



Despite a decline in radio listening time, radio continues to play a significant role in the daily lives of teenagers, according to a study released by the ABA.

Radio Important to Teenagers, Despite Listening Decline

Radio listening continues to play a significant role in the daily lives of teenagers despite a 20 per cent decline in listening time over the last five years, according to a study by the ABA.

'For teenage audiences, radio has many advantages which set it apart from other technologies. Besides being cheap, easy to access and an ideal medium for the broadcast of new music, radio allows teenagers to connect with other teenagers,' said Mr Bob Scott, ABA Deputy Chairman.

'The study will assist the ABA and the radio industry to understand the demand by teenagers for new radio services,' Mr Scott said. 'As new national, commercial and community radio stations commence, as a result of the ABA's licence planning and allocation process, there will be increased opportunities for broadcasters to cater specifically for the interests of teenagers. Music programming appears to be the key to attracting and keeping teenage listeners.'

The findings are contained in the ABA research monograph, *Music, new music and all that: Teenage radio in the 90s*, released in June. The study shows the average time spent listening to radio by 10-17 year olds was 12 hours and 51 minutes per week in 1995, a decline of three hours and seven minutes a week since 1990.

The study discusses ABA research findings, industry views and developments in technology to consider possible reasons for the decline in teenage listening.

In terms of media use by teenagers, radio listening is second only to television view-

lenges and opportunities for the radio industry if it wants to address the declining radio listening trend and develop teenage audiences,' said Mr Scott.

The high proportion of teenagers who listened to radio and pre-recorded music every day indicates the importance of

to the current choice of stations.

Forty-four per cent of the teenagers who said they did not have access to the ABC radio network Triple J said they would be interested in that service and a quarter of those without access to specialist music radio services said they would be interested in receiving that type of service.

Teenagers in regional areas of Australia were significantly less satisfied with radio than their metropolitan peers.

Current developments in the radio industry include the expansion of the Triple J network into regional areas and the licensing of new commercial services in regional markets across Australia by the ABA. The ABA has received applications for a second licence (s.39 licence) from all 54 radio licensees who operate the only commercial service in their market and has issued new licences to 37 of these operators since September last year.

A future technical development includes the introduction of digital sound broadcasting that will enable broadcasters to deliver more radio services to consumers with CD quality sound.

ABA research

One of the primary functions of the ABA is to conduct or commission research into



ing. Seventy-two per cent of teenagers listened to the radio each day, while 85 per cent watched television daily and 61 per cent listened to pre-recorded music on CDs or cassettes. Seventy-five per cent of children and teenagers had a radio, cassette or CD player in their own bedroom.

'The range of media available to teenagers presents chal-

lenges and opportunities for the radio industry if it wants to address the declining radio listening trend and develop teenage audiences,' said Mr Scott.

While teenagers were generally satisfied with radio, 53 per cent said there was some room for improvement with regard



community attitudes on issues relating to programs. Another function is to plan the availability of segments of the broadcasting services bands.

In performing its planning functions, the ABA must promote the objects of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* including the economic and efficient use of the radio frequency spectrum (s.23). It is also required to have regard to a range of matters set out in the Act, including:

the number of existing broadcasting services and the demand for new broadcasting services within the licence area, within neighbouring licence areas and within Australia generally... [s.23(c)].

The research presented in the monograph addresses issues relevant to the planning of radio services in Australia, particularly with regard to the needs and interests of teenage listeners.

Research method

Research information has been gathered from a number of Australian audience studies as well as interviews with two representatives from the radio industry.

The major study was ABA national radio research with 3217 people over 14 years of age conducted in 1994, from which the data on 301 teenagers (aged 14 to 19 years) was extracted. The full study was published by the ABA in 1995 as *Listening to the Listeners*, available from the ABA, \$50, phone (02) 334 7700.

Music, new music and all that: Teenage radio in the 90s also contains selected findings from a joint research project by the ABA and the Office of Film and Literature Classification, *Families and Electronic Entertainment*. This is a national study conducted in June and July 1995 with 743 parents and 743 chil-

dren and teenagers. The study examined how 8 to 17 year olds spend their leisure time, parental concerns about electronic entertainment and the rules and routines around electronic entertainment (see p.6).

Other research included audience ratings data from AGB McNair (for radio), Nielsen Media Research (for television) and independent research studies by Reark Research and Keig and Company Pty Ltd.

Major research results

Teenagers mostly listened to commercial FM stations and Triple J. With few exceptions, current radio services primarily target adults during peak listening times, with 'adult contemporary' and 'mainstream rock' being the dominant formats of commercial FM radio services.

Older listeners are considered to be stable audiences by the radio industry because they are often loyal to a particular station and listen during the day. Teenagers are seen as 'station switchers' and are not an available audience when they are at school.

Teenager leisure time

Teenagers spread their time over a range of media, including radio. Eighty-five per cent of teenagers watched television each day, while 72 per cent listened to the radio and 61 per cent listened to pre-recorded music. Fewer teenagers used a computer or played computer games on a daily basis (17 per cent).

Teenagers mostly listened to the radio before and after school.

Sixty-nine per cent of teenagers switched stations, while 30 per cent said they listened to the same station all the time.

Research found that teenagers often listened to the radio when they were doing some thing else, such as homework.

Teenage girls listened to the radio more frequently than boys.

During the 1990s radio has had to compete with a wide range of other electronic entertainment media in the home. These include television, pre-recorded music, computers and computer games.

The ease with which teenagers moved between technologies suggests they will access a music source other than radio, if radio fails to fulfil their music interests. The research indicates that music on radio was more highly valued than music on television. Pre-recorded music is a direct alternative, and computers present a future alternative.

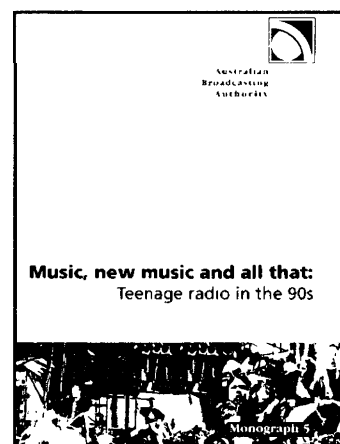
The importance of radio to teenagers

Music was the most important media format mentioned by teenagers. Music was more important to teenagers than adults. Radio was the medium that most teenagers used to access music, new music and information about music.

The high daily use of radio and pre-recorded music indicates the importance of music to teenage listeners. However, they were also interested in other radio formats including news, comedy, talk and information relevant to them.

Radio is important to teenagers because it is cheap, easy to access, it is portable and provides a connection with other young people and with youth culture.

Radio has the potential to provide music and information programs that address the emotional needs of teenagers.



Copies of *Music, new music and all that: Teenage radio in the 90s* are available from the ABA, \$20.
Phone (02) 334 7700.

Satisfaction with radio

Teenagers were generally satisfied with current radio services. Sixty-three per cent gave radio a rating of eight, nine or ten on a scale where one was terrible and ten was excellent. However, 53 per cent said there was some room for improvement with regard to the current choice of services.

Teenagers living in regional areas said they had less choice than their peers living in metropolitan areas. Thirty-three per cent of country teenagers said they had plenty of good stations to choose from compared to 52 per cent of city teenagers.

It was found that teenagers were less satisfied with their choice of current radio stations than adults.

Out of those teenagers who could think of some way to improve radio, suggested improvements included a better choice of music (42 per cent), less advertising (23 per cent), more services or choice of services (14 per cent), more music (11 per cent) and less talk (9 per cent).