



Integrating Social Media in Modern Radio Broadcasting

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Abstract

Within the contemporary digital media landscape, radio broadcasters increasingly rely on social media platforms to distribute content, amplify audience engagement, and strengthen their brand identities. Therefore both commercial and public radio stations worldwide strategically integrate social media into their content distribution. Unlike traditional broadcasting, social media allows real-time interaction, extended content life cycles, and consistent audience data gathering. This paper focuses on the ways in which radio stations utilize social media platforms to enhance their content distribution and listener engagement in order to understand the ongoing digital transformation of radio broadcasting.

Keywords: radio broadcasting, social media, digital content, audience engagement, online strategy

One of the oldest mass communication platforms, radio continues the process of adapting to the digital paradigm as social media has become essential for stations aiming to reach broader, younger, and digitally connected audiences. This integration allows real-time engagement, multimedia storytelling, content repurposing, and brand extension beyond traditional broadcast. The strategic incorporation of social media has become a main goal for both commercial and public service radio, the stations all over the world adapting to the new characteristics of the media landscape, without neglecting their core traditional missions, as Robert McLeish and Jeff Link remind us: "From its first tentative experiments and the early days of wireless, radio has expanded into a universal medium of communication. It leaps around the world on short waves linking capitals in a fraction of a second. It jumps to high satellites to put its footprint across a continent, and it streams through the Internet to reach every digital device around the globe. It brings that world to those who cannot read and helps maintain a contact for those who cannot see" (McLeish et al., 2016, p.1).

At first thought as a threat for radio, the digital media environment has proved to be nothing but another platform for this beloved mass communication channel, a new modality to reach additional audience and gain market share through digital and online transmission, as emphasized by Susanna Karttunen: "Digital radio was created to give a clearer signal and thus a better sound quality. Digital transmission differs from analogue transmission as information is not being transformed in the form of an analogue sound signal but is in bits, meaning in zeros and ones. Nowadays many broadcast radio stations stream their signal online, which is called webcasting. Internet has made creating one's own radio station easier for everyone, and some webcasters are personal Internet stations that are run from bedrooms and basements. The recordings of the radio broadcast can be published online for later listening, and these podcasts are becoming increasingly popular" (Karttunen, 2017, p.2).

In this ever-changing media landscape, the integration of social media into modern radio broadcasting was unavoidable and the way in which content is produced, distributed, and consumed has been revolutionized. Traditionally a one-way channel, transmitting information from stations to passive listeners, radio has evolved into a more interactive medium by adapting to the rise of social media, a new reality that transformed radio into a more engaging experience. By embracing the new opportunities to reach broader audiences and enhance listeners' engagement, radio has managed to stay relevant in the digital age. The main challenge is to find a way to get to the listeners through the multitude of platforms available and to unleash the fascination or the magic of radio in order to attract and maintain the level of interest for as long as possible, as stressed by Valerie Geller: "Listeners seek real connection, hungry for that powerful magic often missing from mass media today. Watching

listeners hunt and scroll through a myriad of choices is proof of that. One option after another might be rejected. But whether a program comes through online, or through a phone, smart watch or any other device, once you've engaged a listener, unless you give them a reason to go, they'll likely stick with you. Your job is to entice listeners through your door and keep them coming back" (Geller, 2025, pp.3-4).

One of the most important advantages of integrating social media into radio broadcasting is the possibility to encourage real-time interaction with listeners. Platforms like Facebook, X, and Instagram provide the means for the audience to respond to live broadcasts, participate in polls, request content, or share opinions on topics debated on air. Thus, a sense of community and loyalty among listeners is created through this level of interactivity, transforming the public from passive consumers into active participants. Radio broadcasters have now the opportunity to fully engage directly with their audience, creating a more personal and relatable connection that enhances the overall listening experience. Moreover, social media functions as a powerful tool for promoting the radio content, as stations use these platforms to announce upcoming shows, post highlights from previous broadcasts, or share behind-the-scenes content. New listeners who might not otherwise tune in a radio station, especially youngsters, can be attracted with visual content such as short video clips, memes, and interesting and dynamic stories, while platforms like YouTube and TikTok enable stations to transform audio content into visual formats, another modality in which extending their reach beyond traditional audience becomes feasible.

By integrating social media into their broadcasting, radio stations can acquire valuable insights into listeners' preferences and their media consumption behavior. Rigorously analyzing user engagement data provides the information that radio stations can use to track which topics generate the most interaction, what time of day listeners are most active online, and how different target groups respond to a certain provided content. This data-driven approach enables broadcasters to tailor their programming more effectively, suiting content to audience interests and maximizing audience on air and online, as Jacob Riederer emphasizes: "Gen X listens to radio most frequently, and Facebook is their social media platform of choice, but that doesn't mean you should ignore other platforms. Gen X is also the fastest-growing generation on TikTok. Don't make the mistake of sticking purely to Facebook. Instead, try to build a presence across all the main platforms—including Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok" (Riederer, 2025).

Undoubtedly, social media amplifies the accessibility and inclusivity of radio broadcasting as podcasts and live streams shared on social networks ensure that content is available on-demand, adjusting the content to the modern listeners' preferences. Increasingly using elements of cross-media and trans-media, two (post-) modern concepts that are more and more used in journalism and specialized literature, radio succeeds in being relevant even though the media landscape keeps on profoundly changing at an impressive speed: "One of the trends a radio station should adapt to in order to stay current in today's world is cross media publishing. The term cross media means involving more than one form of public communication, such as radio, television, the Internet, and newspapers. An example of a cross media use is when a radio station publishes content or interacts with its audience in social media. Transmedia storytelling, a term used in similar contexts, uses narrative to tie together the different channels and platforms" (Karttunen, 2017, p.4).

An article written by Ahmed Al-Rawi focuses on the online comments of news items posted on Facebook by two popular Arabic-language radio channels: Radio Monte Carlo—France24 and Radio Netherlands Worldwide, a study which examines over 180,000 comments with a special interest on the most liked posts in order to understand how audiences of regular radio engage on social media: "The results indicate that audiences seem to be more engaged with posts that encourage participating in broad issues, interacting with clever quotes, and entering contests and less so with reading breaking news. With regards to news events and serious issues, this study also examined how social media users of these two Facebook "radio" sites responded to postings that differed from their own opinions, and seemingly actively engaged with contrasting or oppositional views or sentiments" (Al-Rawi, 2016).

The interactive component of the new media gives the opportunity for radio stations to get a better understanding of their public, so the editorial strategy can be more accurately designed in order to target new listeners: "Social media is also a good place for a radio station to get to know their target audience. Users' accounts have information, for example, on their age, gender, where they live, and their interests. This is valuable information when they are trying to think how to target their content better. Social media can also be used as a platform for personalized content, for instance, by creating own pages for the different radio DJ's or programmes. This way the listeners can pick what kind of content provided by the radio station they want to consume more. In the radio it's harder to service everyone's individual needs at the same time" (Karttunen, 2017, p.12). Social media networks such as Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have reshaped the broadcasting landscape and they provide radio stations with opportunities to promote on-air content before, during and after broadcasts,

share multimedia content, engage with listeners through polls, live chats and comments, and build brand identity and online communities. However, these platforms must be used by radio broadcasters mainly as tools that help them provide genuine radio content to a wider audience, without neglecting the essential characteristics of their specific media channel: "Social media should be managed independently by the radio media. Radio social media must be managed by the radio team directly because the radio team already knows for sure the radio's potential. This will allow the emergence of differentiation. Moreover, it will keep the communication on track based on radio media characteristic. This strategy can also make communication be more personalized" (Kholis et al., 2023, p.6).

The emergence of Social Networking Service (SNS) has obviously changed the radio communication paradigm, as Tiziano Bonini clearly explains: "The new communication model that derives from the short-circuit between radio and social media is a hybrid model, partly still broadcast, partly already networked. Radio is still a one-to-many means of communication. However, telephone already made it partly a one-to-one medium (phone interview) and many-to-one (open mic, phone talk radio); to this we have to add SNS, which are at once a one-to-one (chat), one-to-many (tweets, FB notes or posts), many-to-many (FB Home, Twitter hashtags), many-to-one (FB comments) kind of media. The mix between radio and SNS considerably modifies both the hierarchical/vertical relation between the speaker/presenter and the public, and the horizontal relation between each listener" (Bonini, 2014).

The digital marketing agency Web FM provides 7 tips for boosting social media for radio stations:

1. Interact with your audience
2. Share posts from relevant accounts
3. Create a social media calendar
4. Invite guests onto your show
5. Run contests and promotions
6. Post clips of your show
7. Use paid social media advertising (How to Optimize Social Media for Radio Stations in 7 Steps)

The site hookle.net indicates 10 social media marketing tips for radio stations:

1. Choose the right social platforms for your radio station
2. Figure out the right posting frequency for your socials
3. Determine the right type of content
4. Create a social media calendar
5. Make the most out of each collaboration
6. Be consistent
7. Keep your finger on the pulse of social media trends
8. Interact with your audience
9. Use a social media scheduling app
10. Takeaways (10 Social Media Marketing Tips for Small Radio Stations, 2022)

The social networks must be operated in accordance with the specific characteristics of each of these different platforms. Thus, Facebook should be used especially for community-building, event promotion, and posting longer forms of text or content such as live studio performances or talk segments. On the other hand, X (formerly Twitter) is more suitable for real-time updates, quick interactions, and hashtag campaigns during live radio programming (Voinea, 2022), while Instagram and TikTok are appropriate for engaging younger audiences with visually-driven content, memes, reels, interactive stories or challenges and short-form videos. Last but not least, YouTube is best suited for archiving long-form visual content, such as interviews, in-studio live sessions, and even full shows.

This new media environment requires different types of content:

Live Streaming & Simulcasting: Stations use platforms like YouTube and Facebook Live to broaden access beyond FM/AM.

Podcasts & On-Demand Audio: Traditional radio products are repackaged for Spotify, Apple Podcasts etc. and promoted through these social channels.

User-Generated Content: Polls, comments, and challenges create a feedback loop that encourages listeners' participation.

Cross-Promotional Multimedia: Combining video, audio, memes etc. tailored to each platform enhances "virality" and accessibility.

The major benefits of a well-balanced integration of digital media in the strategy of a radio station are represented by a consistent reach of broader audience beyond the existent one, an amplified listener loyalty through interactive features, revenue generated by sponsored posts and partnerships, and acquiring insight into listeners' behaviour through analytic tools. These important gains come bundled with certain challenges, such as the continuous demand for new, engaging content, the effort of maintaining a consistent branding across different

platforms, the management of negative feedback, and the dependence on algorithms and third-party platform policies.

In conclusion, integrating social media into modern radio broadcasting represents an inevitable and beneficial evolution. However, immersing into the social media universe comes with certain challenges. The need for constant content creation and permanent audience interaction can inflict significant pressure on both human and material resources, especially for smaller radio stations. In context, the open nature of social media exposes broadcasters to negative comments or misinformation, necessitating effective moderation and reliable communication strategies.

This process of integration not only manages to revitalize the traditional radio format but also aligns it with contemporary media consumption habits. By embracing social media, radio stations can enhance audience engagement, broaden their reach, and remain relevant and competitive in an increasingly digital and interactive media environment. As technology continues to evolve, the symbiotic relationship between radio and social media will certainly extend, offering even more innovative ways to connect with listeners.

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