



ISSN:1306-3111

e-Journal of New World Sciences Academy  
2012, Volume: 7, Number: 2, Article Number: 4C0138

**NWSA-HUMANITIES**

Received: February 2012

Accepted: April 2012

Series : 4C

ISSN : 1308-7320

© 2010 www.newwsa.com

**Özgül Birsen**

Anadolu University

obirsen@anadolu.edu.tr

Eskisehir-Turkey

**WHY DO YOUTH LISTEN TO THE RADIO? A STUDY OF COMMUNICATION STUDENTS**

**ABSTRACT**

In Turkey, there are broadcasting options of TRT under the governmental supervision and private channels. According to 2008 data, there are 35 national, 99 regional, and 948 local radio stations in Turkey that applied for a license (www.rtuk.org.tr). A majority of the private radios that began broadcasting in the 1990s operate practically as "music boxes." Among these, there are some that have managed to go beyond the general understanding of commercial and popular broadcasting. Youth have more media options today than in the past. This study examines youth's radio use in this digital age. This study assesses the radio listening motivations of young people and the effect of technological development on radio use. The study used a questionnaire among university students and found that radio serves young adults as spare time activity, music box, entertainment, and habit. According to participants, radio must adopt new technology to continue its existence.

**Keywords:** Radio Broadcasting, Youth Media Choices,  
Radio Listening Motivation

**GENÇLER NEDEN RADYO DİNLİYOR? İLETİŞİM ÖĞRENCİLERİ İLE BİR ÇALIŞMA**

**ÖZET**

Türkiye'de radyo yayıncılık ortamını devlet tarafından yürütülen TRT yayınları ve özel kanallar tarafından sürdürülen özel radyolar oluşturmaktadır. 2008 verilerine göre Türkiye'de lisans için başvuran 35 ulusal, 99 bölgesel ve 948 yerel radyo istasyonu vardır (www.rtuk.org.tr). 1990 yılında yayına başlayan özel radyoların çoğunluğu müzik kutusu olarak yayınlarını sürdürmektedir. Bunlar arasında popüler ve ticari yayıncılık anlayışının ötesine geçmeyi başarabilenler de vardır. Gençlik şu an eskiye oranla çok daha fazla medya seçeneğine sahiptir. Bu çalışma gençliğin günümüz dünyasındaki radyo kullanımını incelemektedir. Gençlerin radyo dinleme motivasyonlarını ve teknolojik gelişmelerin gençler üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmektedir. Çalışmada üniversite öğrencilerine anket uygulanmış ve radyonun gençler arasında boş zaman aktivitesi, müzik kutusu, eğlence ve alışkanlık olarak görüldüğü ortaya çıkmıştır. Katılımcılara göre, radyo varlığını sürdürebilmek için teknolojiye uyum sağlamak zorundadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Radyo Yayıncılığı, Gençlerin Medya Kullanımı,  
Radyo Dinleme Motivasyonları

## 1. INTRODUCTION (GİRİŞ)

Marshall McLuhan categorized radio as a "hot" medium, not necessarily for its popularity, but for its high levels of information intensity. Radio gives the audience a chance to use its own imagination. This feature distinguishes radio from other mass media. Radio has persevered despite the broad popularity of television and other technological developments.

Turkish radio broadcasting was under state monopoly until the 1990s, when private stations emerged. The rapid increase of private radio stations and developments in new communication technologies led to different radio broadcasting concepts. Private radio stations prefer domestic or foreign pop music formats. Broadcast content includes more advertisements and focuses more on increasing profits (Cankaya, 1997, p. 133).

Private radio stations also broadcast on the Internet. Commercial logic and the power of technology determine the content. Thus, program contents are emptied, and the programming and journalism concept is replaced with the radio broadcasting concept, with fewer employees and more music than news or discussion. From a radio journalism perspective, the ability of television, radio, and Internet to use the same content results in a decrease in variety in terms of broadcasting concepts (Aydın, 2005, pp. 123-131). In private stations, one person serves as technician, announcer, and reporter (Guibert, 1992, pp. 301-303).

Today, radio broadcasting serves rather regional and local communities by narrowing down the broadcasting area. It now accompanies people to their most personal areas (at home, in the car, and on the road) by addressing their personal requirements at different times during the day. Radio channels addressing the needs of special listener groups are increasing. Young adults, the most active radio listeners, prefer private radio stations (McLuhan, 2007, pp. 349-358).

This study determines radio listening motivations of young adults, who are the quickest to accommodate alterations and adopt technology. Research assesses whether technological developments affect radio listening habits of young adults. A questionnaire was sent to final-year students at Anadolu University Faculty of Communication Sciences.

### 1.1. Radio Broadcasting in Turkey (Türkiye'de Radyo Yayıncılığı)

Radio broadcasting began in the 1920s in Great Britain. Turkey introduced radio almost simultaneously with the rest of the world, unlike other mass communication tools. The first radio broadcast was initiated by Turk Wireless Telephone Cooperation, using 5 kW transmitters in Ankara and Istanbul in 1927. The power and influence of radio on society was quickly realized in Turkey. The young Turkish Republic quickly realized the societal benefits of radio, especially in explaining new fundamentals of democracy. Broadcasting rights were then taken away from private companies, and the government controlled all broadcasts.

Radio broadcasting was maintained by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) until the 1990s. The TRT monopoly on broadcasting was protected by the Constitution. Although legal regulations in Turkey did not allow private radio and television broadcasting, radios and televisions began to broadcast de facto in 1989. Consequently, the monopoly was eliminated by a change introduced in the 133rd article of the Constitution. The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) was established to supervise the legal conformity of the radio and television broadcasts. The Law on the

Establishment of Radio and Television Enterprises and Their Broadcasts 3984 designated rules for private radio stations, television channels, and the TRT. The 29th article of Law 3984 explains eligibility to broadcast. Political parties, associations, unions, occupational groups, cooperatives, foundations, and local administrations cannot set up or partner with private radio and television establishments (Official Newspaper, 20.4.1994). In accordance with Law 3984, nongovernmental organizations cannot undertake radio or television broadcasts.

Broadcasting was controlled previously by Post, Telegraph and Telephone (PTT), later by the Public Directorate, and finally by the Turkish Radio and Television Institution (TRT) which has been criticized regarding its autonomy and freedom. TRT's impartiality and trustworthiness was also questioned because of its dependency on laws passed by the ruling parties. Despite issues with bureaucracy, impartiality, and autonomy, TRT has been an important institution in public broadcasting.

It is feasible to examine radio broadcasting in Turkey during four different periods: the first private broadcasts (1927-1936), PTT administration (1937-1940), prime ministry administration (1940-1964), and post-TRT private broadcasting (Tekinalp, 2011, 96-105). Rapid and fundamental changes occurred in the media after the 1980s. Traditional media structures have been replaced by the new media structure due to neoliberal policies. Public monopolies in the field of radio and television were eliminated through privatization and deregulation and a brand new structure of ownership was formed. Monopolization began in the communication sector, which was gradually being conquered by multinational capitalists. Survival of non-commercial broadcasters became more difficult. Aside from the legal and economic barriers, socio-cultural issues were the most important reason behind the inability of alternative broadcasting to make its presence felt in Turkey.

At the beginning of the 1990s, private radio and television broadcasting occupied the agenda in Turkey. Although pluralism, polyphony, and democratization were expected to continue, over time, international companies seized control of news sources. Seeking profits led to the purchase and combination of businesses. This new process generated by globalization introduced strong international media structuring. Private television broadcasting in Turkey, which began with Star TV in 1990, was followed by private radio broadcasting in 1992. The broadcasts carried out without legal regulation soon created a painful and chaotic communication environment. Legal regulation's following technology is not a phenomenon unique to Turkey; this process is generally experienced globally. However, this situation caused an unprincipled and non-educational broadcasting concept in private television and radio in Turkey.

Today, according to 2010 data, there are 1082 radio channels in Turkey, of which 31 are national, 100 are regional, and 951 are local (<http://www.rtuk.org.tr>). It is feasible to classify these radios according to their functions as follows (Tekinalp, 2011, 113):

- TRT stations
- Private stations established by newspapers and television (music-centered broadcasts for the general public): Show Radio, Radio D, Kral FM, Super FM, TGRT FM, Joy FM, Metro FM, Power FM, Best FM, and Super FM.
- Congregational and religious stations.
- Political stations.
- Profit and advertisement-oriented stations.

### 1.2. Use of Radio by Youth (Gençlerin Radyo Kullanımı)

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute's population census results of 2007, Turkey has a population of 70,586,256, and 70.5% of those people live in cities. Half of Turkey's population is younger than 28.3. The working-age population between 15 and 64 constitutes 66.5% of the population; 26.4% are between 0 and 14; 7.1% are 65 and older (<http://www.tuik.gov.tr>). It is clear that Turkey has a young population. Press preferences and predictions of the youth show that they adapt easily to technology and follow the latest developments. They will also shape mass communication of the future. The youth of today is defined the new generation, or "cyber youth."

Computers, Internet, mobile phones, game consoles, and tablets in other words all these digital technologies which are common, and they have radically changed the habits of daily life (Binark, 2011). Distinctive characteristics of new media, as opposed to traditional forms (newspaper, radio, television, and cinema) include its interactive and multimedia style.

The Internet and other digital technologies are new communication technologies. New technology contains important aspects of old technology. The printing press, photographs, film, and television couple with the camera, tape recorder, video recorder, and player to allow Internet access, radio, MP3 players, and telephone in one device (Nalçaoğlu, 2008).

Two characteristics of the evolution of new media due to information technology and a new audience are hyperlinks and interaction. Hyperlinks enable the audience to be the user, and interaction enables the new user to be an active participant. Interaction is a platform that enables the user to leave its passive role in the media and take a selective and participative role with the facilities offered by the new media. The user of interactive media provides feedback quickly. Feedback is not limited to showing whether something is liked or not; the user can produce content or bring it to the media professional. The user becomes a consumer of media content that he or she helped produce (Birsen, 2011).

Young people make active choices in the media they use according to their personalities, socialization needs, and personal identification needs (Arnett, 1995). The uses and gratifications theory proposed by Blumler and Katz (1974) predicted that young people will select and use the media to best fulfill their individual needs. McClung, Pompper, and Kinnally specified motivations of listening to radio in this way:

- It is exciting.
- It amuses me.
- It entertains me.
- It puts me in a good mood.
- It makes me happy.
- It relaxes me.
- It helps me forget about school and homework.
- I can get away from things I have to do.
- I can get away from family or friends.
- Chat with friends about things I heard.
- I hear songs that my friends tell me about.
- I learn things about myself and others.
- My friends talk about the things they hear.
- It is a habit.
- It helps me pass time when I am bored.

- I have nothing better to do.
- I use it to find out about sports.
- I use it to find out about the weather.
- I use it to find out about the news (McClung, Pompper, & Kinnally, 2007).

Chan and Fang (2007) carried out a study of traditional media and the use of the Internet in Hong Kong. Data revealed that radio is the least preferred device among mass communication tools. Radio is not the primary format for listening. Yet new communication technologies and the Internet increase the popularity of radio (2007).

## **2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE (ÇALIŞMANIN ÖNEMİ)**

In Turkey, there are broadcasting options of TRT under the governmental supervision and private channels. According to 2008 data, there are 35 national, 99 regional, and 948 local radio stations in Turkey that applied for a license ([www.rtuk.org.tr](http://www.rtuk.org.tr)). A majority of the private radios that began broadcasting in the 1990s operate practically as "music boxes." Among these, there are some that have managed to go beyond the general understanding of commercial and popular broadcasting. Youth have more media options today than in the past. This study examines youth's radio use in this digital age. This study assesses the radio listening motivations of young people and the effect of technological development on radio use. The study used a questionnaire among university students and found that radio serves young adults as spare time activity, music box, entertainment, and habit. According to participants, radio must adopt new technology to continue its existence.

## **3. METHOD (YÖNTEM)**

This study uses a qualitative data analysis method: descriptive analysis. Data obtained is interpreted in a sensible and comprehensible way; it establishes cause-effect relationships between the findings (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2000). The qualitative data were digitized as frequency values, and the findings were analyzed using a descriptive method. The study was carried out on final year students of Anadolu University Faculty of Communication Sciences. This group makes up future media employees. The 14 participants study Press, Communication, Advertising and Public Relations, and Cinema-TV. Interviews included semi-structured questions. After data foundry, the study established interview coding keys, coded the interviews, and compared the coding keys using reliability calculations (Miles & Huberman, 1999). The interview used a recorder and was transcribed.

## **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS (BULGULAR VE YORUMLAR)**

To determine the relationship between young adults and radio, 14 students were asked 10 questions. Findings were analyzed by preserving the asking sequence of questions. The first question within the scope of the interview was "What does radio mean to you?" Most participants considered radio an entertainment tool.

Table 1. What does radio mean for you?  
(Tablo 1. Radyo sizin için ne ifade ediyor?)

Radio is a recreation activity for me	1
Radio is continuous music	8
Radio enables me to keep away from people	1
Radio provides news	3
Radio entertains	4
Radio informs	1
Radio relaxes	1
Radio associates	3
Radio socializes	1
Radio motivates	1
Radio makes you dream	1

Radio is defined as a tool of mass media that broadcasts continuous music. Students regard radio as a relaxing, entertaining, escape from daily problems and loneliness. Radio is also defined as an instrument addressing the listener's imagination. "Radio is a music box which does not restrict me and lets me be free," said Sevinç, discussing the most important aspect of radio. Süleyman stated that communicating without a visual address the imagination directly and emphasized that he could focus on the music this way. Essentially, radio is a friendly voice of entertainment that provides music and an escape from problems and as well as accompaniment to daily life.

Students were asked whether they listen to the radio every day; eight students stated that they listen daily. Three listen several times a week. These results show that the radio has an important place in their daily lives.

Table 2. How frequently you listen in radio?  
(Tablo 2. Ne sıklıkta radyo dinliyorsunuz?)

I listen in everyday	8
I listen in every other day	3
Once-twice in a week	2
Always turned on	1

When it was asked "What would change in your life if radio did not exist?" three students answered "nothing." These students emphasized that they can obtain music from other sources and thus do not need radio. Yet Elif stated that radio is a friend and she would feel its absence. Eren stated that he utilizes the radio to escape from daily problems and from people while emphasizing that he would have to communicate with people if radio did not exist. Duygu noted that radio motivates her to study and that she cannot study without radio; therefore, she cannot imagine a world without radio. Many of the students defined a world without radio as lacking, boring, routine, negative, and ordinary.

Table 3. What would change in your life if radio did not exist?  
(Tablo 3. Radyo olmasa hayatınızda neler değişir?)

Would not make any changes	3
My imagination would be limited	4
I would feel lone	1
I would have to communicate with people	1
My motivation would decrease while studying	1
I would turn in on myself	1
Music would be lacking	1
I would get bored	2
I could not keep up to date	1

When students were asked whether there were any radio channels or programs that they listed to regularly, nine students responded "no." This shows that they often use radio as background. Private radio broadcasting in Turkey defines itself via music and does not contain verbal programs that grab the attention of students. Students appear to prefer broadcasts with music content that does not require their attention. Nuri and Eren responded, "I listen to what sounds nice to me" and "I seek music rather than a program," which support this contention.

Table 4. Is there any radio channel or program that you listen in regularly?  
(Tablo 4. Düzenli dinlediğiniz bir radyo istasyonu ya da programı var mı?)

Yes	9
No	5

When asked about local, national, and international radio channel preferences, seven stated that they prefer national channels. Students who prefer local channels for news prefer national radio for music broadcasts. According to Ersel, "I listen in national radio stations for popular music." Güven stated, "I prefer national radio for quality music."

Table 5. What are your local, national and international channel preferences?

(Tablo 5. Yerel, ulusal ve uluslararası radyo istasyonu tercihleriniz nelerdir?)

Local	1
National	7
Makes no difference	3
Both local and national	5

The students listed radio listening motivations rather providing them readily with these motivations identified in literature. The most recurrent radio listening motivation was music. Sevinç, who prefers music rather than talk radio, said, "I listen to radio stations that have fewer advertisements, that are entertaining, and that give me energy." Süleyman emphasized that he listens to the radio mainly for music but prefers radio channels with fewer advertisements and without overly verbal programmers.

Table 6. What are your reasons to listen in radio?  
(Tablo 6. Neden radyo dinliyorsunuz?)

Since it keeps me away from my troubles	3
To spend time	1
Since it is intimate and sincere	2
Since it is a habit	3
Since the music range is wide	2
For music	6
For its announcers	1
Since contains less advertisement	2
Since it gives information	2
Since radio accompanies me	2
It is amusing	1
I socialize	1
It helps me dream	1
I can listen in while dealing with other things	1
Since I share the same vision of world	2

When it was asked, "Where do you listen to the radio?" all stated that they prefer listening to the radio primarily at home. Hours and places for listening radio differed with the developments in the new communication technologies. What began with the Walkman became MP3 players; telephones take the radio from living rooms to cars and make it portable. Portable radios have gained strength over traditional media.

Table 7. Where do you listen the radio?  
(Tablo 7. Radyoyu nerede dinliyorsunuz?)

At home	14
In car	5
Everywhere	2
While walking	4

Students were asked, "Via which device do you listen to the radio?" Young people listen to the radio mostly via the Internet or portable devices. Although 7 of participantssaid they listen to the radio only over the Internet or portable devices, 12 of them said they listen via Internet. Two prefer local radio channels: Nuri and Elif prefer local radio channels because its quality of broadcast is better and creates a more nostalgic atmosphere.

Table 8. Via which device do you listen to the radio?  
(Tablo 8. Radyoyu hangi araçla dinliyorsunuz?)

Via radio	6
Via internet	12
Via mobile phone or MP3 player	8

Students also answered, "Do you follow the radio stations broadcasting on Internet sites?" Students prefer radio stations broadcasting on Internet sites, but they glance at the websites of these radio channels only occasionally. Students look at the websites of radio channels to learn about broadcasters and guests. Among the students, only Sercan and Hakan stated that they participate in the programs by commenting. Radio broadcasters left their mysterious and invisible characteristics aside and became visible due to Internet technology. The audience wants to see the broadcaster's face. Students considering content of radio stations broadcasting on the Internet are not willing to comment or participate in the program.

Table 9. Do you follow the radio stations broadcasting on the internet sites?

(Tablo 9. İnternetten radyo yayını dinliyor musunuz?)

I consider the content	7
I never consider web-sites	4
I comment	2

The last question was, "How would you define the future of radio?" The students' opinions were mostly negative. Duygu, Alper, and Ersel stated that radio broadcasting will completely fade away. Alper emphasized that radio will not improve because television is popular; radio will only be listened to in cars. Duygu noted that in the future, there will be only internet radio, and the content will be weak. Sercan stated that in the future, radio that addresses a specific group will increase its broadcasting to special groups. Sevinç Sevinç answered that because of the portable and practical nature of broadcasting, radio will move toward digital broadcasting, and everyone will broadcast from their houses. Young adults predict that radio in the future will broadcast only in completely specialized fields and to specific groups. They predict that it is most important for radio to use interactivity efficiently.

##### 5. CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENDATIONS (SONUÇLAR VE YORUMLAR)

The research revealed that young adults define radio as an instrument to broadcast uninterrupted music. Participants overwhelmingly noted that radio entertains through music. Only one participant stated that the most important feature of radio is its ability to address the imagination.

Today's radio broadcasting in Turkey has lost the dynamism of early private broadcasting; it is typified by unqualified radio stations with small budgets. The concentration trend created by a change in media ownership structure created a suitable environment for big media holdings. There can be more than one television, radio, newspaper, and magazine under the same holding or company in this new media environment. One of the consequences of the subject ownership structure is the tendency to produce media products with fewer employees. Another result is the usage of the same contents in different channels or via mass media. Frequently, various programs produced for television are broadcasted on the radio.

Radio is a habit of daily life for the participants who stated that they listen to the radio almost every day. But only three participants stated that there would be no deficiency in their lives. These statements show that radio is used as an entertainment instrument rather than to obtain information. Although there is no program or programmer that the participants specifically follow, they mostly prefer listening to national channels. Radio is thus used as background noise without a conscious channel preference. Their preference for national broadcastings rather than local channels in their cities indicates that they do not have any desire to increase their connection to their city or that they have enough channels to obtain information about their city.

Radio has moved beyond traditional listening patterns, which has increased its availability to listeners. Broadcasting on the Internet is thus important. The data obtained from the study verifies this determination. The participants, preferring to listen to the radio at home and via the Internet, browse the Internet pages of the stations they listen to but do not take part actively in these sites by making comments or writing opinions. Participant these statements point another field to focus on and to be studied in future studies. The

interactive nature of the Internet environment provides more than just online broadcasting of radio; it opens up many possibilities. Participants stated that the future permanence of radio requires several conditions. Traditional radio broadcasting will be replaced by specialized, interactive, radio that adapts to new technologies and targets more narrow groups.

#### REFERENCES (KAYNAKLAR)

1. Halil, N., (2008). "Eski" Medyadan "Yeni" Medyaya Geçiş, Gençlerin Kamusal Katılım Alanı Olarak İnternet. inet-tr'08 - XIII. Türkiye'de İnternet Konferansı Bildirileri 22-23 Aralık 2008 Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi. Ankar
2. Arnett, J.J., (1995). Adolescents' uses of media for self-socialization. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 24(5), 519-33
3. Aydın Şakı, O., (2005). '21. Yüzyılda, Türkiye'de Ulusal Radyo Haberciliği Ticari Kaygıları Aşabilecek mi?', İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Yıl: 4 7(1)
4. Binark, M., (2011). "Yeni Medya, Gençlik ve Gündelik Yaşam" Yeni Medya, <http://yenimedya.wordpress.com/calismalar/> (Erişim tarihi, 23, 06, 2011)
5. Birsen. H., (2011). "Internet Journalism and Journalistic Ethics: Working Conditions and Qualifications of Journalists in the New Media" *Journal of US-China Public Administration*. V:8, N:2, p: 230-240
6. Miles, M.A.M., Huberman, (1999). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London: Sage Publicatio
7. Blumler, J.G. and Katz, E., (1974). *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
8. Cankaya, Ö., (1997). *Dünden Bugüne Radyo-Televizyon*. Beta Basım Yayım Dağıtım A.Ş
9. Chan, K. and Fang, W., (2007). Use of the internet and traditional media among young people, *Young Consumers*, 8(4), 244-256
10. Crowley, D. and Heyer, P., (2007). *İletişim Tarihi (Teknoloji-Kültür-Toplum)*, Çev: Berkay Örsöz, Phoenix Yayınevi, Ankara
11. Guibert, E., (1992). *Telekomünikasyon Araçları, Gösteri ve Basın Kavşağında Radyo Meslekleri Medya Dünyası*, Çev: Oya Tatlıpınar, İletişim Yayınları
12. McClung, P. and Kinnally, (2007). The functions of radio for teens: Where radio fits among youth media choices. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 15(2), 103-119.