

Innovations in Digital Drive Up Radio Listening

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While traditional radio listening is threatened by new technologies such as personal music players and on-line music catalogues, evidence from radio stations around the world whom have embraced *digital broadcasting*, using the DAB family of standards seems to indicate stability and in many cases growth in listening figures.

In Australia, where digital radio launched in key cities in the summer of 2009, radio groups are seeing steady recovery in the market. Leading commercial broadcaster Austereo's chief executive Guy Dobson pays tribute to the group's expansion on to the digital spectrum, including online sites and digital radio. "A lot of our wins this year have come as a result of us owning that digital spectrum," he says. The company is predicting continued steady growth after reporting a revenue increase of nearly 2 per cent earlier this year.

In the UK, where nearly 25% of all listening is digital, stations which have a strong digital presence are also faring well. The Absolute Radio group, which broadcasts new digital only stations such as Absolute 80's, Absolute 90's and Absolute Classic Rock, as well as its national service, "Absolute Radio", reported a record reach in the latest Rajar figures (Q3, 2010). The group has a combined reach of 2.4 million listeners and 18.2 million hours. Absolute 80's, reporting for the first time, claimed a debut reach of 546,000 listeners. Absolute says that, excluding its London FM license, 55% of its audience is listening digitally. It hopes to broadcast exclusively on digital radio by 2015. This growth is not only driven by extra digital only content but novel ways of engaging listeners through podcasts such as the recent initiative with celebrities Baddiel & Skinner live from South Africa to support the World Cup.

AM station, TalkSPORT which is also available nationally on digital radio, reported reach up 18.1% quarter on quarter and 19.6% year on year to 2.96 million. Quasi national stations broadcasting on analogue and digital radio, also saw reach increase. Global Radio's Heart network was up 2.7% quarter on quarter and 8.5% year on year. GMG's Smooth Radio and Bauer Media's Kiss network also saw significant gains this quarter.

Meanwhile, digital listening continues to grow in Denmark, where 34% of the population has a digital radio, and in Norway, where local giant Nokia has just released its new Digital Radio Headset enabling mobile phone users to tune in to DAB services.

In Malta, where DAB+ services have been on air since 2008, the country has seen a big increase in overall radio listening. For many years the number of Maltese who did not listen to the radio at all was greater than those who did. Since 2009 that trend has reversed with 54% of the population now tuning in each week. Ownership of digital radios increased from 1.2% in spring 2009 to

5.24% in the same period 2010, and some stations, such as Vibe FM, have seen audiences triple according to Broadcasting Authority of Malta media research.

As radio continues to fight its corner, it appears that broadcasting digitally can help to increase listening reach, share and hours, as well as building brand loyalty and consumer interactivity with radio. This, coupled with innovative, digital only content, is helping drive up listening figures globally.

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About WorldDMB

WorldDMB is an international, non-governmental organisation with a mandate to promote the awareness, adoption and implementation of Eureka 147 based technologies worldwide. Its members include public and commercial broadcasters, receiver manufacturers and other companies and bodies committed to the promotion of services and equipment based on the Eureka 147 family of standards.

Notes to Editors: The DAB family is the most successful set of digital radio standards in the world. Created for mobile and portable reception of audio, multimedia and video services, the family includes the compatible standards DAB, DAB+ and DMB digital radio and DMB mobile TV. Collectively these are the Eureka 147 Family of Standards, having originated as an EU funded Eureka project. The system is on-air in nearly 40 countries across Europe, Australia and the Far East. More than 500 million people are within range of DAB, DAB+ or DMB services, with over 1,000 services on-air. The world's first DMB mobile TV services launched in South Korea in 2005 and is now one of the most successful markets in the world. In 2008 the industry body responsible for the Eureka 147 family of standards, the WorldDMB Forum, created the 'Digital Radio Receiver Profiles' which specify a set of minimum requirements and features for different types of consumer digital radio receivers. The Receiver Profiles ensure interoperability of new receivers and services between countries whose broadcasters may be using different combinations of DAB, DAB+ or DMB and creates a harmonised digital radio and multimedia market across the world.