

Radio steps into a power pose

 By [Deirdre King](#)

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As the dust settles after two years of pandemic-infused uncertainty, 2022 is set to offer the radio industry more opportunities for those who are willing to hustle. Here are seven trends in the radio industry to keep a watchful eye on this year.



Deirdre King, MD at Jacaranda FM

1. Credibility as a currency

Breaking, and hyperlocal news is a massive component of commercial radio and news is one of the reasons we saw an increase in consumer radio engagement as the pandemic developed. More listeners choose to be informed by trusted parties with who they already had a relationship with, and it certainly helped that radio is still viewed as a traditional source of credible news and views around the world.

These past two years have highlighted just how important fact-checked and credible news sources are – we are after all living through the most misinformed period in history. So important is credibility in news content today, that Associated Press hired public communicator Julie Pace to “steer the company to a greater leadership role in the news industry”.

Broadcasters who include news in their content strategies will see a growing need for faster, more accurate fact-checking in 2022. Those who get this right will grow audience numbers, engagement, and brand love.

2. Podcast fever

Whilst trending at a much faster rate over the pond, podcasts consumption continues to grow in South Africa. Iono.fm, one of South Africa's largest podcast platforms just rebuilt their entire measurement framework to align with the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) standards for audio measurement.

Adopting the IAB measurement standard has the benefit of being universally recognised, and so now South African podcasts can be measured against the more established podcasts abroad.

Jacaranda FM is one of the Top 10 South African podcast publishers on iono.fm (Q3, 2021) and we see this alignment as an opportunity to compete globally and as an indicator for sector growth based on credible and universal metrics.

The Reuters Institute Digital News Report notes that podcasts are of particular interest to publishers because they attract younger, well educated, and more affluent users. As long as podcasts keep attracting the highly sought after advertiser audience, podcasts are a trend that won't be going away anytime soon.

3. *When?*...is the most important question to ask?

Instant digital escapism, information gathering, meta-meet-ups, or online gaming means consumers dictate **when** they want to engage as it's always-on. Radio will need to keep innovating to provide listeners with immediate options for consumption on their terms.

We created Audio On Demand (AOD) which gives listeners instant playback of magical on-air moments missed, whilst Mzansi Quest a virtual reality treasure hunt through our country gave our listeners a slice of South Africa to escape to during hard lockdown. Business partners are going to look for evidence that you can connect and engage an audience at the moments **when** they want to be engaged, which brings me to my next trend.

4. Metaverse matters

I recently shared a video by #WPP on the [five things you should know about the metaverse](#), if you're unfamiliar, it's a great resource. Basically, we're entering the next digital phase where our real world can be layered with a digital one, and they can both operate exclusively, or as one combined world.

Think of any virtual space where people gather together to buy things, meet up, hang out, attend a concert, or play games as the metaverse.

For radio, this is big news! We're already in our second year of digitising Spar Carols by Candlelight from a real-life event to a completely digital livestream experience. Mzansi Quest offered listeners the opportunity to meet up with family and friends from all over the country and around the world in an exciting digital world to interact with real-life Jacaranda FM DJ's in avatar form, explore virtual provinces in South Africa, and play a game for entertainment. I've shared a case film below if you'd like to see more of Mzansi Quest's entry into the metaverse.

Jacaranda FM (94.2)

3,810 followers

2y

We're happy to forget last year's locked-down days, but we're taking the creative energy that made Mzansi Quest possible in 2021 into 2022! In collaboration with our partners [Tracker Connect \(Pty\) Ltd](#), we re-imagined Mzansi and created a virtual adventure through some of South Africa's most iconic places and space. Watch our case film to see how we brought this audacious idea to life and why it was so important for us to connect with our audience during a most critical time in SA.

[#MetaJaca](#) [#VirtualExploration](#) [#LockdownCampaign](#) [#JacarandaPlay](#)

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The metaverse has huge potential. For example, online game networks like Fortnite and Roblox already make the majority of their income from in-game cosmetics and options to customize your digital characters, and those trends, which have steadily become embedded behaviours among young users, will eventually be major elements of the expanded metaverse shift.

5. Digital Asset Expansion

Introducing your digital identity to new and emerging platforms will be ongoing and increase in frequency. Expect to see people in avatar form more often, and expect those avatars to change as people change how they represent themselves. Radio stations need to develop digital asset expansion strategies that look at how the various digital platforms plug into radio and have those assets ready to represent your brand in these places and spaces.

6. Cross-cultural audio content boom

English was the first language used on the internet, yet its prevalence has shrunk to about 30% according to Holly Young's – [The digital language divide](#). The nuance of language is very important to capture, it's the difference between an American and South African understanding what "I'm waiting at the robot" means.

A key function of radio is to share information and to entertain, doing so in a particular language can help democratize information for those speakers, but also deeply shape their perception of the world. This shift is further fueled by the recent understanding that one of the main reasons many Africans do not go online when they can, is a lack of content in local languages according to the World Economic Forum.

Local radio stations that broadcast in indigenous languages like Jacaranda FM does in Afrikaans, will also see a greater need for video, written, audio, and brand experiences to include these local languages.

7. Conscious consumption

Fuelled by a youngblood ethics check, how and what we consume (including the brands we buy into) will become much more of a conscious choice. Sustainability critics will want to know what you do for the community, the planet, and what your ethical vision is. Backed by science and confident in their choices, younger consumers will also demand that this considered approach extends to radio in the type of news that is covered, our community commitments, mass events and their impact, and how employees are treated.

ABOUT DEIRDRE KING

Deirdre King is Managing Director of Jacaranda FM. King has extensive experience in marketing, communications, business, and content sectors. She has helmed key projects for some of South Africa's biggest brands.

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