



Arbitron/Joint Communications

## **What Women Want: From Radio and Contests**

A 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](http://www.arbitron.com/radio_stations/studies1.htm)

Welcome to the Arbitron/Joint Communications summary of the opinions of diarykeeping American women about “contests” on the radio. This contest-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 the opinions of 18- to 54-year-old female diarykeepers about radio contests.

## **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 contests only.

## **Radio and Contests**

For over 50 years, contests have been part of radio programming. During the heyday of “Boss” radio in the ’60s, contests were sometimes as important as the music. Big contests became so pervasive and so intrusive that the nationwide stunt “The Last Contest” was taken as a positive by millions of listeners who started tuning to FM progressive rock stations.

During the ’70s, there were fewer “hyped” contests and more product-focused prizes—trips to concerts in other cities (or even other countries), dinners for two, ticket giveaways and even “free” concerts for as many as 20,000 people. MTV and VH1 set a new bar for prizes in the ’80s, and many radio stations began trying for bigger prizes and more hype.

As we begin the 21<sup>st</sup> century, contests are entrenched tools in the radio world. Most stations think they can’t survive without them.

Some large chains are taking advantage of their size to do “national” contests that are disguised as local—with the opportunity to win a huge prize.

There’s so much disagreement about whether contests hurt radio or help it that this study asked female diarykeepers aged 18-54 whether contests mattered and then measured the importance of contests in generating radio tuning.

The results may surprise you.

## Top Eight Things to Know About Contests and Women

- 1. Women Like To Win Things.** Almost half (48%) of women 18-54 “strongly agree” with the statement “I like to win things.” The agreement was even higher among 18- to 24-year-old women (59%). And, only 8% of all women 18-54 “strongly disagree” with the statement.

It’s clear that women like to win something. But do they want to win things on radio, especially if they have to participate in contests?

- 2. Contests Are Not Top of Mind.** When women 18-54 were asked what they “love” about radio and asked to give “top of mind” response, the overwhelming majority said “music.” Only 1% said “contests and games.”

When they were asked what they “hate” about radio, the overwhelming response was “too many commercials” and only 2% said “contests and stupid games.”

In other words, contests are almost an afterthought when the average diarykeeper thinks about what she likes and dislikes on the radio. And even though the numbers are small, twice as many women said they dislike contests compared to those who said they like contests.

- 3. They Are More Likely To Say Contests Are Important Than To Play Contests.** There was a sharp difference between what female diarykeepers say and what they do when it comes to contests. When asked how important “contests with a chance to win prizes” are in generating tuning, 20% of all diarykeepers said “very important.” But 29% said “very unimportant.”

Younger CHR listeners (18-24) were most likely to think contests were important. As listeners got older, their interest in contests declined dramatically. Fifty-two percent of all 45- to 49-year-old diarykeepers “strongly disagreed” that it’s important to have “contests with a chance to win prizes.”

Even among CHR listeners (the highest among those who like contests), only 28% “strongly agree” that they’re important. And to put it in perspective, 41% of Mainstream Adult Contemporary listeners “strongly disagree” that contests with prizes are important.

So if you’re chasing a younger audience (under 29) on a CHR format, contests will generate more enthusiasm than negatives.

However, not many listeners to any format actually “listen for a chance to win prizes.”

Only 11% of all 18- to 54-year-old female diarykeepers said they ever listened specifically to the radio for a chance to win something. Nearly 90% never listen specifically to win a contest.

- 4. Very Few Winners.** Among the 11% who have ever listened to try to win something, most (89%) tried to contact the station. But of those who tried to contact the station, *only* 59% got through. And *if* they got through, only 61% of those who got through won something. By the time they have managed to get past all the barriers, only 3% of all female diarykeepers have *ever* won something. Yet, nearly half of all women strongly agree that they like to win things.

And, if they did win, 56% won more than once. In other words, over half could be considered repeat players. Among those who tried to win anything, the majority were trying to win tickets to shows or events (42%) or money (28%), with only 14% looking for a fantasy trip and 6% for a vehicle. Of course, as they told us, hardly any of them ever won.

- 5. What About the Fun of Just Listening?** This question polarized listeners. They were asked to agree or disagree with the statement “radio contests are fun to listen to even if I don’t play.” Almost a quarter (23%) strongly agreed. Almost the same number (22%) strongly disagreed. Clearly the love/hate relationship with contests is highly polarizing.

Although 38% “slightly agreed” and only 16% “slightly disagreed,” this lukewarm “center” suggests that the “play-along” value of contests is questionable.

Younger listeners (18-24) were more likely to “strongly agree” that contests are fun to listen to even if they don’t play (27%). As listeners got older, their interest in the “entertainment” value of contests declined.

- 6. If You Ask Them To Play a Contest, They’re More Likely To.** The study asked 18- to 54-year-old female diarykeepers whether they had ever been contacted and asked to listen to play a contest. Almost one-fifth (18%) said they had been contacted. Most were over the age of 30. Of this group, the overwhelming majority had been contacted by mail (11%), with 4% contacted by phone and 3% contacted by phone and mail.

Half as many women 18-29 were contacted compared to those age 30+. Yet, this is the group most likely to play contests. Radio may be missing something here.

Among the 18% who were contacted, 39% said they listened to the radio station as a result of that contact. So, only 7% of all 18- to 54-year-old diarykeepers listened to the radio for a contest as a result of being contacted.

In many cases, radio stations see ratings increases that are presumably tied to “direct-contact” contest requests. It might be time to consider putting more “benefits” (such as more music or fewer commercials) on an invitation to listen rather than the promise of a prize.

**7. Contests As a Tune-Out.** Diarykeepers 18-54 were asked a series of questions about why they stopped listening to radio or why they turned it off. They were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that “contests and games” got them to turn off the radio.

More women strongly agreed (21%) that they *turned the radio off* because of contests and games than those who strongly disagreed (14%).

Interestingly, women 18-24 were as likely to “strongly” agree that contests and games were a tune-out as all women 18-54. Even though they may be slightly more likely to find contests entertaining or to listen to win for prizes, they are just as likely as other 18- to 54-year-old women to tune out because of contests.

**8. Contests As Time Wasters.** There was a strong correlation between women who tuned out because they had “no time to listen” and “contests and games.” In other words, they saw contests as time wasters. They wanted to listen to music and when a contest came on, they finally tuned out.

## Recommendations

- 1. Keep the clutter down.** If you are doing a contest, keep it focused, brief and entertaining.
- 2. Make sure people win.** Have lots of winners. And let everyone know there are lots of winners. If nearly 50% of women like to win things and only 3% have won something from radio, there's a serious disconnect.
- 3. Consider a "no-contest" position.** Even if you don't say it on the air, reducing contest clutter will increase the amount of music—the #1 attribute 18- to 54-year-old women want from radio.
- 4. If you're using direct appeals, sell your benefit.** If you invite someone to listen, give them clear, compelling reasons. The prize is icing on the cake. It shouldn't be front and center.
- 5. Have lots of small prizes.** Most women who listened to win were looking for smaller, immediate prizes such as show tickets or tickets to events. Most women who really try to win contests appear to be acting on impulse.

Among the small number of women 18-54 who actually listened for a chance to win a contest, less than half (46%) strongly agreed that they generally listen to the radio for "contests with a chance to win prizes." Playing the "impulse" card may make your station more "human" and closer to the listeners.

- 6. Brainstorm "entertainment."** If you are using contests as part of your station's "entertainment," give it a serious rethink. You may be ignoring other ways to entertain—ways that could be bigger tune-ins than contests for a larger number of listeners.

## 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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