

Radio Ads Retain Listeners

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By Katy Bachman/Mediaweek

NEW YORK Contrary to popular belief, far fewer listeners change stations when a commercial comes on the radio.

In fact, radio commercials on average retain 92 percent of the lead-in audience, according to a landmark study from Arbitron, Media Monitors and Coleman released Thursday at the National Association of Broadcasters radio show in Dallas.

Conducted last November and December, the study examined 93,876 commercial breaks in Houston (where Arbitron is demonstrating its portable people meter), comparing the audience level for each minute of a commercial break to the audience for the minute before the ads began.

Retention levels varied by length of commercial, demographic and daypart. For a one-minute break, commercials retained more than 99 percent of the audience. For a six-minute pod, retention dropped to 88 percent. Three-minute commercial breaks retained nearly 90 percent of the audience.

Not surprisingly, younger listeners are more likely to tune out commercials than older listeners; audience levels drop to 82 percent by the end of a six-minute pod among 12-17-year-olds. That age group will, however, hang on during one-minute breaks at a rate of nearly 94 percent.

Commercial breaks during morning drive shows hold more than 94 percent of the audience, but middays are best for audience retention. For shorter one- to two-minute pods, midday commercial breaks hold 95 percent of the lead-in audience.

The findings were in stark contrast to industry perceptions. A separate poll found that advertisers and agencies believed that the size of the commercial audience is about 65 percent the size of the audience prior to the break; radio broadcasters said radio holds 68 percent of the audience during commercials.

"This shows that commercial radio, even with declining listenership, is still viable and that commercials are not as detrimental to ratings as we've been led to believe," said Brad Adgate, senior vp and director of corporate research at Horizon Media. "Commercial radio isn't dead."

***To view the entire study from Arbitron, [Click Here.](#)**

Source: adweek.com, 9/25/06