

# Smart radio habits



By [Diane Macpherson](#)

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I remember when I first started using a Sonic electric toothbrush. I could barely get the job done in between all the giggles. It tickled my mouth so much I thought I'd have to go back to the manual variety.



Diane Macpherson, on-demand content head at Kagiso Media

I leaned into the laughter though, and these days I'm so in reliant on the toothbrush - and in tune with it - that I panic I may forget to pack the charger when going away. After all, what if the battery runs out? How on earth does one brush their teeth without power!

A similar thing happened early last year when I bought my first smart speaker – an Amazon Echo Dot. I battled to get off the starting block with it. It was unfamiliar territory.

Again, I leaned into it, figured out how to get it working in a non-supported region (South Africa) and how to enable skills, which are like apps on smartphones. And now, like that sonic toothbrush, it's part and parcel of my life.

I have three smart speakers at home: two Alexa devices and one Google Home Mini. A Google Home Mini in my office and, recently, I installed the Alexa for cars (Echo Auto). And what do I primarily use these smart speakers for? Setting kitchen timers, checking on the time, turning my smart lights on and off, playing Rain Sounds at night (white noise helps ensure

good sleep) and... listening to radio.

And despite thousands of digital radio options from around the world, I still gravitate to my South African favourites. Because despite the sexy new tech, it's human nature to turn (and tune) to the familiar. The upshot of this is that I listen to more hours of radio per week than ever before. And yes, it's the industry I work in, so it's partly my job to do this. But more than that, it has become so easy to listen via the smart speakers, that radio fills our home for more hours than ever before.

The [Infinite Dial](#) digital audio study in South Africa by Edison Research, that was carried out last year, reveals that while I'm still an early adopter in this country on the smart speaker front – with awareness levels among over 18's of 23%, online listening is growing. Among the findings, released in September, was that 44% of radio listening at home by the South African major metro commercial population was done on a non-radio device. A non-radio device is basically a mobile phone, TV or computer. And 56% of under 34's consumed radio at home in this way.

The study also revealed that 39% of South Africans in major metro areas had listened to online audio in the past month. That's your radio stations or internet streams.

And while we still have some catching up to do when you look at the picture elsewhere (USA – 66% in 2019; Australia and Canada – 59% in 2019), with such a high penetration of smartphones, this is where we're heading.

So, does this mean traditional, local radio is going to suffer in terms of audiences? I don't believe it will. Instead, just like me with my fancy smart speakers, it makes local radio more accessible. Mobile phones mean more chances to listen to radio while mobile. Bluetooth technology in cars also helps. Audio options on smart TVs – or DSTV in SA's case – make it more convenient to listen to radio at home. And perhaps most importantly, a digitally savvy and connected younger generation, who're already very comfortable consuming radio and online audio on smart devices and digital platforms and who will drive the behaviour change, and perhaps even show the older generations how to get smarter with their radio habits.

*\*Note that Bizcommunity does not necessarily share the views of its contributors - the opinions and statements expressed herein are solely those of the author.*

## ABOUT DIANE MACPHERSON

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