



Arbitron/Joint Communications

What Women Want: From AOR Radio

A Format-Specific Summary Taken from
*What Women Want: Five Secrets to Better
Ratings*

For the full study, *What Women Want: Five
Secrets to Better Ratings*, go to:

http://www.arbitron.com/radio_stations/studies1.htm



Welcome to the Arbitron/Joint Communications summary of American women Album-Oriented Rock (AOR) radio listeners. This format-specific summary is taken from a groundbreaking study based on interviews with Arbitron diarykeepers that asked the timeless question “What do women want?”

This report focuses specifically on 18- to 54-year-old female diarykeepers who listen to AOR radio.

The Study

In July 2001, Joint Communications conducted telephone interviews with 1,060 female Arbitron diarykeepers aged 18-54 to find out what they want from radio. Diarykeepers of all Arbitron-identified formats were included. These women were asked questions about lifestyle, loves/hates about radio, reasons for tuning in or out, and specific radio behaviors and needs. This special report focuses on female AOR listeners only.

Top 10 Things to Know About Female AOR Radio Listeners

- 1. Internet Use Is Low Among AOR Females.** Just over 60% of AOR women have logged on to the Internet during the past seven days. Forty-one percent have *not* logged on—one of the highest numbers among all female diarykeepers. And when it comes to work, the numbers are even lower. Among those who log on to the Internet at any time, only 13% listen at work only.
- 2. Overwhelmed by Commercials.** Commercials are a big turn-off among all female diarykeepers, regardless of format, but for AOR listeners, commercials are why they tune out. Eighty-four percent of AOR female listeners cited “too many commercials” as their #1 reason for tuning out of radio vs. 76% of all women. When asked what they “hate” most about radio, 32% of AOR women said, “too many ads,” making it the #1 item that AOR female listeners hate.
- 3. Music Is the Heart of the Format.** AOR has got to be music intensive to be successful with female diarykeepers. Eighty-eight percent “strongly agree” that they listen for “music I like,” and 78% said “lots of music” is very important.
- 4. Older Songs Are Important to the AOR Listener.** Among “mainstream” AOR listeners, older music is “very important,” with 59% “strongly agreeing” that it is an important tune-in item. This suggests that successful AOR for women will have a heavier dose of oldies than newer music.
- 5. ID Songs for AOR.** Sixty-one percent of all AOR listeners “strongly agree” that “radio should identify songs and artists more often than they do now.” This is higher than the average for all female Arbitron diarykeepers. Even though they favor older music, they don’t know the names of all the songs and they want that information.
- 6. Weather, News and DJs Are Important.** AOR females are equally likely to “strongly agree” on the importance of weather, news and DJs as factors that generate tune-in. When provided with a list of reasons for tuning in the radio, almost half “strongly agree” that these three items are equally important. However, when simply asked what they “love” about radio (without a “prompted” list), only 3% said DJs, less than half the number in the total sample who mentioned DJs as an important factor in radio.
- 7. AOR Listeners Worry a Lot and Use AOR to Relax.** AOR females worry about the future a lot. Over a third (36%) “strongly agree” that they worry this way vs. the total sample of 23%, and they use AOR to relax. They listen to the format to reduce stress at work (61% “strongly agree”) and to “reduce stress” overall. The numbers are much higher for these women than for most other format listeners—including Soft AC!
- 8. Kid Sensitive.** AOR radio women are like other radio women. They don’t want radio that is inappropriate for kids. However, they are somewhat less likely to be offended by radio that’s bad for kids. When asked why they turn the radio off or tune out, 52% “strongly agree” that it’s because “it’s not good for the kids to listen to” vs. 62% for all female diarykeepers. However, 61% “strongly agree” that they worry a lot about their kids’ safety.

- 9. Watch Out for Rude DJs.** AOR women are as likely as most listeners to tune out radio if it has “rude announcers.” While men may enjoy them sometimes, 71% of AOR women “strongly agree” that they tune out because of rude announcers.
- 10. Contests Are Polarizing.** On the whole, female AOR diarykeepers are more contest-prone than the average woman. However, it’s the entertainment value that intrigues them more than the prize. AOR females are just as likely as the average diarykeeper to agree with the statement “I like to listen to contests with a chance to win prizes” (19% “strongly agree”). However, 20% “strongly disagree.”

When asked whether “radio contests are fun to listen if I don’t play them,” there was a more positive bias. A full 30% “strongly agree” with the statement and 17% strongly disagreed. This is higher than the total among all women (22% strongly agree). In other words, AOR stations are doing something to make contests more entertaining to their listeners.

Key Findings

- 1. Like listeners to other formats, AOR radio women say that “favorite music” is the biggest reason for tuning in, and the need for “lots of music” is strongly associated with “little talk.”** Music is especially important among AOR listeners. Eighty-eight percent “strongly agree” they want “music I like,” and 78% want “lots of music.” They also want mostly music with very little talk. Over two-thirds (68%) consider it “very important.”

For women in general, the demand for “music I like” does not change with age, but the demand for “lots of music” declines. This emphasizes that picking the correct songs can be key in keeping women tuned in. Just over half (54%) of AOR listeners “strongly agree” they would tune out if they hear a song they don’t like.

- 2. Older songs are an important part of the music mix.** Over half (59%) of all AOR female listeners “strongly agree” that they want to hear their favorite older songs. This is slightly higher than the total for all women. It suggests that AOR is rooted in the music from the past even though newer material is an important part of the mix.
- 3. Too many commercials is the #1 reason they tune out.** Women had no problem telling us what they do not want, and most are saying loud and clear that “too many commercials” is the reason they turn the dial. While programmers and managers argue about spot loads, women are busy tuning out the station.

Eighty-four percent of AOR radio women “strongly agree” that “too many commercials” cause them to tune out. The number was much higher than the total sample (76%). When asked what they “hate” about radio, all AOR women volunteered “too many ads” as the #1 reason.

Interestingly, the #3 reason among AOR listeners was “specific commercials that irritate me” (62%). This was higher than the overall sample.

- 4. AOR helps its listeners relax.** This study unearthed some important information: AOR women listen to their favorite format to relax. Sixty-two percent “strongly agree” that they listen to relax and 51% “strongly agree” that it helps them reduce stress. These numbers are much higher than the overall female diarykeepers’ results, where only 43% listen to the radio to relax.

Sixty-one percent listen to reduce stress at work (much higher than the total sample at 43%). In contrast, only 25% of AOR females “strongly agree” that they listen to AOR to give them more energy.

- 5. More AOR listeners tune in to radio at work than most formats.** Fifty-one percent of all AOR listeners listen to the radio at work (higher than the total of 43% for all women). And they listen to reduce stress, have the radio keep them company and to be informed.

On the whole, most AOR listeners have mixed feelings about work. Only 50% are very happy with their jobs, and only 61% really like their coworkers.

And they have a lower use of the Internet—in general and at work—possibly because they have one of the highest percentages of people who work in retail (they tie CHR listeners who work in this category).

Sixty-five percent of all AOR listeners strongly agree, “I never have enough time to get everything done.” This is much higher than among all women, where only 55% strongly agree.

Like most women, AOR listeners are very likely to worry about their children’s safety. Over 60% of all AOR listeners strongly agree that they worry about their children’s safety.

- 6. AOR women are optimists and American Dreamers.** Even though women are heavily pressured for time and worry a lot, they remain optimists. So don’t play to the negatives.

Seventy-four percent of this sample of AOR Arbitron diarykeepers “strongly agree” that hard work brings success, and 68% believe they can be whatever they choose to be—statistics that are uniquely American, reflecting a free and upwardly mobile society.

However, the American Dream is a little weaker among AOR women than among listeners to other formats. They score lower on positive feelings than many other formats’ listeners. They are more stressed and worried. They are more likely than most to say they worry about money and don’t have enough money.

So make sure that you help them feel good by playing their favorite music and giving them a laugh.

Provide an environment where they feel comfortable, where they can wind down and hear songs they love, few commercials and not a lot of talk.

- 7. AOR listeners watch slightly different TV than other women.** AOR women watch a little less TV than other women, but when they do watch, their favorite shows are dramas and comedies, with “Friends” being the top choice (13%) on the comedy side. However, they are no more likely than the average woman to watch the show.

AOR women, however, are twice as likely to watch science fiction as the average woman (13% compared to 7%) and four times as likely to watch “The Sopranos” (8% vs. 2%).

They are about average (13%) in the number who watch the nightly news but more than twice as likely to watch WWF wrestling (5% compared to just 2% of all women).

- 8. Most AOR radio women work full or part time (80%), but only half (51%) of the workers listen to radio at work.** Although the majority work in an office, in a school/college or in healthcare, 18% work in retail (double the average among all working women). If they listen to the radio at work, their time spent listening is high—so they are important to your average quarter-hour.

Target them because they are using radio to relax and keep them company.

- 9. The Internet is not as important for AOR listeners.** Most AOR listeners access the Internet (59%), but this is a lower number than for most other formats. And when they log on, they do it from home rather than from work. This suggests that AOR stations that use the Internet as the primary way to “connect” with their female listeners are leaving a huge number out.

- 10. AOR radio women say that *the best* way to find out about radio stations is hearing about it from a friend, but TV and billboards are close.** Even though friends are very important to AOR listeners (72% trust friends to tell them about a new station), TV and billboards are a very

close #2 and #3 behind “hearing from a friend.” Among AOR women, 70% look to billboards and 68% to TV to tell them about a radio station.

These listeners look for advertising. They exhibit an above-average interest in stickers (41%) and miniboads on bus shelters or taxis (45%), so use those media to reach them.

Even though AOR listeners are looking for music, “scanning the dial” is considered the best way by only 55% of AOR listeners. In other words, a really well-programmed station that is spread by word of mouth, TV or billboards is less likely to simply become a button that listeners punch.

11. Contests are highly polarizing but work better with AOR than some other formats. On the whole, AOR listeners are slightly more likely to listen to the radio if the contest is entertaining to listen to. Only 13% of AOR listeners have ever listened to the radio for a chance to win something. In every case, among those who tried to win, most never won anything.

When asked how important “contests with a chance to win prizes” are as a reason for tuning in, just over 55% of AOR listeners think they are important. However, there is strong polarization at the extremes, with 19% “strongly” agreeing to the importance and 20% “strongly” disagreeing.

Although there is a more positive response to “radio contests are fun to listen to even if I don’t play them,” only 30% of AOR listeners “strongly agree” and another 35% “slightly” agree. This suggests that if contests are entertaining for AOR women, they can act as a programming tool. Keep in mind that 17% strongly disagree, even for entertainment value.

Recommendations

1. **Music, music, music.** Music is the driving tune-in factor for AOR women. The most important thing is “songs I like,” and when they get music, they want lots of it. Obviously, music research is crucial if you want to satisfy this music-intensive listener.

They’re tuning in for older music rather than newer music, although newer music is still important.

2. **Target them at work.** AOR listeners are listening at work. More of them work than listeners of most other formats, and many listen. Although most work in traditional offices, more than average work in retail or in healthcare. And they are looking to relax, to reduce stress and to have the radio keep them company. Don’t change the music; they use rock to chill them out. And don’t tell them that you are helping them relax, because they are listening for the tunes more than the mood. Just be aware that most of them aren’t looking for energy from the format. Obviously, this is a format that targets men most of the time. However, if you want to optimize women, you don’t need to tell them that you will energize them.

3. **Watch out for the Internet.** AOR listeners are less likely to use the Internet at home and at work than those who listen to most other formats. Over 40% don’t log on.

Make sure that you offer people a chance to communicate with your radio station if they don’t have access to the Internet.

4. **Rethink spot loads.** How do you handle commercials at your station? They are an enormous tune-out factor for AOR women. AOR listeners were very likely to tune out because of commercials and very likely to say the thing they hated most about radio was “too many ads.” Also, over 60% of them said they tuned out specifically because of irritating commercials. Remember the value of good creative. And remember that low-commercial and commercial-free satellite radio is coming.

Don’t shrug off this finding. Many programmers and managers tend to fall back on an “it is what it is” abdication of responsibility to their listeners. They know they have to run commercials, so they just say, “we’ll have to take what we get.”

AOR radio female diarykeepers told us that you should redouble your brainstorming efforts to figure out new ways to make commercials better and reduce the number. Companies that put time, energy and effort into this area will reap big rewards.

5. **Think about how to make your station more kid friendly.** This is an important one since 42% of AOR listeners have children under 12. And more have teenagers.

They don’t like rude announcers (it’s the #2 reason they stopped listening), and over half tune out because it’s not good for kids. Sixty-two percent “strongly agree” that they want to be able to listen with their kids.

These diarykeepers might be a “canary in the coal mine”—warning radio to rethink community responsibilities.

- 6. Help them feel better.** AOR listeners are worriers. They worry about their kids, their future and money. They are twice as likely to listen to AOR to relax as they are to get more energy. Even though the music may rock, it works on them as a stress reducer.

So, if you want AOR women, don't play to negatives. Make them laugh. Take their mind off the day-to-day. ID songs more (they want to know), and build a station that "keeps them company."
- 7. Advertise cross-media.** Unlike most other listeners, AOR women don't respond to their friends' recommendations any more than they respond to TV or billboards. Even though friends' opinions are important, this is a media-savvy crowd who is checking out a lot of media. They will be more likely than most to respond to ticket giveaways and other nontraditional ways of "advertising."
- 8. Don't waste their time.** This is a time-stressed group of listeners. They are more likely than most to feel that they never have enough time. AOR listeners want to hear music, and they don't want to hear a lot of talk. They are slightly more likely than listeners to most other formats to tune out because of "too much talk" (61%). And like most other listeners, they don't like a lot of commercials. They want lots of their favorite music. When you talk or do contests, keep it light and entertaining. Keep it funny and keep the music going.

About Arbitron

Arbitron Inc. (NYSE: ARB) is an international media and marketing research firm serving radio broadcasters, cable companies, advertisers, advertising agencies and outdoor advertising companies in the United States, Mexico and Europe. Arbitron's core businesses are measuring network and local market radio audiences across the United States; surveying the retail, media and product patterns of local market consumers; and providing application software used for analyzing media audience and marketing information data. Arbitron Webcast Services measures the audiences of audio and video content on the Internet, commonly known as webcasts. The Company is developing the Portable People Meter, a new technology for radio, TV and cable ratings.

Arbitron's marketing and business units are supported by a world-renowned research and technology organization located in Columbia, Maryland. Arbitron has approximately 750 full-time employees; its executive offices are located in New York City.

Through its Scarborough Research joint venture with VNU Media Measurement & Information, Arbitron also provides media and marketing research services to the broadcast television, magazine, newspaper and online industries.

About Joint Communications

Joint Communications Corp. is considered a global leader in media strategy, marketing and consumer trends. For 25 years, it has helped a distinguished roster of clients to achieve remarkable success. They have included VH1, *Rolling Stone* Magazine, MTV, Wendy's, S.C. Johnson, Molson, CBS, NBC, ABC, Bryan Adams, major record companies and hundreds of radio stations in the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe and South America.

Joint Communications specializes in identifying, capturing and keeping audiences. They do it through sophisticated market research, formatting, marketing and promotion.

CEO John Parikhal co-created a successful show for NBC television as well as creating national radio hits for *Rolling Stone* and NBC Radio. Most recently, he put his talents to work in helping to engineer the rebirth and extraordinary success of VH1.

Parikhal is author of *The Baby Boom: Making Sense of Our Generation at 40*, based on the most extensive study ever done of boomers as they turned 40. He earned his master's degree with media guru Marshall McLuhan and studied for a Ph.D. in language and perception.

Parikhal has been interviewed extensively on radio, television and in magazines for his opinions on what people want and why they want it. He shares his insights in his popular *Radio & Records* column, "The Competitive Edge."

Widely recognized as a futurist who helps his clients become even more successful, Parikhal says, "There is a New Entertainment Economy emerging. It's all about control, connection and convenience—a daring tug of war between consumers and creators, between the distributors and the dissatisfied."

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