with the magic of Bluetooth and AUX cords, but we still have bits of our past. No matter what we come up with in terms of technology, the radio is one invention that stays strong to this very day. You get in your car and though you absolutely can go ahead and connect your phone to your car, 68% of people still opt to listen to commercial radio during their drives throughout the week. There is something about radio that we just could never replace, but does that mean our beloved source of entertainment is perfect? Not necessarily. With car radio listening being down 6% since last year, something is missing that makes people decide against listening to the radio before work, but what is it? Let’s dive in deeper to figure out what today’s listeners are looking for.

When people decide against listening to the radio in the morning, the other options they have are Spotify, Apple Music, or even just driving in silence, but what makes those options more appealing than listening to the radio on any given morning? To some, the issue comes from the ads. In a world full of “skip intro” buttons and ad-free premium options, 43% of people say their listening experience would improve if radio followed suit with playing fewer ads. Granted, that’s not to say that all ads are terrible, but it would help if there were fewer. For other listeners, all the really want is a bit of diversity. As much as we all love Dua Lipa, a bit of variety in the songs that are played would really change the game for today’s listeners. With that in mind though, what would they rather listen to? That brings us to the next request from our listeners: more Canadian artists! 60% of listeners are looking to support their fellow Canadians by listening to more local artists and we totally agree. There is a whole world of music that we miss out on because we focus on what is currently popular and we believe there should be more space for the up-and-coming artists of Canada.

So, knowing all of this, where do we go from here? How can we make radio better for Canadians? With 70% of the younger generation listening to traditional radio at roughly 6 hours per week, there is a lot that the radio industry can do to maintain or even improve their listenership. A good start would be to take a note out of CBC Radio’s book and play more Canadian/local content. With 48% of people listening to the station regularly, many folks place value on CBC Radio as a national public broadcaster because they play local content and share the latest local news. Play what is most relevant or relatable to the listener. On that note, let’s talk about the problem with the ads. We know people want fewer ads but, if we can’t do that, what if we played ads that are more appealing. It isn’t that people don’t enjoy a break from the music every little while because, if that was the case, they wouldn’t like the news either which isn’t a problem. Maybe the problem is less that they don’t want any ads, but they want ads that are useful to them, ads that are personalized. Radio doesn’t have the same algorithm magic that streaming and social media sites have but figuring out a way to make ads more interesting to the listener would likely help listenership a lot.

In the end, the issue isn’t that people are sick of radio. People love radio and they genuinely see the value in having systems in the car that do more than just play the music that we already know and love straight from our phones. There is so much out there to discover, the listeners just wish there was more of an opportunity to do that in a new way. Fewer ads, more diversity, more local artists, maybe even throw in podcast-type segments sometimes (with 32% of the younger generation listening to podcasts, it isn’t the worst idea). Radio isn’t dead, it just needs a bit of help to be revamped to keep up with the changing times.

Works Cited

*Attitudes and Opinions towards Commercial Radio in Canada: Final Report*. <https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2021/crtc/BC92-112-2021-1-eng.pdf>.

*Maison Radio-Canada*. <https://site-cbc.radio-canada.ca/documents/vision/strategy/submission/appendix-d-how-millennials-use-cbc-radio-canada.pdf>.

“Podcasts vs. Radio: What's the Difference?: Spotify Advertising.” *Podcasts vs. Radio: What's the Difference? | Spotify Advertising*, <https://ads.spotify.com/en-US/news-and-insights/podcast-advertising-vs-radio-advertising/>.