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Two commercial music radio stations and their use of Twitter

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This research report is an exploratory study into two regional commercial music stations (YFM and 947) and their use of Twitter as a tool to relate to, interact with and enable participation from their audiences. Of particular interest was why they are using it, what they are doing with it and how this affects the on-air content pre, during and post broadcast, if at all it does. Commercial music radio listening for these two stations and particularly Y FM is now overlapped by discussions, comments, feedback and opinions on Twitter both connected to radio and separate. A new ecosystem has arisen that is hybridized and commercial music radio now sits side by side and is integrated into networking cultures. The radio station is a node within a much broader network and audiences are part of many networks, rather than groups who are part of specific social and economic clusters. The research found that idea of shifting audience power with regards to content for radio would appear to be false, at least in these two cases. The content posted on Twitter while visible to a network of individuals and organisations did not in this research stimulate any online conversation or take on a life of its own. Audience tweets received very little attention even from their own networks. Most content is promotional.

Further findings were that the current use of Twitter does not allow for participation in which the listener can directly influence the production process or the content direction. The level of response to content does not even reach 1% of the followers engaging or responding to the content posted. In the case of Y FM where tweets are used on-air, the research finds that the main difference in their incorporation into the on-air programme versus that of calls is in the auditory aesthetic that the tweets create in the overall broadcast. There is a distinct absence of personality in the tweets that are read on-air as they lack the genuine voice of the person contributing.