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## Radio vs. Streaming Services: Exploring How Radio is Facing Competition

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RADIO VS. STREAMING SERVICES:  
EXPLORING HOW RADIO IS FACING COMPETITION

by

KYRA ALLEN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for Honors in the Major Program in Radio Television  
in the College of Sciences  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Dr. Bridget Rubenking

## ABSTRACT

With the increasing number of online streaming services available in the world, it is astounding to note how radio is still around maintaining excellent ratings and listener interaction. It is essential to analyze the media industry, and while there are many outlets a person is capable of accessing music, people still turn to their local radio. The literature indicates how the business of radio still exists with the primary competition of today.

The study includes interviews from twelve radio professionals at Cox Media Group (CMG) Orlando, the home of seven different format radio stations. All interviewees hold a range of job titles/responsibilities, years of experience, and perspectives in the radio industry. The findings indicate that people still appreciate radio for the locality, resources, and recreational activities radio has to offer that in many ways, a streaming service cannot. The study exemplifies how although a media format may have been around for hundreds of years, it can still be relevant if it can adapt to the changes of today.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Introduction

Radio development traces back to the late 1800s and early 1900s. Not too long ago, the only way people could listen to music was by purchasing records or listening to the radio. Today, people can download streaming service applications (apps) such as Apple Music, Tidal, Spotify, and Pandora to have the option to listen to commercial-free music and a personalized playlist -- something that the radio does not offer. In the past, to watch your favorite television show you had to watch it at the exact time it aired. With streaming services such as Netflix, HBO Now, Hulu, and Amazon Prime people can watch old and new TV series, anywhere, at any time.

The new phenomena of streaming services has taken traditional broadcast industries by storm. They have given traditional radio and TV a new arena of competitors, causing them to adapt to what streaming services have to offer listeners. Unfortunately, being traditional may not always be relevant. “New, internet-based or online radio platforms now account for over 500 million dollars’ worth of streaming music revenue and the format continues to grow with each passing year. The decline of over-the-air radio is being offset by the growth of its online counterpart” (Watson 2019). The difference between radio and streaming services today is people are spending 1,007 minutes a week with online radio (Watson 2019) and that number is only dramatically increasing as each new technology is introduced.

The purpose of this research is to discover how radio is adapting and thriving amidst new technologies and competitors. This research project begins with a brief review of the evolution of radio, as well as the introduction of satellite radio and streaming apps. It also reviews how streaming services influence the ratings and well-



being of radio stations. Following is an explanation of how radio is measured and rated alongside a graph to explain some of Orlando's local radio ratings. The proposal will then analyze competitors of traditional broadcasting radio and explain the current state of streaming services and radio. Lastly, the three academic perspectives or theories: displacement theory, theory of the niche, and zero sum phenomena will be introduced and applied to the current context.

All of this preliminary research leads to the methodology and results section, which document data collected by conducting interviews with different department managers, on-air talent, and account executives at a local radio station. The interviews are based on the amount of years individuals have been in radio and the changes they have personally seen over time. This will allow the opportunity to compare relatively "new" people in radio and "radio veterans" those who have been in radio for 10+ years. During orientation with Cox Media Group Orlando it was mentioned how Sirius XM radio would put traditional radio out of business. Today, it is often discussed that radio will die because of new music applications, yet years later, radio is still competing in the same arena for free.

## **Literature Review**

### **Radio History**

Defined by Webster, radio is the transmission and reception of electromagnetic waves and radio frequency, especially those carrying sound messages. In other words, radio communicates with the use of radio waves. This is used for mass communication as well as from person to person. In November 1886, Heinrich Hertz, experimented with wireless transmission and was the first person to transmit and receive controlled radio waves (Doc, 2017). Guglielmo Marconi researched and tested Hertz's findings in his own home and duplicated the work. Initially used for militia and naval ships, radio was used to communicate with other ships and land stations. Person to person communication is most illustrated in this era. In the early 1900s (after radio ban by the government), radio began to have mass communication broadcast about different topics regarding church sermons, sports, and government.

The Radio Act of 1927 was implemented to bring order to the radio broadcasting world. The act is most known for creating the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) to regulate airwaves, approving and disapproving licenses, and assigning frequencies to each licensee. The Communications Act of 1934 governs telephone, television, and radio communications (Civil Liberties, 2013). The 1930s-1950s are the "Golden Age" of radio. During these years, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was created and overseen by congress. The FCC regulates communications by radio, television, satellite, and cable in the United States. The use of radio for listeners was not only free, but they had the opportunity to get updates on current events going on in the world at the time. Compared to newspapers and television, radio was more accessible. People didn't have to

tune in at a specific time or wait for the newspaper to be released- they could gather around and turn on the radio to get updates (Civil Liberties, 2013).

### **Radio Measurement and Ratings**

In the past, Nielsen ratings would send out questionnaires and compensate people to find out who, where, what time, and what stations were being listened to the most. This is how the radio stations were rated, and demographics/statistics were found until Portable People Meters (PPM) were invented. This small device is given to people at random and measures how many people are being exposed and listening to radio stations. Founded in the early 2000's PPM was created to get precise and accurate ratings from people in the comfort of their own home and wherever they go it will record the audio the person is listening to. Nielsen will then use the data to produce local ratings reports for each market, which it delivers monthly. The data is based on the average four weeks of survey results (Nielsen). In addition to PPM, diaries are also another method to measure/rate audio, which requires diary panelists to record their listening in one-week increments. This tried-and-true measurement technique remains the gold standard for hundreds of U.S. radio markets (Nielsen). In the past, one method used to measure audio locally consisted of having representatives from the radio stations research department call numbers at random and asking the simple question, “do you listen to this station?” if the answer was no, the representative would hang up and proceed with the next person. If the answer was yes, then they would play 10 second clips of songs asking if the listener liked or did not like a song.

Every month radio stations receive rating updates that breaks down the demographics of who is listening to what stations. At one time, stations used to only get

four books a year, now they get one book a month and have daily access to ratings. A book of data collected on audiences on who is listening. I had the opportunity to sit down with the local sales manager at CMG, Ashley Williams, to discuss ratings for the Orlando radio market in 2019 as well as the Cox radio stations which include WDBO, WWKA, WCFB, WMMO, and WPYO. The figure below (Figure 1) is a graph illustrating people from the age 25-54 listening to prime radio (6am-7pm). Figure 1 shows the Orlando radio ratings (not shares) from all stations in Orlando market. The figure then explain the Orlando market broken down by companies such as CMG, iHeart, and entercom. Current year (CY) and the prior year (PY) were compared in the Orlando market for the month of September the CY was rated at 5.5; October was rated at 5.3 and November was rated at 5.6. The booking for the month September-November was 5.5. The prior years booking in 2018 for that exact time period was 7.1.

ORLANDO MARKET 3 MO RATINGS // PERSONS 25-54 // PRIME											
ORLANDO MARKET	CY	CY	CY	CY	CY	PY	PR 3 BOOK	CY vs PY		CY vs PR 3 BOOK	
	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	SEP-NOV	SEP-NOV	AUG-OCT	Var	Var %	Var	Var %
Orlando Radio	6.3	5.5	5.3	5.6	5.5	7.1	5.7	1.6	23%	-0.2	-4%

CMG 3 MO RATINGS // PERSONS 25-54 // PRIME											
CMG	CY	CY	CY	CY	CY	PY	PR 3 BOOK	CY vs PY		CY vs PR 3 BOOK	
	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	SEP-NOV	SEP-NOV	AUG-OCT	Var	Var %	Var	Var %
Cox Orlando Radio Stations	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.7	2.6	1.8	-0.9	-34%	0.0	2%
WDBO-FM	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	-0.2	-42%	0.0	-12%
WWKA-FM	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	11%	0.0	-11%
WCFB-FM	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.3	-0.2	-40%	0.0	10%
WMMO-FM	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.5	-0.3	-39%	0.0	0%
WPYQ-FM	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.3	-0.2	-40%	0.0	0%
WDBO-AM2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	50%	0.0	0%
WCFB-HD2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	-0.1	-100%	0.0	0%

ENTERCOM 3 MO RATINGS // PERSONS 25-54 // PRIME											
ENTERCOM	CY	CY	CY	CY	CY	PY	PR 3 BOOK	CY vs PY		CY vs PR 3 BOOK	
	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	SEP-NOV	SEP-NOV	AUG-OCT	Var	Var %	Var	Var %
Entercom Orlando Radio Stations	1.8	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.5	0.0	3%	-0.2	-11%
WQMP-FM	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	13%	0.0	-10%
WOCL-FM	0.9	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.1	13%	-0.1	-15%
WOMX-FM	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	-0.1	-13%	0.0	-7%

IHEART 3 MO RATINGS // PERSONS 25-54 // PRIME											
IHEART	CY	CY	CY	CY	CY	PY	PR 3 BOOK	CY vs PY		CY vs PR 3 BOOK	
	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	SEP-NOV	SEP-NOV	AUG-OCT	Var	Var %	Var	Var %
iHeartMedia Orlando Radio Stat	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.8	2.3	-0.6	-21%	0.0	-1%
WMOG-FM	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4	-0.1	-20%	0.0	9%
WRUM-FM	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.8	0.6	-0.2	-30%	-0.1	16%
WTKS-FM	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0%	0.0	7%
WXXL-FM	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.6	-0.2	-24%	0.0	0%
WYGM-AM	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0%	0.0	0%

Figure 1: Ratings for Orlando radio market

Source: CMG orlando

### Competitors to Traditional Broadcast Radio

In 2000, digital music sharing took the music industry by storm. Peer-to-peer file sharing websites such as Limewire and Kazaa allowed millions to access music with no purchase needed. Essentially, everyone now had the capability to purchase music for free. The once thriving music industry took a major hit in losses financially due to file sharing websites giving out singles, mixtapes, and albums at no cost. “According RIAA figures, US recorded music sales fell to \$7.7bn in 2009 from \$14.5bn in 1999. The rise to prominence of peer-to-peer filesharing networks is singled out as a primary factor for this

decline by the RIAA” (Halliday, 2010). Limewire was liable for copyright infringement which is in violation with the law and later shut down by the federal courts. Unexpected competitors like peer-to-peer file sharing websites was only the beginning of what radio would experience.

While many stations despised (and others celebrated) using PPM, it wasn't until Satellite, and Sirius X.M radio came along and threatened radios wellbeing. X.M.'s first satellite went public in 2001- and four-months later, Sirius followed. Before streaming services, there was only Sirius XM. This is a commercial-free music including 72 channels across categories that include, sports talk and analysis, news/entertainment, and comedy, and multiple music formats. It is accessible in vehicles, homes, computers, offices, and smartphones/tablets and all commercial-free. To listen to Sirius, you must pay a monthly fee which typically starts at \$15.99/month. Like traditional radio, it also does not allow listeners to create a personalized playlist.

According to Tech survey, in 2017, while AM/FM radio had leading numbers in listeners, satellite radio followed behind it. The data displayed in Figure 2 also acknowledges that music streaming platforms such as Pandora, Apple Music, and Spotify are on the rise and have many subscriptions from people around the world (Jacobs, 2017). But will it be enough to put radio out of business? Before streaming services became as popular as they are today-in 2017 Satellite radio took the lead following radio. Figure 2 shows people who own a “connected car” which is one equipped with media platform like Ford SYNC or Chrysler Uconnect are more likely to use Satellite radio compared to people who do not own a connected car. Jacobs mentions that it's becoming more apparent the threat from SiriusXM is a clearer and more present danger to broadcast

radio. Considering the #1 location for AM/FM radio consumption is the car, then satellite radio provides the greatest challenge (Jacobs, 2017). 64% of all respondents in a car used traditional AM/FM radio, 13% used satellite radio and only 4% used streaming audio.

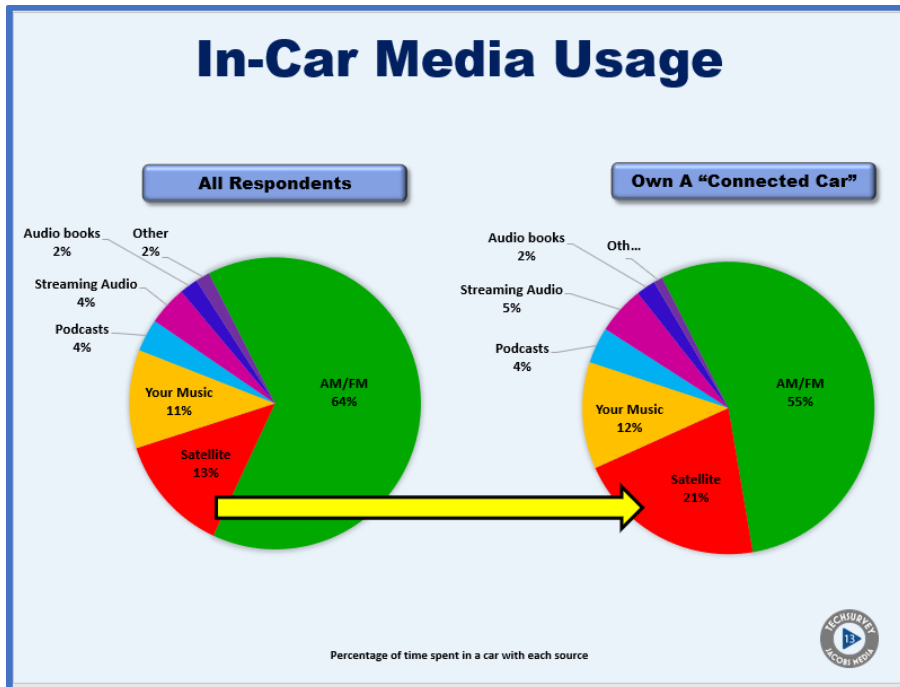


Figure 2: In car media usage

Source: Tech Survey Jacobs, Fred, et al. "Watch Out: SiriusXM Is Stepping Up Its Threat to Terrestrial Radio." *Jacobs Media Strategies*, 28 Oct. 2017, [jacobsmedia.com/radio-cant-just-check-off-boxes/](http://jacobsmedia.com/radio-cant-just-check-off-boxes/).

Pandora was founded in January the year 2000. Pandora was initially made to listen to the music you love and want to hear commercial-free. Unlike the radio, Pandora can make a playlist of all the songs and artists you like to hear without creating the playlist yourself. For example, if you are listening to your favorite genre and artist, Pandora will find other artists in that same genre to match the song you are listening too.

Pandora is a personalized listening experience that is partnered with Sirius XM, and together the two have created the largest audio entertainment company. Pandora offers a family plan for a monthly fee of \$14.99 and an individual plan of \$9.99 a month (Casey, 2019).

Spotify was founded in 2006 in Sweden, allowing people to "discover, manage and share over fifty million tracks," Spotify explains. Unlike radio, Spotify will enable you to access to every and any song you want for an unlimited amount of time for a small monthly fee. Spotify has 113 million subscribers and available in 79 markets, including the United States, Australia, and Brazil. The premium membership for Spotify costs \$9.99, but for students, it is \$4.99 a month, and it allows Hulu and fellow streaming service on Showtime (Casey, 2019).

While the brand Apple was founded many years ago, Apple Music wasn't discovered until June 2015. Apple Music offers to broadcast 24 hours a day, and the most convenient part is Apple Music is already programmed in all Apple products. The products include iPhone, iPad, Mac, and Apple TV. The plans offered by Apple music are \$14.99 for a family plan (up to six people), \$9.99 a month for an individual plan, and \$4.99 for college students.

### **Theoretical Approaches**

Several relevant theories are briefly reviewed here. These theories are used to guide some aspects of the data collection process. The data analysis stage will incorporate an examination for evidence of the theories or patterns of findings listed below, with a broader discussion of the theories.



## **Displacement Theory**

Displacement theory suggests that people have limited attention and time available to participate in one communication activity. This proposes that if a person makes one use of communication (radio, MP3, streaming service) eventually the other use of communication will not be used (Tokunaga, 2016). Meaning that the person will only have limited time and attention for one communication and it is not likely the user of two communication activities can equally allot time for both. For example, when a new communication technology is introduced, people will have less time for other activities related to communication (Sienkowski, 2012). This was seen firsthand when TV was first invented because the more time people spent watching TV, the less time they spent with other media technologies. With the introduction of many new technologies such as satellite radio, streaming services, and music playing devices it will be difficult for one to manage their time between this and technology such as TV. The theory is based on time being a limited resource and the amount of time we have constrains communication activities (Sienkowski, 2012). This theory relates to the study of “radio facing competition with streaming services” because it can be discovered if time being spent with streaming services will eventually replace time spent with radio.

## **Theory of the Niche**

Initially used for ecological theory, it was made for the different species in nature competing with one another for scarce resources in order to survive. Theory of the niche was proposed to explain media competition by Dimmick and Rothenbuhler (1984) and just like species, new and existing media companies compete for scarce resources in order to survive. The theory suggests that a new mass medium in media industry forms

competition/coexistence relationships with incumbent media for limited resources like consumer time, and consumer satisfaction (Jang and Park, 2016). This concept states if two media have similar functions, they will have a large niche overlap and may form a substitution relationship with each other (Dimmick, 1984). Niche theory will analyze how media companies compete for advertising and audiences in order to gain an advantage over one another. It also suggests that new media must compete with older media. For example, when media started to be consumed digitally magazines and newspaper companies could no longer compete because the audience preferred to consume electronically. Today, many news outlets have stories available online via website and applications because that is consumers preference. The theory is designed to quantify competition among media industries through a series of measures. The measures include “niche breadth” which is the amount and range of resources used by one company. “Niche overlap” is the degree to which two or more companies share the same resources. Researchers find that greater the breadth, greater the overlap which then leads to competitive exclusion. The smaller the breadth, the less overlap which leads to greater resource portioning or coexistence of more companies (Jang & Park, 2016). Theory of the niche relates to this study of radio competing with streaming services because it will discover if the two have created a “large niche overlap”. The overlap occurs when two media’s have similar functions and will lead to a substitution of one media form not being used. A drawback to this theory may arguably be there are no inter-specific measures to quantify competition, only intra-specific measures. The theory will discover and understand how media industry’s adaptation to new competition.

## **Zero Sum Phenomenon**

Zero sum phenomenon also known as zero sum game is a situation in which one person or group can win something only by causing another person or group to lose it (Kenton, 2019). This is found more in game theories but can also be used for other theories such as media. Nonzero sum game is just the opposite, there is neither a winner nor a loser in competition. This relates to the competition of radio and streaming services because while conducting interviews I can establish whether radio is considered to be “winning or losing” listeners as compared to streaming services.

## **The Current Study**

The ability to listen to music has developed tremendously over time. Not too long ago there was a time where people would purchase music playing device (MP3) and would have to download/sync music to the device. After compact disc players (CD) went out of style, iPods and Zunes took the music arena by force. While Paula Meija describes selecting digital files to sync on a MP3 as a “distant memory” , soon music lovers will have limitless access to music from all over for a small monthly fee. "Professionally, streaming has become crucial for the artists I work with, and it's become such a big part of what we do in terms of marketing our campaign and making sure that people know that it's on these streaming platforms," says Katie Garcia, who owns Bayonet Records and does A&R for Secretly Group. "It's crucial nowadays; it's a necessity" (Meija, 2019). In a 2018 year-end report, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) stated that "for the third year in a row, double-digit growth was driven primarily by increased revenues from paid subscription services including Spotify, Apple Music, Tidal, and Pandora. In early 2018, Apple Music was rated the most successful music streaming

service with 49.5 million users accessing each month. Spotify following the same year with 47.7 million monthly users (Watson, 2019). In 2018 alone, streaming contributed over \$3.4 billion to the music industry with streaming profits accounted for over 75% of the overall revenue for the entire recorded music industry (Hernandez, 2019). Over 229 million people globally subscribe to a streaming service (Washenko, 2019). The growth of streaming services is successful from the drive of Millennials. While much research describes the generation as “cheap” and “freeloaders”, Millennials are far more likely to pay for music streaming service compared to elders (Howe, 2019).

This research will be conducted by completing interviews with professionals at CMG. Cox is a single integrated broadcasting, publishing, and digital media company. In the Orlando market, CMG owns seven radio stations, such as Power 95.3, ESPN, Star 94.5, K 92.3, WMMO 98.9, Solo Exitos 107.3, and WDBO 96.5. In addition, Cox Media Orlando also owns television station WFTV Channel 9 News.

The purpose of this study is to discover the following research questions:

RQ1: What strategies are radio implementing to stay relevant in today’s media landscape?

RQ2: Do radio professionals view these strategies as being effective?

RQ3: How does listener interaction help a radio station?

RQ4: How has streaming and social media influenced radio?

RQ5: How do advertising decisions influence a station’s success?

RQ6: What are common practices and trends in radio promotions strategies and programming strategies?

## Methods

Twelve in-depth interviews were successfully conducted with Orlando CMG employees.

The table below illustrates the name, position, years of experience, where the interview was conducted and the duration of interview.

**Table 1**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>How Interview was Conducted</b>
Keniece Hamilton	Promotions Manager ESPN, WMMO, News 96.5, Star 94.5	6 years	In person at CMG Orlando. Interview lasted 31 minutes.
Allie Gomez	Promotions Manager Power 95.3, Solo Exitos, K 92.3	6 ½ years	In person at CMG Orlando. Interview lasted 28 minutes.
Denise Ryan	On Air Talent Morning Show host with 98.9 WMMO	14 years	In person at CMG Orlando. Interview lasted 32 minutes.
Estee Martin	Program Director Solo Exitos and On-Air Talent Power 95.3	15 years	On the phone. Interview lasted 20 minutes.
Danie B.	On Air Talent for Afternoon show for Power 95.3 and Assistant for Programming & Branding	10 years	In person at CMG Orlando. Interview lasted 60 minutes.
Ashley Williams	Local Sales Manager	12 years	In person at CMG Orlando. Interview lasted 23 minutes.
Matt Jones	Senior Account Manager	21 years	Email. Had difficulty schedueling due to COVID-19.
JC	Director of Sales for Power 95.3, Star 94.5, K 92.3, Solo Exitos 107.3, WMMO 98.9, News 96.5, and ESPN	21 years	In person at CMG Orlando. Interview lasted 45 minutes.
Amanda Duitsman	Marketing Director	10 years	Conducted via Microsoft Teams. Interview lasted 45 minutes.

Steve Stewart	Director of Programming Operations	32 years	Conducted via Microsoft Teams. Interview lasted 45 minutes.
Dallas	On-Air Talent WMMO 98.9	34 years	Conducted over the phone. Interview lasted 41 minutes.
JoJo	On Air Talent Star 94.5	35 years	In person at CMG Orlando. Interview lasted 46 minutes.

Interviews took place in person at CMG Orlando, over the phone or via Microsoft Teams. All interviewees were given basic consent information, and informed that they may stop being interviewed at any time if they desired. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, with permission of the interviewees. Interviews took approximately 20– 60 minutes to complete. Upon completion of the interviews, the transcripts were transcribed and analysis of the data to answer the posed research questions, as well as any unexpected additional findings were completed by the primary researcher. Common themes were found upon completion of the interviews. Past work experience played a vital role in who employee’s are today. A draft of Interview Questions is included below in Appendix 1.

Founded in 1898 by James M. Cox, he always valued serving the community and “intrument of truth”. Starting off as just newspapers, Jim Cox, Jr. was intrigued with radio and added the medium to the business. Cox’s first radio station was WHIO I the year of 1935. In 1948, television was yet an additional medium added under the Cox umbrella in Atlanta, Georgia. Bringing together television, newspaper, and radio in 2009 Cox enterprises then became known as Cox Media Group. In 2013 in few markets CMG newspapers offer readers paid and free digital products that included websites and all access mobile applications.

I am currently an employee at CMG Orlando. Initially, I was interning with the promotions department and got hired as a part-time employee after three months. I currently assist with promotions department, work front desk and run board operations for 98.9 WMMO.

One of the people interviewed goes by the name of Estee Martin. I was recommended to interview Estee due to the many roles she plays at CMG Orlando. Estee is an on-air personality talent for the "Wake Up" morning show at Power 95.3. She started as a co-host for the highly-rated Lil Shawn & Obie show and at the time had her own midday show. Today not only is she on-air personality, but she is also a program director for CMG's sister station Solo Exitos 107.3. Being a Latina woman with much experience in radio, it was important for the new station 107.3 to have someone run the station who understands the brand, the Latin community, and experience in radio. Lastly, Estee currently works with WFTV Channel 9 news. Estee's role with the news station will help drive views for the station online application. She reports all the entertainment and sports going on in the Central Florida area. This is something new that Channel 9 has developed because they notice the shift and impact of cord-cutting.

## Results

Before reviewing the results for each original research question posed, some common themes that were not explicitly asked about in the research questions are reviewed, followed by several differences across interviewees according to years in the radio business. The interviewees were like-minded on many topics, for example, everyone agreed from the time that they first started in radio up until today, there are a lot less people employed in radio. One person now has the job title and description of what used to take 2-3 people. For instance, years ago people were in place to do research and find out morning news to discuss on the morning show, but today that is the job of on air talent, among other tasks. Talent must post to social media and interact with listeners, control board operations, select winners for contests, attend on-site activations, and many more. Talent's role in the past was largely just to announce and engage on air.

Interviewees also agreed that listeners and the sales department are what keep a radio station alive. Without money to run the station and an audience to listen to it, a radio station will not survive. Lastly, everyone agreed that the Nielsen rating system could accumulate ratings in a more measurable/accurate way. Many believe it is unfair how PPM's determine how many people collectively are tuned into a station.

Employees with various years of experience in the radio industry differed in a few responses. For example, when asked, "what are some major changes you have witnessed in the industry?" people with less experience responded to how the new development of podcasts and social media are being enforced with all seven radio formats at the CMG Orlando. Interviewees with more experience noted how the 1996 Telecommunications Act changed the radio industry as they knew it. People with more experience also found



that since they started radio, they can always pinpoint a new innovation threatening radio's existence. CD players, MP3's, and satellite radio are all past technologies that people believed would put out radio. Still, employees with more experience agreed that these past innovations, like streaming services, only allows radio more room for growth.

### **Research Questions Results**

RQ1 asked, what strategies are radio implementing to stay relevant in today's media landscape. Strategies that are implemented to assure radio is relevant in today's media landscape is that they have evolved continuously as technology have become more prevalent. To add on, short duration commercials were implemented . Keeping up with changes in technology was one strategy that many interviewees highlighted. On-air talent, Dallas for CMG Orlando rock station 98.9 WMMO, says that when he first started in radio in 1986, "we were still using records and carts." Records and carts are what allowed commercials and music to play on air. The boards in the past were all analog, not digital, as they are today. Dallas notes that he was on one of the first stations in the United States, in Charlotte, North Carolina, that transformed to digital. "In 1998, we switched everything to digital and had digital files with a computer system." Digital transformation in radio has caused the radio industry to decrease the number of employees tremendously. CMG Orlando director of sales, JC, notes that "Technology replaced humans. In the beginning, there used to be 200 employees at a station, but today there are only eighty-eighty five." JC gives a relevant example of on-air jock, Tom Joyner, who retired back in December 2019 after being in radio for 25 years. Joyner would work long hours flying between his morning job located in Dallas, Texas, to his afternoon job in Chicago, Illinois, to record his shows for eight years.

Today, on-air talent can record from any studio to be on-air in any state or city that they please. A perfect illustration of this would be 98.9 WMMO Denise and Dallas who both record in different markets while still being on-air for the Orlando market. Promotions Managers of ESPN, WMMO, News 96.5, Star 94.5 Keniece Hamilton and Allie Gomez of Power 95.3, Solo Exitos, K 92.3 note since that new competition has emerged, technology has allowed them the opportunity to develop apps for smartphones and tablets. Listening online allows the audience to have a transportable experience from their car, to their job, or in the comfort of their own home. On the website, app, and on-air "at home alexa" is promoted for people to program at home so they can have a hands-free experience. Smart devices also enable users to receive push notifications. Push notifications are small messages that can reach listeners and audiences anywhere and anytime; this allows the radio stations to keep listeners updated even when they may not be listening to the radio at that time. Listeners not only benefit from the app by being "in the know," but by any chance, they are not in the car to listen to the radio, they have the opportunity to listen to the radio anywhere they are in the world. On-air talents are always encouraging listeners to listen to the radio even when they are not in their car. Having mid-day contest increases the chance of listeners tuning in on the app on their lunch break at work or home. Driving traffic to the app will not only benefit for ratings, but also insure that the radio station has more than one avenue to reach an audience. On-air personality, Jojo, states that "I went on vacation and traveled outside of the U.S and just for fun I wanted to see if the app would work, and sure enough I was able to listen to Star 94.5 in a different country thanks to the app". The application also offers a feature called "open mic"; this feature allows listeners to leave a voice message to the radio

station to express how they feel about the station and also have song requests. Often if the listener has something positive to say, it will be featured on-air.

Radio stations are also implementing short duration commercials to stay relevant in today's media landscape. This practice can drive people to a website instead of using long format commercials to describe the product thoroughly. Senior account manager Matt Jones adds that these short duration messages help in developing the “‘Call to action’ in radio advertisements help drive consumers to make a decision or miss out.” Changes in digital technology, including the developments of on-the-go apps, as well as changes in advertising formats, such as short duration messages are some of the strategies CMG Orlando employees point to as those currently being employed to keep their stations competitive in a crowded market.

RQ2 asked, do radio professionals view these strategies as being effective? Overall, the radio professionals who were interviewed here do see these strategies as being effective, especially those that develop greater local interaction. It allows them to connect with listeners with more than one avenue. Rather than the traditional call-ins on the radio, thanks to the development of technology, radio stations can utilize social media, websites, and apps. Currently, the world is experiencing a pandemic due to the coronavirus (COVID-19). Director of operations, Steve Stewart, explains “We practice these strategies all the time, but won’t always see instant results.” He explains it is times such as the current outbreak that has a great effect on the people, community, and world. The radio websites and social media accounts provide listeners with resources for jobs, food assistance, and a break from reality. People are turning to radio more than ever

before to get an update on resources and services that local business or the government may be providing. Steve also states that radio experiences high volume when traumatic experiences happen in the Central Florida area. “The Pulse night club shooting and recent hurricanes that hit Florida -- we get to see how much our listeners value radio.” While the majority of the country has to work from home or got laid off due to COVID-19, Governor DeSantis announced that “essential workers” are still allowed to report to work-essential radio employees (personalities, IT) were one of the few listed on the list. In a time of a crisis such as COVID-19, events and concerts are unfortunately cancelled or postponed. K92.3 holds Country Thunder (a country concert) every year, although this year it is postponed. Due to show being delayed, it was important to program director, Steve, to still give the listeners the show they have long anticipated and deserved. After much work from the K team, “Virtual Country Thunder” was a success. A two-day phenomenon, that lasted for four hours of live authentic country music. Audio from artist were collected to be played on-air and listener engagement was at an all time high. While this was no easy task to pull off, the team delivered and accomplished a new format of country thunder. It is events such as “Virtual Country Thunder” that allows radio to feel connected to their listeners. Steve shares that the station received an outpour of love and support from listeners expressing their gratitude for the station. Radio professionals will always depend on the appreciation of a listeners and being innovative with technology as strategies being effective.

Building off of the results found in response to RQ2, RQ3 asked, how does listener interaction help a radio station? All interviewee's agreed that if there were no listener interactions, then there would be no success with radio at all. On-air personality

for Star 94.5, Jojo, explains that there has always been a need for listener interaction since she began broadcasting 20 years ago. "I remember being in my twenties, and I would host a club in Altamonte, Florida every weekend. Any night I had the opportunity to host the club, the turn out was outstanding. I believe listeners love to put a face to the voice they hear every day on the radio. The locality of a radio station is what differentiates radio from any other media formats." Star 94.5 Program Director, Dawn Campbell, further explains how local radio is essential, and each market will always be different from another. "If you took radio in New York and put it in Orlando, it will not succeed and vice versa. Each market and station is made explicitly for the audience/demographic of that market. Listener interaction allows us the opportunity to not only meet our listeners but to connect and give back to them. Feedback, positive or negative, will always allow room for improvement for the radio station." Sr. Account manager, Matt Jones, adds that "In a crisis, such as a hurricane, the radio may be the only way listeners get critical information, which is a meaningful connection. Radio stations often showcase listeners in the community that has done something unusual or have a story to tell or are perhaps in need after a fire or other devastating event – which can help drive donations."

A perfect example of this was the Bahamas Relief Concert Star 94.5 showcased at House of Blues. Listeners were granted free admission in exchange for nonmonetary donations to go to all victims who had recently been affected by Hurricane Dorian in 2019. Dawn Campbell explains that without being able to broadcast on-air, the need for essentials, there would not have been over thousands of items donated to the Bahamas.

All interviewees agreed that without listener interaction events, concerts, and donations to those in need would not be possible.

RQ4 asked, how has streaming and social media influenced radio? The interviewees credited social media as a great tool to utilize and increase in listener interaction. The development of the digital arena has allowed radio another avenue to connect with their listeners. Rather than just being on air, the listener can now communicate with their favorite talent via social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter). Power 95.3 on-air talent, Danie B, explains how social media enhanced radios interaction. Danie B. states, "when I first started radio ten years ago, social media was an option for us, now it is mandatory. We have numbers we have to hit. There have to be several posts a day and visible interaction/activity with each post." Rather than just giving gifts out on-air, talent can now do contests and giveaways on social media. Each station has its own social media preference, depending on the demographic. For example, the demographics for WMMO Classic rock stations are ages 23-54 older Caucasian men; the audience prefers Facebook. For Power 95.3, the demographic is 18-34 men and women; the younger audience prefers Instagram.

Streaming services have forced radio to be more creative. At the beginning of 2020, CMG Orlando has mandated all stations add podcasts to their websites. Podcasts used to be an option for the radio stations, but now it is mandatory. Solo Exitos 107.3, the Hispanic station, had already begun the process of recording for the podcast in February 2020. Dominique Diaz and Kahlil Collazo have collectively created with Program Director, Estee Martin, "Un pájaro, dos alas" which means "two wings of the same bird." Dominique and Khalil are under 25 years old; the station has decided to appeal to the

younger audience with the podcast. The podcast will last 15-30 minutes and ranges from topics about Latino culture in all areas of life: entertainment, family, different countries, and slangs (different languages). Allowing listeners to have yet another outlet to connect with the station on a personal level proves how radio can evolve and adapt to modern times.

Streaming services may have a few advantages over radio. Director of sales, JC, and local sales manager Ashley Williams both believe the main reason listeners turn to streaming services is because of the ability to listen to what you want, when you want, and commercial-free. This is the only advantage interviewees agreed on; streaming services are now mimicking radio by curating different artists to host their own radio show/podcast on the streaming app. Interviewees feel as if there is no competition amongst radio and streaming services because radio has something streaming services will never have, locality. Radio is focused on local listeners, which is something streaming services could never do. The ability to cater to the community and give back to listeners is what radio is all about. It is also one of the many reasons radio is still around today. Radio is there to help, full of resources and tickets to ensure the listener is always satisfied. Director of marketing, Amanda Duitsman, states that “radio always fights. Streaming services forced radio to be innovative. Radio will be known as the innovative medium.” Streaming services and social media have had great influence on what radio is today-from creating yet another avenue to reach listeners to forcing radio to be more creative with contest and giveaways.

Advertising is a large part of every radio station, and so RQ5 asked, how do advertising decisions influence a station's success? All interviewees collectively agreed

that advertising decisions have a significant influence on the success of a radio station. JC states that "The sales department is what keeps radio alive; without the sales department there would be no radio. Sales are intricate and it would be impossible for radio to exist from the sale side" He explains that when he first started radio, the only way to sell advertisements to a potential buyer was on-air time and billboards. Today, there has been a development of digital space that allows potential buyers to not only have on-air time but also advertise on social media, websites, and endorsements. "A good creative ad that hits the right target and demographic will serve the listener greatly. Our service is to keep the community informed with major updates going on in Central Florida and to offer solutions on making their life easier," JC adds. Promotions manager for Star 94.5, News 96.5, and WMMO 98.9, Keniece Hamilton, adds that "sales is how we eat, it's how we survive and it's how the building is still standing. In my opinion, sales is the blood and the lifeline to radio. Many other aspects have a great contribution to a station, but if there is no sales there is no money. There would be no digital advertising, running commercials, and doing activations." A number of the interviewees from different departments mentioned that listeners benefit from the ads when the research is performed accurately, knowing the demographic for each station and delivering the proper call to action that will drive the consumer to make a decision.

It is also crucial that each station is selling products and services that make sense to the demographic of the station. "It is essential that product or service can marry the consumer" talent for Power 95.3, Danie B explains. Danie B. mentions an incident when she first started radio in New York City, and she aired the commercial (that she was a star in) that came off racist/biased. At that moment, she realized "all money isn't good



money." All interviewees agreed that just because a business is offering money, doesn't always mean they will accept it. It has to align with the station's morals and ethics.

In addition to sales, promotions and programming are also integral parts of radio. RQ6 asked, what are the common practices and trends in radio promotions strategies and programming strategies? All interviewees agreed that employees in promotions are the face of the station and the brand. They are the ones who are in the field, as Dallas from WMMO calls it "promotions is more grassroots with people in the streets." As former promotions manager JC describes it "all we did was van hits in the Central Florida area." Van hits is a phrase used to describe the promotions team physically traveling to consumers to spread brand awareness. "My boss used to say all the time 'a van in the parking lot is a van wasted'" states JC. It is a common trend for the promotions department to give away goodies such as T-shirts, koozies, hats, and tickets to an upcoming concert. It also essential that the promotions team does not just give away items but also gives the listener an experience; this is referred to as an "activation." Activations include many games, giveaways, and even a photo booth, so people have a physical memory of the experience with the station. As Jojo mentioned, "it is vital to give a listener a reason to say 'hello.'" A perfect example of an event where all seven stations had the opportunity to give back and be "in the streets" is "Basket Brigade." This is an event where account manager, Joetta Raylots, asks for donations (in a form of a basket) be made to families who are in need during Thanksgiving. The baskets are filled with food and grocery store gift cards so the community can have the Thanksgiving meal they deserve. Last year, with all seven stations broadcasting the event and its' importance there was a turnout of 2,000 baskets. This outstanding number would not have been

accomplished if it weren't for the listeners and people in the Central Florida area.

Director of marketing, Amanda Duitsman, explains "the companionship to listeners and the community is what matters most."

Standard practices and trends in the programming department on the radio is program directors, music directors and on-air talent can get music faster with programs today. Applications such as Adobe Audition and Wide Orbit, allows music to be found, cut and transferred much quicker. Program directors can communicate better; in the past, the only way to communicate with the talent was by hitting a red button, and the red button was always a clear indication that something went wrong. Director of Operations and Programming, Steve, explains that programming relies heavily on research. "We research people's race, age, and gender to understand what people like and don't like. Programming has always been made up of research."

Overall, the 12 interviews that were conducted provided data that could be used to answer all of the research questions posed. In the following chapter, these results are discussed, as well as limitations and suggestions for future research.

## Discussion

The radio industry is in no harm or jeopardy of going out of business any time soon. RQ2 found that radio professionals acknowledge the competition of other media companies, but they also recognize the ability of radio to be innovative and adapt. When technology started advancing, radio stations began to advanced along with it. When social media first came out, it was an option (or plus) for the on-air talents to post on social media. Today, not only is posting on social media mandatory, but there are specific numbers that each station must meet regarding listener activity online. RQ1 discovered that technology enables radio professionals to complete their job in a timely fashion. Rather than having to fly city to city to voice track in different states, today, people are capable of recording from any studio they please. The recent tragedies of COVID-19 also demonstrated that on-air talent can record from the comfort of their own home. Program director Will Calder made it possible for Power 95.3 to be the first station in CMG to successfully broadcast remotely.

Results related to RQ4 illustrates one of the many ways radio can be innovative. Radio is featuring new methods such as creating podcast and using social media to their advantage. Streaming services offer their listeners content to indulge with no interruptions or breaks. The radio knew it would be essential to soon develop the same strategy for users online via podcast. Social media and podcast are yet other avenues that allows radio stations the capability to connect with their listeners. The more ways the radio can connect to the listener, the increase in listener interaction. RQ3 concludes with out listener interaction, the radio station would be nothing. The very existence of radio was created to give back to the listener and offer fun incentives and prizes for them to

participate in. RQ5 also speaks to the very existence of radio, without advertising dollars the radio station would have no support financially. Radio must continue to let listeners and advertisements to be the driving force of the station's success.

The outlooks amongst the radio employees were very optimistic. Many of them (especially the ones who have been in radio for 15+ years) realize that nothing can threaten the state of radio, it can only improve it and force radio to grow. One of the few disagreements the interviewees had was some believing that ratings determine a station's success, and others think ratings have nothing to do with a station's success. Interviewees noted that if ratings are high it will reflect well on advertising dollars. Businesses will want to invest with a radio station if it is proven to reach an audience successfully. Contrary, some interviewees strongly believe that no matter how high or low ratings may be as long as there is listener engagement, the station is instantly successful.

Unlike other industries in the world, radio is one of the few essential businesses that plays a vital role in the community in a time of a pandemic such as COVID-19. As soon as the first few cases of COVID-19 impacted the Central Florida area, CMG Orlando instantly expressed concern and advised employees to stay home. President of CMG, Kim Guthrie, recently addressed employees stating, "as news providers, ratings are strong during this time of a crisis because the audiences are counting on us. Listeners have that companion and a trusted source to rely on." While the only radio employees that can go to the station are the on-air talent (if not broadcasting from home), IT workers and board operations, about 80% of the station is working from home. Currently, the promotions department and sales department are taking a significant loss. Although ratings are strong, advertisers and clients are cutting back on advertisements or excluding them

altogether. As mentioned above, advertising is the blood that runs through the radio station and can have a huge impact on the radio station in its entirety. The promotions department currently has no activations or events to promote, which leads the employees to be out of work. Due to COVID-19, all events are cancelled or postponed.

The displacement theory suggest that two media companies can not coexist and one media will get displaced. The data collected from radio professionals further explains that the strategies implemented in radio are used to not get displace. Implementing the use of social media, podcast, and having access to online audio streams insures that radio will not be displaced. The theory of Niche suggest that the competitors in media and the ability for them to coexist and share scare resources (consumers time). Radio and streaming services are able to coexist because they both have their niche. The radio industries niche is keeping the locality of radio, serving the community, and always prioritizing listener interaction. Radio's ability to be innovative, implement strategies, and engage with listeners illustrate how radio is able to face competition today.

### **Limitations**

COVID-19 caused this study to face a few limitations, while everyone is packing their belongings to work from home or to get the latest updates for listeners the study interviews had to be conducted by any means necessary. Understandably, many interviews did not follow through due to quick change in events of the pandemic. In-person interviews were rescheduled for on the phone or video chat via Microsoft Teams. The study also faced selection bias limitations to just employee's at CMG Orlando as opposed to interviewing people in other markets and radio stations. The study lacked only

getting 12 radio professionals opinions as opposed to the hundreds of people in radio in the Orlando area. To add on, the only point of view the study collected was radio professionals. There was no access to streaming services professionals or their audiences to speak for themselves. CMG Orlando has seven radio formats, there are many more formats and genres that could've reflect different outcomes. While it is difficult to plan for a nation wide pandemic, to avoid time constraint limitations it is essential to plan for the unexpected.

### **Future Research**

Related to this study, people should research the type of people that listen to the radio and listen to streaming services to understand further if the two media outlets have the same audience and if one media outlet is taking away from the other. This current study is focused on radio professionals and their opinion/experience, researching the consumers will further explain how radio and streaming services are coexisting and if one media outlet will outdo the other. It is important to note that radio professionals main purpose is to serve to the audience, grow their audience, and generate advertisements. A number of radio professionals and executives have served their time in radio for 10+ years before they acquire the job titles such as program director, director of sales and general manager.

In the midst of conducting this research COVID-19 unexpectedly and rapidly impacted the nation. Forcing big and small business's to enforce work from home policies, causing others to lose work altogether and file for unemployment. As mentioned in the discussion chapter, the radio station serves as news providers to the community. While listeners are utilizing the radio station for updates and resources in the community,

many advertisers are pulling their advertising dollars or cancelling altogether. Radio relies heavily on advertising dollars, it is how the station is able to exist, fund events, and compensate employee's. According to IBISWorld, the economic recession in 2008 resulted in many companies that purchased commercials to make drastic cuts to their advertising budgets during the downturn. "This crippled the Radio Broadcasting industry, which relies on ad buying for about 90.0% of its revenue" (IBISWorld, 2019). For future research, it will be remarkable to conduct a follow-up study on the impact COVID-19 and how it effects the radio broadcasting industry and advertisers.

## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1. Interview Questions

Rather than just asking interviewee's RQ questions, it was important to collect a variety of answers to find differences, similarities, and common trends found for analysis.

Questions were suited toward a number of departments such as promotions, programming, sales, and advertising . While many interviewee's are experts in their department, interviewee's were asked to answer questions to the best of their ability.

Sample questions are listed below:

1. What are some practices developed over time with radio?
2. What radio ratings trends over time are you aware of, or find interesting/  
relevant?
3. What trends in promotions and programming have you seen as effective in  
radio?
4. Has the success of streaming services effected radio?
  - How does radio compete in the same arena with streaming services?
  - How does radio stay relevant?
  - Did radio develop new practices and trends once streaming services were  
developed?



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