

P()WERING UP: Helping UK SMEs unlock the value of digital advertising

A guide to Digital Audio advertising for small businesses

Introduction to digital audio advertising

Audio triggers emotions instantly. Take the soundtrack to Jaws for example. Without the iconic music of John Williams, it would have been just a plastic fish in water. That is the power of the visual transfer and it's one of the reasons why audio is such an effective medium in helping brands build connections with consumers.

Digital audio is the means of listening via a connected digital device; for example, streaming live radio on a laptop, catching up on a podcast on your smartphone, or listening to music on your smart speaker. Digital audio has become vital this year during the pandemic - used to inform, entertain, engage, and connect us - providing a link between listeners across the country when physically it may not be possible.

With changing consumer habits and more people increasingly using technological devices to access audio, digital audio consumption has increased dramatically over the past few years. In fact, latest industry figures show that over 30 million people in the UK currently listen to online audio, up from 28.6 million in 2019. This drive towards digital audio has been further exacerbated this year during lockdown, with many households using their smart speakers and laptops to listen to the radio, especially whilst working from home.

So, what does this mean for SMEs? Digital audio provides the added benefit of digital distribution, giving SMEs access to more and new audiences at scale. As audio ads are fast and agile to produce, it's the perfect medium for a small business to deliver value. It allows more precise targeting and personalisation, utilising information such as location to make communications more effective.

What's more, digital audio provides businesses with a trusted and brand-safe platform. Audio has 100% share of voice when delivered – without any background noise or information around it – and adverts are directly and safely communicated to listeners, one-on-one. According to the 2020 Eurobarometer survey from the European Commission, it also remains the most trusted medium – 57% of UK consumers rate audio as trustworthy.

Plus, audio is one of the mediums that can be consumed whilst audiences are multi-tasking – what we call "screenless moments". Unlike TV or print, audiences can consume audio in the car on a run, providing more opportunities for SMEs to reach their customers.

Digital innovations in the audio industry over the last decade have also allowed brands to be much more tactical in their approach to audio advertising. Take the rise of dynamic audio, where brands can personalise messages to their target audiences based on data such as the weather, time, geographic location and seasonal events.

What marketing challenges is it best suited to?

Digital audio can help with multiple marketing objectives throughout the marketing funnel, from increasing brand awareness through to driving purchases and increasing sales. For SMEs, especially in the current climate, campaigns need to be impactful, effective and show return on investment. Research shows that adding digital audio to traditional broadcast campaigns drives awareness, brand perception, consideration, consumer intent and sales.

Due to its sophisticated targeting capabilities, digital audio advertising is incredibly effective, with listen-through rates in excess of 90%. Many brands see it primarily as a channel to drive brand awareness, but it can also work as a direct response mechanism - to drive app downloads, store visits and sales.

How to reach your audience

With digital audio advertising, targeting options are sophisticated. Advertisers can target via nonpersonally identifiable logged-in data – including age, gender, listening habits, and the device they are listening on – for example via smart speaker or phone. Depending on the budget, targeting can be as sophisticated and scaled as you wish, with small budgets still being able to target effectively and deliver good value and return on investment.

Location is critical for some SMEs who may only work in a local area. With digital audio, businesses can target specific locations, ensuring that advertising is only being heard by potential consumers local to the area – driving footfall, reducing wastage and increasing precision.

For people who listen to digital audio via their phone, advertisers can tap into data around places that device has visited in order to get a better understanding of the listener's interests. They can even target an ad to be heard only by people listening on headphones, which can give an even deeper, personal connection.

Context is also important and, like broadcast, advertisers can always target listeners based on the type of programme they are listening to. Ads can therefore then be reflected and created around people's interests, making them more relevant and engaging.

Creative considerations

Creative is critical for effective campaigns and, with digital audio, there are so many new exciting opportunities to create impact. Multiple versions of copy can be served digitally to personalise ads; be it bespoke copy to different geographies, localities, age, type of device or time of day. In addition to ads, SMEs can also buy branded content, where hosts read and land key messages. This can be delivered through radio or podcasts, with the hosts delivering the content during a live read or within the episode. This provides further trust, confidence and authenticity – loyal listeners trust their radio/podcast hosts.

Campaigns can also be delivered across platforms for a more 360 approach. A digital display companion advert can be served alongside audio for those with their device open, for example, on the radio's app or website. With a clear call to action to tap on the screen in the creative, SMEs looking to drive app downloads, website views or sales offers can benefit greatly.

Technical considerations

As a prospective advertiser, you don't need any technical knowledge or skills to get started in audio. Audio advertising is easier than video where there are multiple different screen sizes, resolutions, frames per second, qualities to consider.

Real-life campaign examples

You can see some campaign examples from A Million Ads - a leading dynamic audio company - here.



Thanks to the companies who authored this guide:



Bauer Media UK reaches over 25 million UK consumers through a portfolio of world-class, multi-platform media and entertainment brands including heat, KISS, Grazia, Empire, Magic, Absolute Radio and the Hits Radio Network. These brands offer commercial partners access to highly engaged audiences, with creative solutions underpinned by insight and instinct.



A Million Ads are a leader in dynamic audio. As personalisation experts, they use data to create personalised advertising with more context and more relevance to better connect with people. The technology combines creativity with data, enabling brands to deliver personal advertising at scale. A Million Ads reach listeners across digital audio and video and combine the advertiser's message with user data to deliver ads that are simply more effective. This dynamic approach allows brands to deliver millions of personalised audio and videos ads fully on the fly and for a fraction of the cost.

AdTonos is an audio online marketplace for any advertiser from the UK, US, Latam or CEE that wants to accelerate business with an audio campaign. Campaign set-up is easy and a detailed report is provided after every campaign. With a recent feature called Audiopixel[™], AdTonos are able to precisely measure the website traffic resulting from the campaign and offer audio remarketing campaigns that work well for any online business.

AdTonos integrates well renowned publishers like radio networks, podcasters or mobile apps. For live stream monetisation it has real-time ads replacement, that replaces spray-and-pray adverts broadcasted by radio with personalised and targeted advertising.

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