Study: Key Radio Ad Features Do Indeed Boost Online Search

Radio campaigns turbo-charge ad impact, says RAB

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By Susan Ashworth (/author/susan-ashworth/article)

Do listeners actually respond to radio advertising? According to new research by the Radio Advertising Bureau (http://www.rab.com/), there's definitive proof that radio is driving online behavior.

This is significant when one considers that a consumers' path-to-purchase almost always includes using a search engine, said the RAB after commissioning the study "Radio Drives Search." A separate Forrester Research report found that 71% of consumers begin their journeys by using a search engine to discover new products and services and 74% report using a search engine for consideration and purchasing.

The RAB study was conducted in the summer of 2017 in the nation's top 31 markets. It looked at more than 2,100 local radio ads from advertisers in the fields of automotive, ecommerce, insurance, auto aftermarket retail, jewelry retail and wireless communication.

To begin, surveyors looked at minute-by-minute Google search data. That data was then matched to radio occurrence data.

The study found that radio-driven search peaks during specific times of the day, namely during the day, followed by morning drive. Search activity was also nearly four times higher during weekdays versus weekends.

On average, radio drove a 29% lift in Google search among those advertiser categories included in the study. The study looked at individual brands too, and found that every brand within a total of six advertiser categories showed incremental search lift generated by radio.

The study also looked at advertisers that use more than one medium to deliver an ad message. One particular brand included used both radio and TV, and the results were "astounding," the report's authors said. Radio drove 228% more search volume than TV in terms of both total search volume and dollar for dollar search.

There was one common denominator for those categories that did experience lift: creative ad programming.

Perhaps a bit surprisingly, those ads that contained typical elements in a radio spot — such as a call to action to visit a website, humor or drama — did not result in a lift in search.

Instead, advertisers that experienced a greater lift in search were those ads with five key characteristics: price deals, product or feature news, localization information, nonprice offer and precise personalization.

The RAB "Radio Drives Search" answers the question of whether radio advertising drives online behavior, said Erica Farber, RAB president and CEO. "We already know that radio delivers a strong return on an advertisers' investment. Now we know it drives search results across a number of advertising categories in addition to other metrics."

"While the lift in search may vary by advertiser and category, advertising on radio can increase an advertiser's web search activity," the report's authors said. "The effectiveness of a radio commercial has always been attributed to a successful radio campaign. This study underscores the critical importance of developing good radio creative for a very important reason — to aid in an advertiser's web activity."

This study was designed and commissioned by the RAB, and was conducted by Sequent Partners, Media Monitors, and In4mation Insights in June and July 2017.

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