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Spotlight on... **Radio**

Today, radio is one of the most flexible of media. It offers advertisers narrowly segmented audiences, relatively low cost per spot, and high daily listenership among many prime prospect groups.

Depending on its format and time period, radio advertising has the potential to reach people of all ages in many different locations. In fact, radio is often called the "mobile medium" because of its ability to reach consumers out in the marketplace. Here's a review of its general strengths and limitations:

Advantages

Frequency. Because of the large number of stations and the intense competition within the industry, cost to purchase radio time has remained relatively low. This makes radio ideal for building frequency of message.

Broadly Selective. Each station tries to develop programming that appeals to specific audience types. As a result, radio allows advertisers to focus on narrow target audiences with a minimum of waste.

Proximity to Purchase. Radio goes where the listener goes. For advertisers, that means a chance to reach listeners on their way to shop. And since messages can be changed quickly, radio can help stimulate impulse purchases.

Engaging. With a wide range of sound effects to create "theater of the mind," good radio commercials can involve the listener's imagination... a powerful creative edge.

Disadvantages

Audience Fragmentation. Since each station reaches a fairly small audience, a media buy must include multiple stations to reach a larger, mass audience.

Aural Medium. With no visual element, radio cannot show new styles or models and demonstrations are extremely difficult. Taking down a phone number or address while driving down the highway is impractical to say the least.

Clutter. Some stations cluster many commercials back-to-back in order to offer longer segments of uninterrupted music. This adds to listening fatigue and lowers the attention span for all commercial messages.

Audience Preoccupation. For most people, the radio serves as background to some other activity (i.e. driving, studying, working, getting dressed, etc.). As such, listeners are often distracted and attention to commercial messages can be low.

Radio's Best Uses:

- Building cost-effective frequency as part of a total advertising effort.
- Creating quick awareness and exposure of a message.
- Reaching a younger and more active audience.

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