

# Making talk radio "fashionable"

 By [Mfundo Ntsibande](#)

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It's an exciting time for radio in SA. With so many radio stations with different value propositions, listeners are spoilt for choice.

In the Gauteng province alone a listener is likely to radio-hop between three to five stations a day, depending on their mood, time of the day, a preference to a radio presenter or news, and current affairs information.

Radio market segmentation or positioning has evolved a lot in the last 10 years. The listener has a choice - and if they feel a station does not resonate with them, they simply switch to the next one.

## Resonating with lifestyle and culture

The timing couldn't be more perfect for Power FM to enter the radio scene as listeners are yearning for a media platform that resonates with their lifestyles and cultures.

Kaya FM also has a powerful brand proposition to the market as it is targeting the "grown and matured" black listener - which is great because it's talking to the listener who grew up listening to YFM or Metro FM, but who has outgrown the urban hit music format.

A few years ago Radio 2000 and SA FM repositioned their formats and were also targeting the same mature listeners, although sport was still dominating on Radio 2000 (bearing in mind that they are both national stations). SA FM was SABC's answer to 702, a regional station.

702 has always been seen as a white radio station, even though it currently boasts a significant black listenership. It's regarded as the "father" of talk radio and its brand positioning has also been strengthened by the fact that it's not a state owned media platform.

## What does it all mean?

What does this all mean for marketers and advertisers? It's an opportunity for radio brands to strengthen their brand propositions. The objective is retaining listenership and advertising revenue.

Most brands adopt a "wait and see approach" when it comes to competition or a new entrant into the market. The danger with this approach is that six months or a year down the line the marketing strategy is reacting to the effect of the

competitors. Loss of listenership normally equals loss of revenue.

Listeners will gravitate towards the radio brand that speaks to them with fresh, exciting content and rewards based marketing and promotions.

Radio 702 has done well by owning an event property, "Discovery 702 Walk", that has nothing to do with talk but everything to do with lifestyle. The event attracts more than 50,000 people - some who don't even listen to the station. Advertisers are looking for brand associations that are not so obvious but will give their brands a platform to engage with the listeners.

Taking into consideration that Power FM will also offer music (30%) in their format, music radio stations also face the possibility of losing listenership. YFM also created a new youthful culture when it entered the scene, a new music culture and events were born.

When good programming and marketing meet, magic happens and a revolution is created.

## A unique opportunity

A unique opportunity exists for radio marketers - particularly for the stations that will be affected by Power FM's entry into the market - to rethink their marketing strategies.

Here are a few key strategies to reaffirm brand positioning in a competitive market:

- strengthen brand visibility
- become more accessible and relevant
- create a unique environment for advertisers and brand associations
- bold and assertive positioning
- use social media as part of your marketing strategy

Event-based marketing might not be the only tool to fight competition. With social media being the cousin of radio, innovation on how to use it will also be key.

A radio station presenter lineup is similar to a soccer team lineup, and judging from Power FM's press release it is the "Real Madrid" of radio, which means it wants to win awards and have a strong brand presence in the market.

Programming drives a station and marketing reinforces the brand positioning within target markets. If your listeners feel the content is not relevant, and if there is a lack of brand awareness and visibility, then you might find your radio brand "unfashionable".

## ABOUT MFUNDO NTSIBANDE

Mfundo Ntsibande is marketing professional with over 16 years career of building brands, with a maverick approach to brand thinking. A thought-leader with a background in media and broadcasting (TV, Radio, Print), Advertising and entrepreneurship. A winner of Promaxbda Gold Award.

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