



Audio Landscape 2025

Bauer Media



Audio Landscape 2025

40 years of commercial radio! Special Edition

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40 years of commercial radio An industry for magnificent village idiots

Finnish literature loves villages. We have Pentinkulma, Jukola and Putkinotko. The dean's wife as well as the stern parish clerk stroll along the main street of the village. Not forgetting the gamekeepers, tailors and millers.

If the Finnish media field was such a village, commercial radio would be the village idiot – a necessary and essential character.

Village idiot is a purely positive expression. They have always played a very important role in their own communities.



Kaupallinen radio 40 vuotta



Thank you, village idiots

These individuals are perceived as odd, but they have many good qualities. Their actions are characterised by testing and crossing boundaries. And that's exactly how village idiots build a sense of belonging. Members of the community laugh at their own village idiots, but immediately rush to their defence if outsiders make the mistake of mocking them.

With their quirky actions, village idiots have always challenged taboos and social norms – they call into question what is considered normal. Often, defining normality is about exercising power: an individual group wants to decide what is normal and what isn't. As the majority is prone to hushing things up and avoiding conflicts, we have needed village idiots to question things. Breaking social boundaries and bringing out annoying truths brings oxygen to society. This is where village idiots are superior.

Village idiots have also often been very creative. Their ability to be freer souls than ordinary citizens gives rise to fresh and significant ways of thinking. Part of being a village idiot also includes the ability to tell stories. Traditional knowledge has been preserved and passed on in the form of colourful stories with the help of village idiots.

Above all, village idiots have offered endless entertainment – joy, merriment and reasons to be shocked.

The virtues of village idiots are particularly well-suited to commercial radio. Numerous radio programmes and the masters of verbal art that work in this industry create a strong sense of community: *this is not for everyone, and that's why it's our thing*.

Commercial radio stations are more eager than other types of media to challenge norms. The industry is ready to experiment with AI news anchors, new people and genre radios, long podcasts, short videos, festivals, audio branding, social media campaigns and new types of advertising products.

During this period of partial optimisation and cost-savings, it's really liberating that there are people in the media industry who are not afraid. Not afraid of experimenting, not afraid of confrontations, not afraid of telling stories – nor creating them.

- Jani Halme

Creative Director, ToinenPHD

Jani Halme is a charismatic media personality known for his diverse projects and innovative initiatives. He has won several media awards. As a creative director, he combines strategic thinking and creativity in an excellent way. As a storyteller, he's in a class of his own.



40 years of commercial radio

What does audio advertising sound like?

In 2025, audio advertising is a diverse and dynamic field that offers plenty of opportunities for interaction between brands and consumers. We have numerous options to take advantage of new opportunities and help advertisers achieve their marketing goals efficiently in an increasingly competitive market environment.

Audio advertising has become an important part of marketing strategies, reaching broad audiences and creating strong emotional bonds. It is a powerful tool for brand building and messaging.

Although audio advertising is cost-effective and has the best ROMI of offline media, the level of investment in it is low.

Finnish media has lost more than 250 million euros of investments in ten years, and 37 per cent of Finnish media investments go to international digital operators. Audio advertising needs to be measurable and its effectiveness needs to be proven in order to increase its share of media investments.



Kaupallinen radio 40 vuotta



Audio advertising according to a media agency

The traditional approach and its challenges

The traditional media agency approach focuses on cost-efficiency, affordable contact price and broad coverage. Audio is perceived as a mass media, whose strength lies in free contacts outside the target group. However, focusing solely on these benefits will not fully exploit the potential of audio advertising.

Changing ideas and brand building

Fortunately, this view is changing. Audio is increasingly seen as a brand builder. Audio is used for longer-term exposure and companies want to utilise the diverse possibilities of audio even more. Audio is now seen as one of the strongest and most powerful brand elements.

Audio conveys emotions strongly and therefore plays a particularly important role in brand advertising, which is also intended to arouse emotions.

Voice branding increases brand memorability and strengthens its position in the market. Music and soundscapes create strong images and emotions that remain in the listener's mind for a long time. Audio has a subliminal effect and gets through messages that the consumer is not interested in to begin with. Repeated exposure to the advertisement strengthens the memorability and effectiveness of the message.



Audio advertising according to a media agency

Fragmented media use and the role of audio advertising

Fragmented media use requires maximising consumer encounters, and audio plays a significant role in different situations and channels. Audio advertising gets more attention than TV or social media. Audio advertising helps to differentiate from the competition and create a unified brand identity.

The diversity and challenges of audio advertising

Audio is not just FM radio, it covers a wide range of channels and formats. The fragmented audio field presents challenges for us at the office as well as advertisers. Audio covers a wide range of different channels, formats and targetability. Digital audio, outdoor audio (audio in various retail spaces, such as retail media, retail chains and gyms) and podcasts offer many new opportunities. Effective use of media investments requires creative approaches, and the diverse possibilities of audio challenge us to try and learn new solutions.

Change in design and listening for the future

From the perspective of design, we have been guided to Total thinking in terms of cost efficiency and coverage: all channels in one package and everything for everyone. There is a visible shift from Total thinking to channel and target group specific customised packages and more long-term use of audio.

Audio advertising offers many advantages, such as cost efficiency, broad coverage, reproduction power and brand building. While facing challenges in the fragmented media landscape, its future sounds promising with new technologies and digital channels.

-Arja Suominen
Investment Director, Dagmar

Arja is a media veteran who leads a TV and radio team and works as a strategist for several different customer accounts. Annual contract negotiations and customer responsibilities are part of her everyday life. She monitors the constant change in the media field, identifies emerging trends and draws solutions from them that fit the needs of her clients.

40 years of commercial radio Towards the voice

Audio advertising is still the most difficult type of advertising. The images need to be painted into people's minds using nothing but sound. That's why it's worth leaving it to those who know how to do it. Those who have mastered the art of crystallisation and storytelling. The kind of people there seems to be too few of at the moment.

***Voice advertising has largely become idle rubbish
that is simply used to fill empty space.***

It's a bit like schoolchildren writing with letters as big as possible to fill out a page with minimum effort. Regardless of the fact that the possibilities of audio are endless.

Unlike with moving images, for example, where the budget largely determines what the image can display, audio can be used to build amazing inner worlds that everyone can hear and see in their own way.





Towards the voice

You realise the enormous significance of sound when you start to think about everything that it is connected to. Babies get to know their mother already in the womb through voice. When I was a teenager, even boyfriends were chosen based on their voices. When a random boy's trembling voice answered on the other end of the phone line, we had to decide based on his voice whether we'd meet him at the local station in the evening or whether we would wait to be connected with someone who sounded a bit more confident. The concerts of your favourite bands, from Sir Elwood to Pearl Jam.

Those voices that still make us shiver to this day.

Or how annoying the wrong kind of sound can be. The moments when I was just about to tape my favourite song off the radio on a cassette, but the host suddenly began blabbering during the best moment of the song. The matriculation examinations where I stabbed with a pencil an out-of-tune whistler sitting in front of me. Or my violin practice that no one wanted to hear. Perhaps that's why my father strongly recommended I switch to playing football, and instead of tormenting the violin I began taking the piss out of referees. That sounded very annoying too, I'm sure. Not to mention the sounds inside your head.

The significance of sound is also highlighted in brain researcher **Minna Huotilainen's** study, in which people were shown images of faces with varying emotions, such as sadness, joy, hope and disappointment. The material was shown in the study both with and without sound.

The end result was that we can recognise a feeling even without a sound, but when there is a sound, these feelings get under our skin and mix with our own emotions.

I believe that everyone understands the importance of sound from a marketing communications perspective. What would a silent podcast be like, or an emotive motion without music? Additionally, every one of us can surely describe what Netflix, the McDonald's jingle or opening an Apple computer sound like. Partly this is because these companies have remained loyal to the same audio for years, but audio is also an integral and essential part of the brand of these companies.

*- Pia Dahlman
Managing Director, Folk Finland*

Pia is a recovering perfectionist who thinks managing a creative agency is the best fucking job in the world. A curious and competitive former professional footballer who has completed the highest possible degree in team work through the experience gained over the years spent in locker rooms. _

40 years of commercial radio

When the radio went online – Kiss FM's digital vision in 1995

Kiss FM was born when commercial radio was only just developing in Finland. Kiss FM stood out with a youthful and energetic approach, international sound and bold campaigns. The channel's concept was based on contemporary hit songs, edgy hosts and interaction with listeners.

But Kiss FM wasn't just a radio station – it was an entire media brand that wanted to take advantage of modern technologies before anyone else. Kiss FM had one of the first online services aimed at young people, the first online chat service in Europe, and its own virtual Kissnet online service with free email addresses for its listeners.

Kiss FM, launched in 1995, was not only a new radio station, but also an open-minded technological experiment that helped predict the media environment of the future. Now that digitality is already a matter of course, it's worth remembering that it all started with small but bold steps like the launch of Kiss FM and kiss.fi almost three decades ago.

I was honoured to design, conceptualise and even code the first kiss.fi websites. I'm not a coder, but there weren't many others available at the time!





When the radio went online

The year 1995 was a revolutionary one in Finland: in addition to joining the European Union, our country experienced the first steps of digital transformation. The internet was still a new technology that few people were familiar with, but visionary companies realised its potential. One of the most significant launches that year was also the new format radio, Kiss FM, a radio channel that had no CDs in the studio, but played music from a computer. A radio channel that revolutionised the Finnish radio industry and launched an innovative online service, kiss.fi.

Kiss.fi – a pioneer in the online world

Although the internet was only used by a few people in 1995, Kiss FM saw its potential to support commercial success. Kiss.fi was something completely new in the Finnish media field: it was not just a static information page, but an interactive platform where users could chat, vote for songs and participate in competitions for commercial brand marketers.

Kiss.fi created an early digital community where listeners could feel part of the world of Kiss FM. This was a significant step towards the digital communication culture that is now commonplace.



When the radio went online

Hotelli Chat – Finland's first chat channel

One of the biggest innovations of kiss.fi was Hotelli Chat, which was the first chat channel in Finland and, according to our information, all of Europe. This unique service enabled users to chat in real time with other internet users at a time when social media was still an unknown concept. In Hotelli Chat, users created their characters and could move to different rooms to chat with others. It was an early example of a virtual community and a model for later chat services and social media platforms.

Hotelli Chat quickly became popular and brought young people from all over Finland together in a way that had never been seen before. The service showed how the Internet could connect people regardless of time and place. The inspiration for the chat came from... hmmm... On the other hand, I'm not going to tell that story here, but you are free to come and ask if you want to know the secret.

A pioneer who paved the way for the future

Kiss FM and kiss.fi represented a period of transformation in which traditional media began to merge with the digital world.

Although the number of internet users was still small, Kiss FM's investment in online community and interactivity turned out to be far-sighted. It laid the foundation for future developments, such as the rise of social media and the interactive consumption of digital content.

Launched in 1995, Kiss FM was not only a new radio station, but also an open-minded technological experiment that helped predict the future media environment.

Now that digitality is already a matter of course, it's worth remembering that it all started with small but bold steps, like the launch of Kiss FM and kiss.fi almost three decades ago. I am proud to have been part of the launch of kiss.fi, and even to be the mother of the idea. I would like to thank my supervisors at the time, **Markku Ahto** and **Leena Puntila**, for trusting a young woman's vision and letting me create kiss.fi. On the condition that I could also commercialise it – and that was the easiest part!

*- Ulla Koivula,
Marketing and Sales Director and one of the founding members of Moi Mobiili*

Moi uses radio efficiently in its marketing, and radio is one of the media that produces the most ROMI for Moi.



Year 2025
Bauer Media



Foreword

Janne Turunen
Sales Director



**"You see your newborn baby for the first time. The baby is soft, healthy and lively
– the greatest miracle of your life. You feel love for the little one."**

More than fifty parents heard stories like this in Aalto University's study, which measured brain activity related to six different types of love. The study found that feelings of love were born in the brain through auditory stories and not with visual images, for example. The stories told out loud gave everyone space to imagine the situation in their minds, making the effects of the feeling of love more personal and stronger. This is the unique power of sound.

Sound is everywhere, which means that audio advertising is more diverse than ever in our everyday lives. In addition to FM radio, audio advertising also includes podcasts, IP radio, streaming services and mobile games. In addition, Retail Audio brings audio advertising to retail premises, such as shopping centres, gyms and shops. It is worth making extensive use of the strengths of audio! When image and professionally designed sound come together, the message isn't just visible, it's tangible.

Your brand's advertising shouldn't sound like someone absent-mindedly brushing their teeth. Ever.

After listening to the audio market, we wanted to compile the most interesting observations for the marketers in Audio Landscape 2025. To celebrate the 40th anniversary of commercial radio, we are also publishing a Special Edition section, in which commercial radio is evaluated from the perspective of both the advertisers and representatives of the media and advertising agencies.

Enjoy it as a whole, or piece by piece!



A new era of audio advertising

The significance of audio in the media field has increased and diversified over the past decade. Traditionally, radio has been one of the strongest forms of mass communication, and even though there have been major changes in media consumption, audio has retained its strong position. FM radio reaches the widest audience, and digital audio has also grown significantly.

Over the last decade, media consumption has changed dramatically. The significance of print media has decreased, TV advertising has adapted to the rise of streaming services, and digital platforms have increased their share of the advertising market. Radio has played a special role in this transformation: FM radio has a stable position and audio has expanded to new platforms.

In 2024, audio reached more than 90 per cent of Finns every week. Of all audio media, FM radio has the most coverage, and digital audio brings significant additional coverage especially among younger listeners. Music streaming is the second most popular audio form, and podcasts and internet radio have established themselves as part of people's listening habits. Approximately 22 per cent of the Finnish media day is spent on audio. Listening has become more diverse and adapted to different life situations and needs.

Maria Lehto
Data & Insight Strategist



Audio advertising has undergone similar developments as listening to audio: it has become more diverse and its impact has increased.

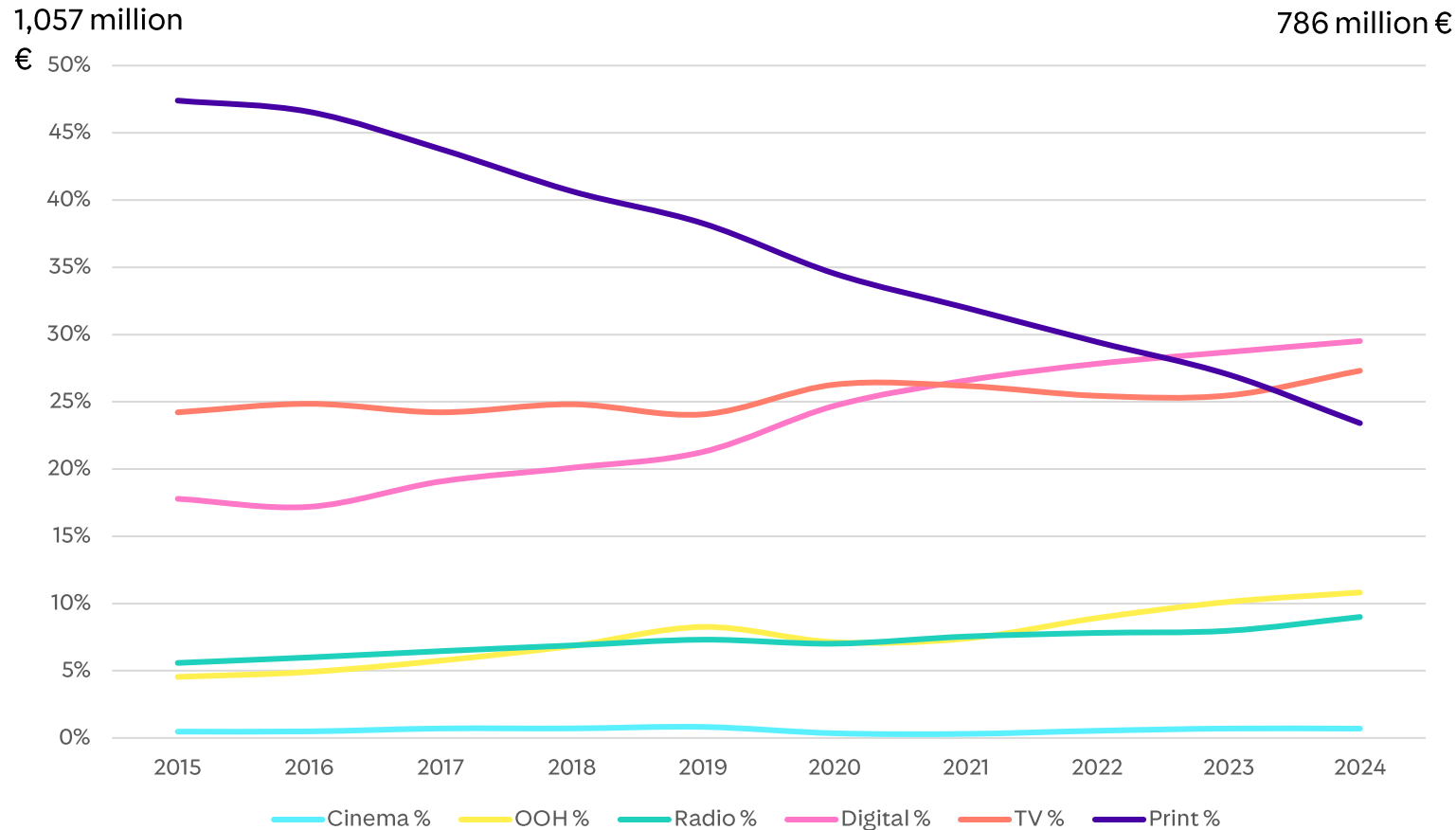
In the 2020s, audio advertising has become one of the most effective forms of advertising. It has the second highest attention value after TV and its long-term impact is stronger compared to other media.

Audio advertising is also more strategic than before – the improved quality of advertising and stronger use of branding have increased its effectiveness. Although the total investments in Finnish media advertising have decreased over the years, the share of audio advertising has increased from six per cent to nine per cent.

The audio market has not only remained strong, it has also become more diverse than ever. FM radio, digital audio and new audio services complement each other, offering listeners flexible ways to consume content. In the future, audio content and audio advertising will be increasingly integrated as part of a multi-channel media environment in which different audio formats support each other.



Advertising investments in Finnish media have decreased – radio's share of investments is growing steadily

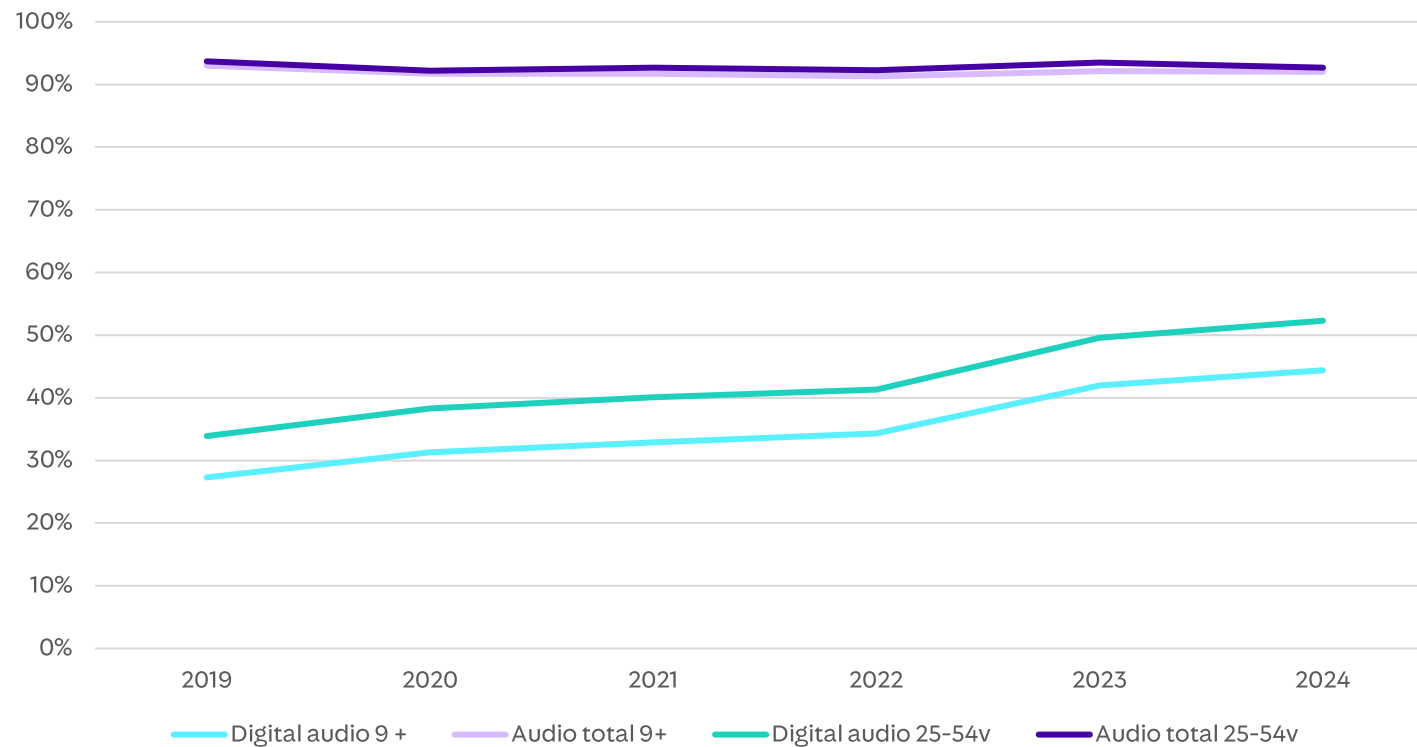


- ▶ Investments in Finnish media have decreased in 10 years from 1,057 million euros to 786 million euros (-271 million euros)
- ▶ Investments have shifted from domestic media to foreign giants: in 2024, one third of all advertising investments, 483 million euros, went to social media and keyword advertising
- ▶ The share of print advertising has fallen sharply from 47% to 20%
- ▶ Similarly, the share of investments in other media has increased. Finnish online media has grown the most as advertising investments move from print to digital media
- ▶ The share of radio has increased steadily from 6 per cent to 9 per cent

Source: Kantar Ad Intelligence 2024 (online media covers investments in Finnish online media, the graph does not include investments in social media and search engine advertising)

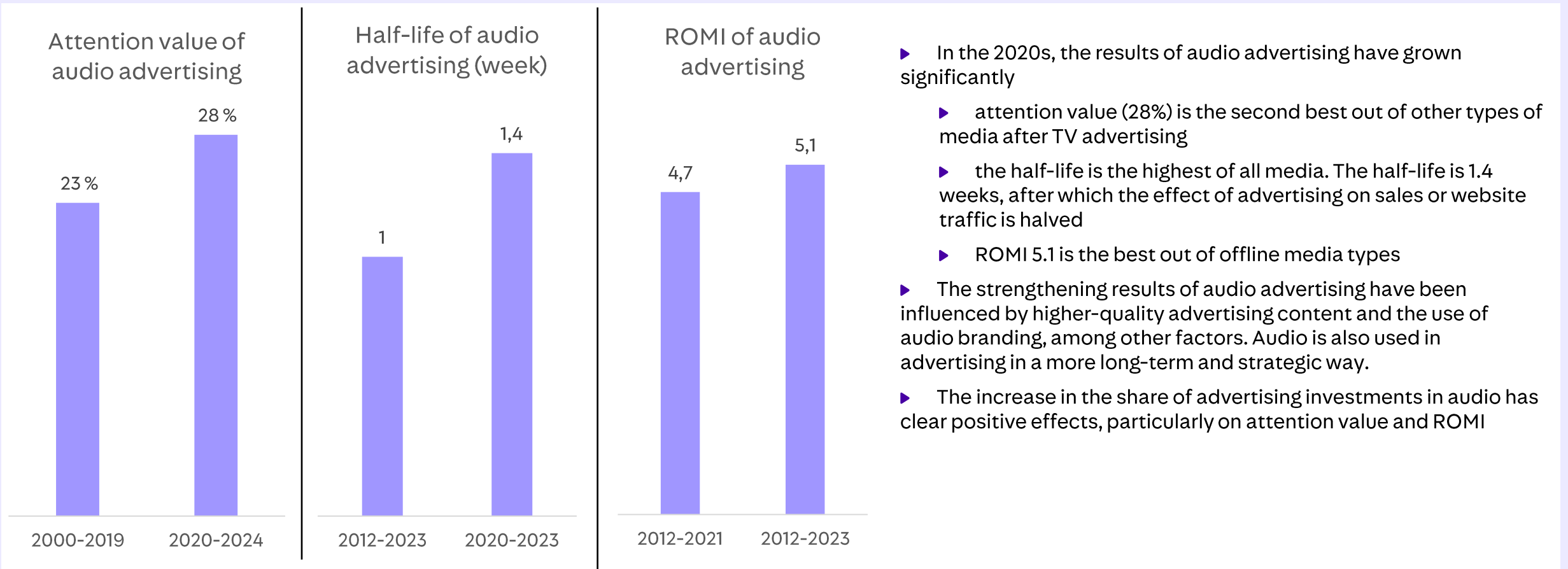


Audio reaches more than 90 per cent of Finns



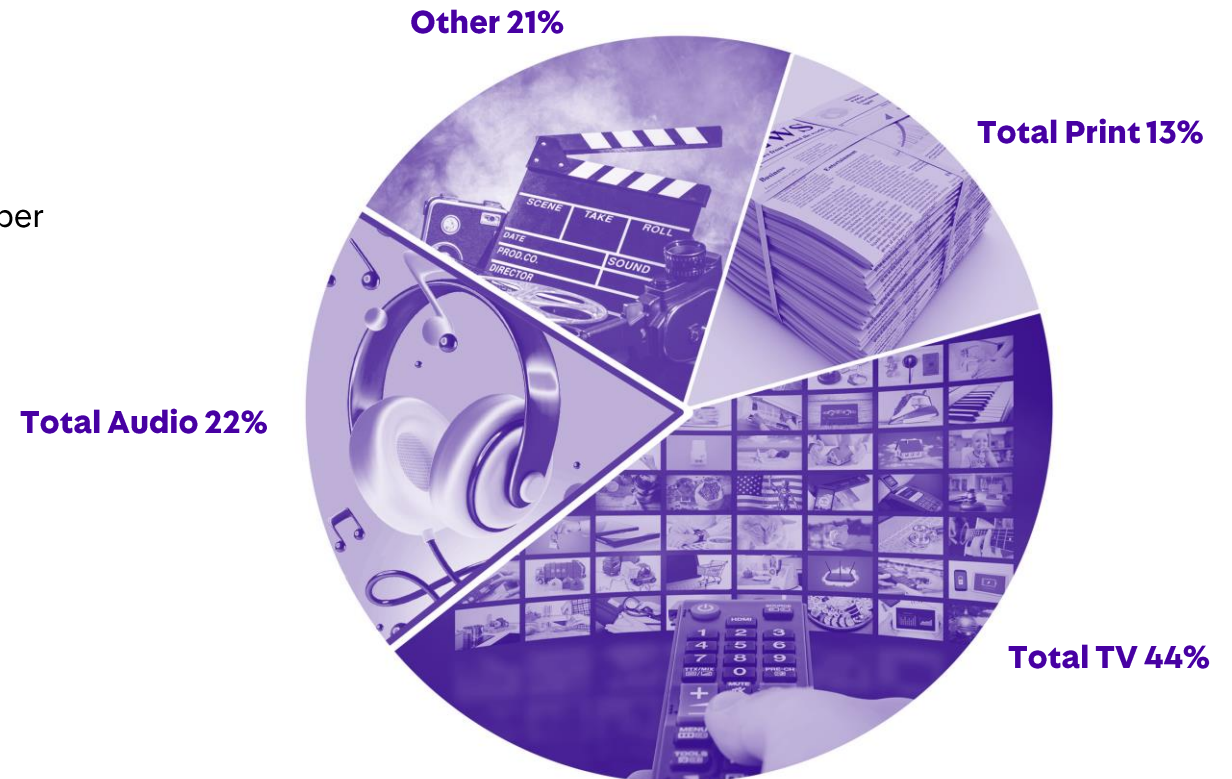
- ▶ Audio reaches almost the entire population
- ▶ The coverage of digital audio is growing rapidly both among the entire population and especially among 25–54-year-olds
- ▶ The significance of digital audio increases every year. It complements FM radio coverage especially among the younger target group

The results of audio advertising have strengthened in recent years

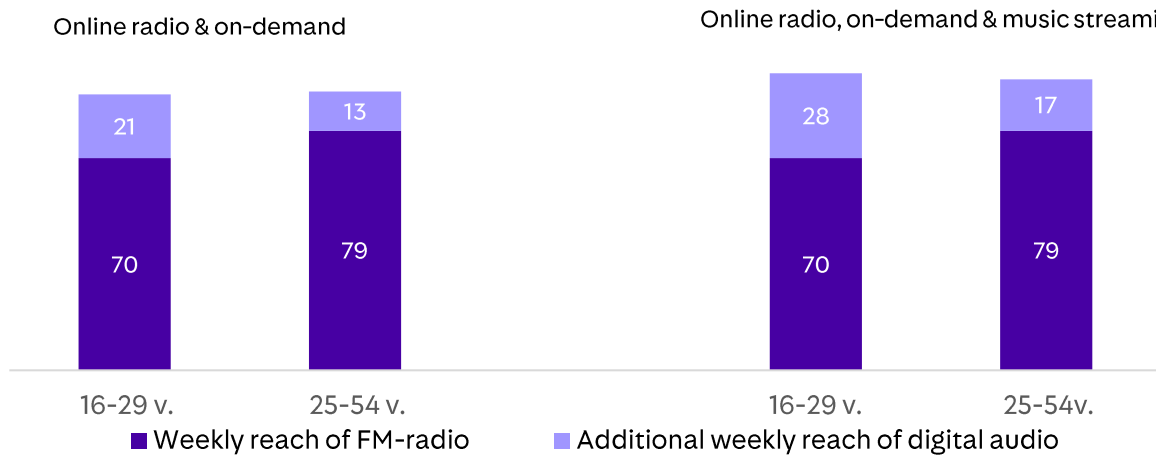


More than one fifth of the media day was spent on audio

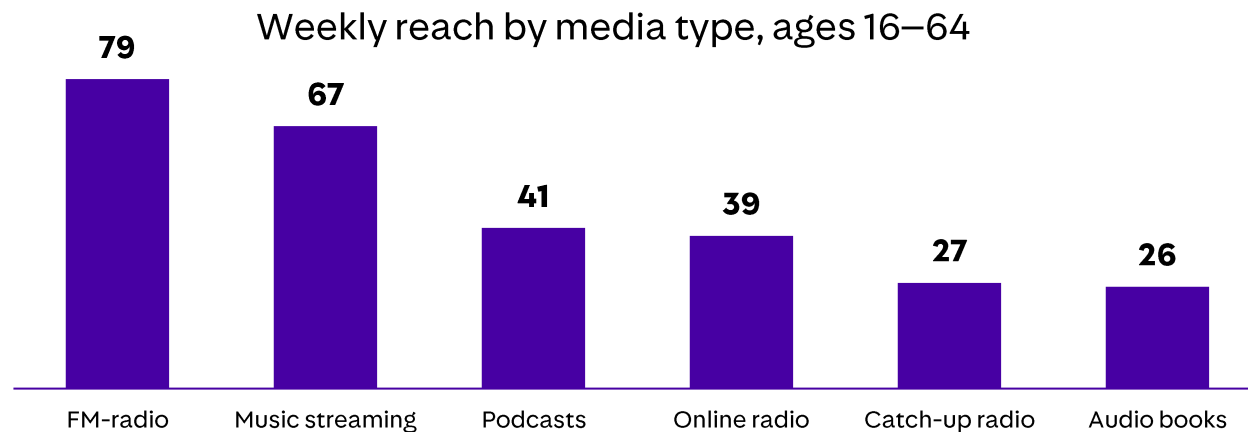
- ▶ In 2023, Finns spent almost 9 hours on media on an average day
- ▶ More than one fifth of the media day was spent on audio media
- ▶ The most time was spent listening to radio on audio services during broadcasting hours
 - ▶ According to Mind data, digital audio services accounted for 41 per cent of Total Audio consumption
 - ▶ Digital audio media include online radio, audio and podcast services and music streaming services



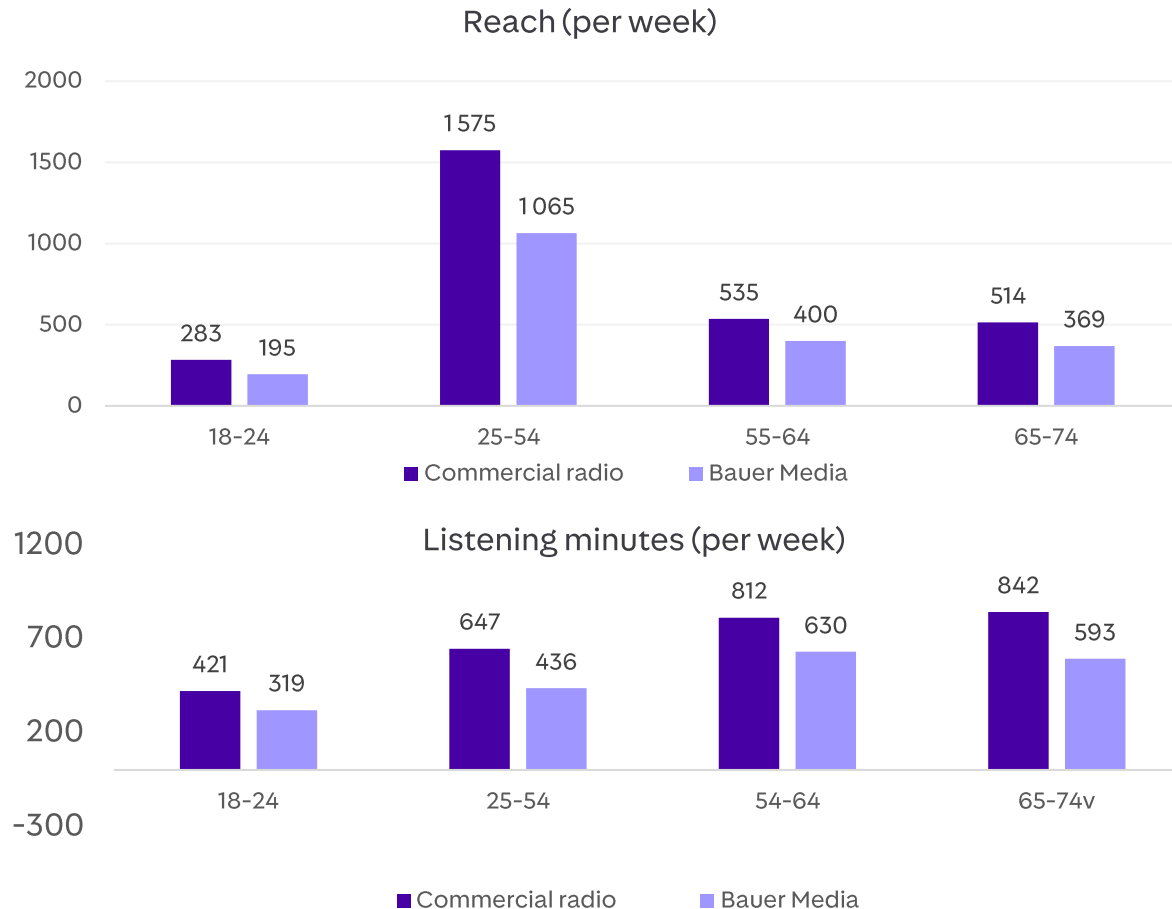
Listening to digital audio increases the coverage of FM radio



- ▶ The Näin suomalainen kuuntelee 2024 survey conducted by IAB and Nepa also investigated the consumption of digital audio
- ▶ Audio reaches people through multiple channels and adapts to different listening habits and needs
- ▶ FM radio has the largest coverage out of all audio media, while music streaming has the second largest coverage. The coverage of podcasts and web radio stations is stable
- ▶ The additional coverage of internet radio, on-demand content (podcasts and catch-up radio) and music is already significant for FM radio, especially among the younger target group



Commercial radio has high coverage in all age groups



- ▶ Commercial radio has excellent reach among Finns

Reach of commercial radio (per week)

- ▶ 67% of Finnish people (9+)
- ▶ 75% of 25–54-year-olds

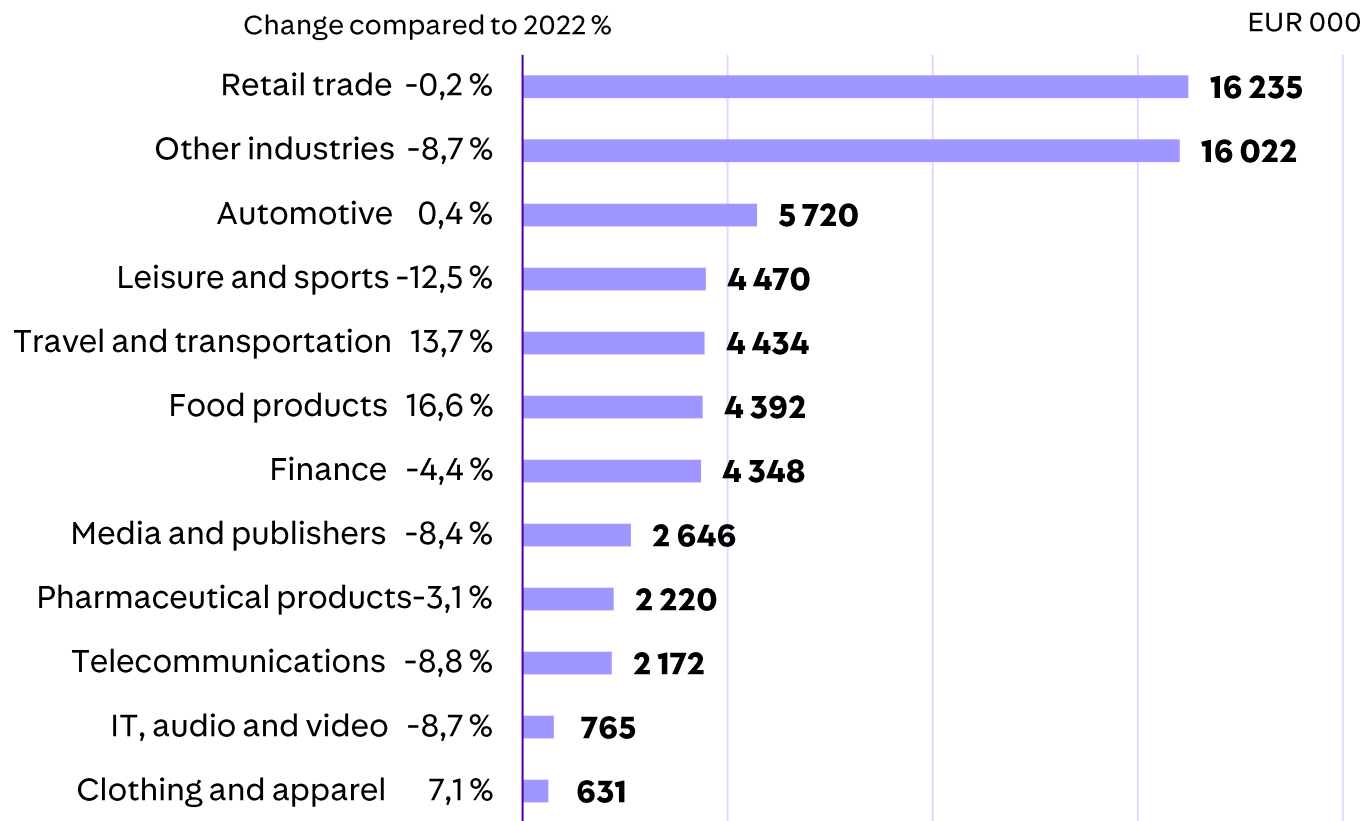
- ▶ People spend a long time listening to commercial radio. The long listening times enhance the reach and impact of advertising.

Time spent listening to commercial radio (per week)

- ▶ All Finnish people 11 h 39 min (9+)
- ▶ 25–54-year-olds 10 h 47 min

The Finnish media market declined 3 per cent from the previous year – the decline in audio advertising was smaller (2 per cent)

Investment in radio advertising by industry in 2024



The year was challenging for advertising and the market declined for the second year in a row, which also affected investments in audio advertising.

- ▶ The investment in Total Radio was 69 million euros in 2024
- ▶ The share of FM radio advertising was 64.8 million euros and the share of digital advertising was 4.3 million euros
- ▶ The percentage of radio advertising in Finnish media advertising was 9 per cent
- ▶ In media marketing including search engine and social media advertising, the percentage of radio advertising was 5 per cent

*Total Radio includes FM radio advertising and digital advertising sold by radios.

Industries that invested in audio advertising significantly more than the average

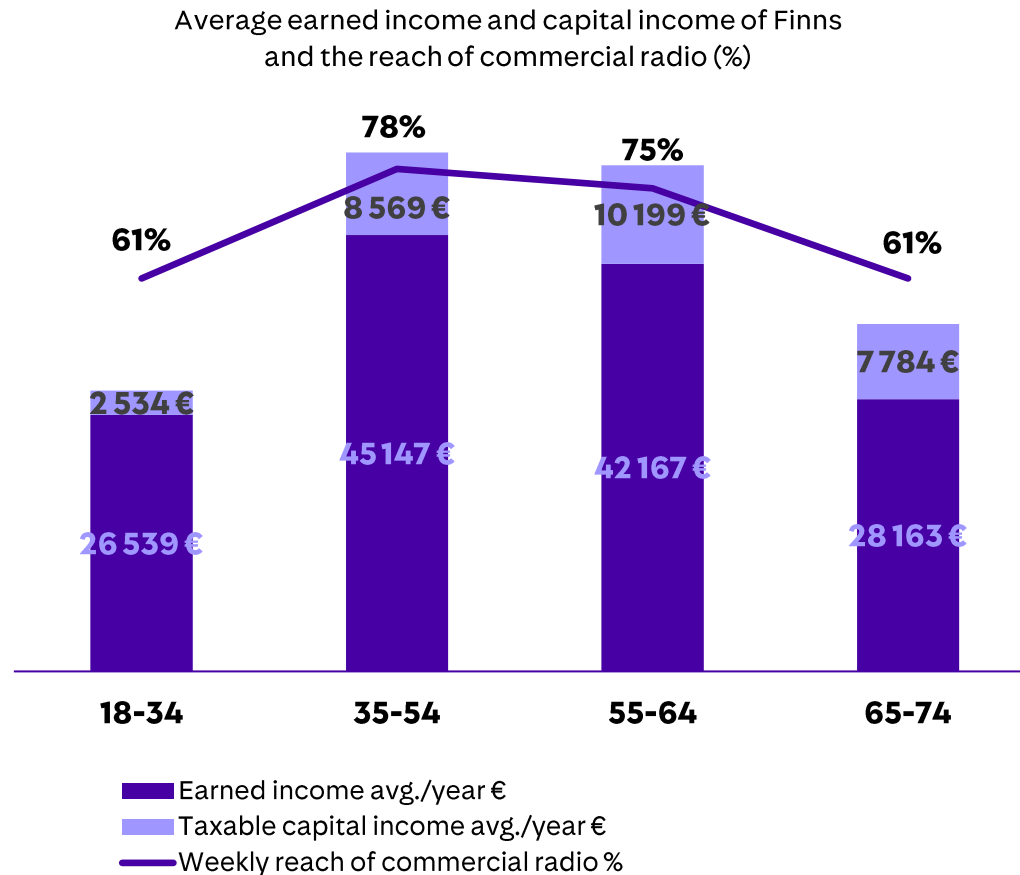
In 2024, five industries invested in audio advertising significantly more than the average. Industries and share of audio advertising in media advertising:

15%	Travel and traffic
12%	Leisure and sports
11%	Financial sector
11%	IT, audio and video
10%	Media and publishers

Source: Kantar Ad Intelligence 2024

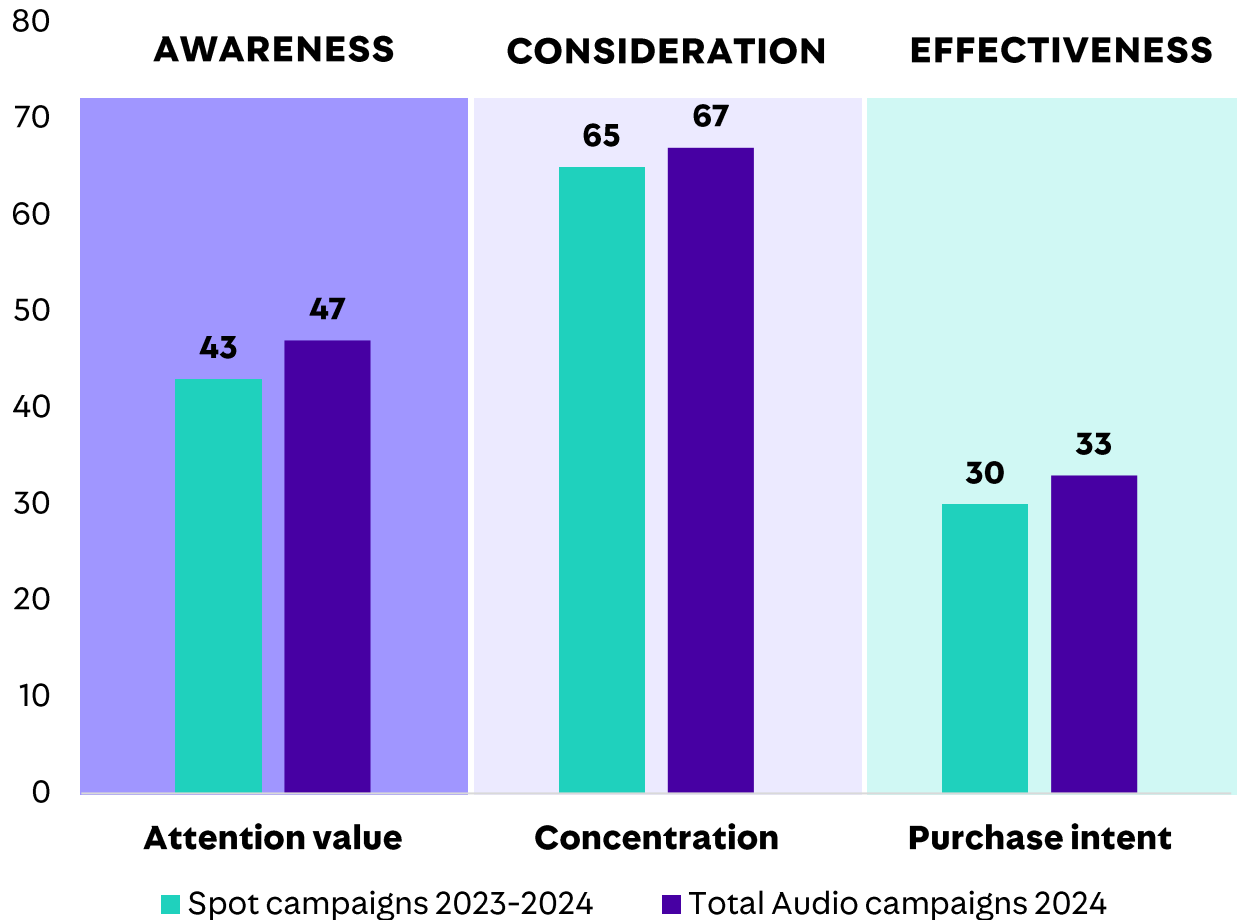


Massive audio reach among the age group with the most consumption power



- ▶ According to the Tax Administration's earned income and capital income report for 2023, the age groups with the most consumption power are 35–54-year-olds and 55–64-year-olds
- ▶ Commercial radio has excellent coverage among these groups with the most consumption power
- ▶ Although the incomes of people aged 65–74 are smaller, they have significant wealth, on average €290,000 per household (Statistics Finland 2019)

Advertising with Bauer Media's Total Audio significantly increases the number of people who notice advertising



The diversification of listening also develops the possibilities of audio advertising. The median results of Bauer Media's Total Audio campaigns are better in post-measurement studies than the median results of other spot campaigns:

► **Attention value: +8 per cent**

- Total Audio's diverse interfaces increase advertising coverage and attention value

► **Concentration: +3 per cent**

- Audio advertising catches the listener's attention, and digital audio in particular enables focused and undisturbed listening

► **Purchase intent: +10 per cent**

- Audio advertising is effective due to its high attention value and consideration. The strength of the retail audio network is that people hear the message close to the point of purchase

Total Audio combines Bauer Media's FM radio, AudioXi and audio retail media networks. In addition to increasing coverage, Total Audio offers 750,000 more people on average who notice the advertising compared to spot campaigns.



Digital audio attached to media strategy

Laura Björkskog
Head of Digital Ad Operations



In 2025, digital audio advertising will make strong use of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and programmatic purchasing. These innovations provide intimate, impactful and effective advertising solutions. The growing popularity of podcasts and voice-controlled devices, the use of first-party data and contextual segments strengthen the position of audio advertising as part of a holistic marketing strategy. Digital audio has excellent reach; listening is the most focused media and has the highest level of attention.*

Tech giants dominate media investments

One by one, the leaders of American tech companies are announcing that they are removing DEI programmes and allowing hate speech on their platforms. Most recently, Meta announced they are abandoning fact checking. Despite the trend, Google and Meta are dominating media investments. In the third quarter of 2024, these companies captured 128.5 million euros from Finnish advertisers' media investments. When looking at the money spent on online content alone, as much as 65 per cent of the investments went to social media and keyword advertising, while the share of Finnish online media remained at 35 per cent.**

Nevertheless, the Finnish media is highly appreciated

Finns value Finnish media. 94 per cent consider it an important advocate of freedom of speech and democracy. 78 per cent also consider it important that the media they spend time with is Finnish. 68 per cent of Finns feel that advertisers should invest specifically in media that employ Finns.***

With their purchasing decisions, every buyer of digital advertising space influences where the funds invested on media are spent on. When advertising investments are directed to Finland, it ensures the continuation of high-quality Finnish journalism and content.



Audio advertising expanded to retail media

Outi Hilakari
Head of Outdoor Audio



The retail media market* is growing and developing at a tremendous pace in Finland. The strength of retail media is to connect clients and brands at the time of purchase**. _

As a pioneer in the audio business, Bauer Media innovates and invests in the development of the audio market. Bauer Media is the first company in Finland and Europe to launch audio advertising in retail media as part of its audio offering. Audio advertising reaches 2.4 million Finns a week in retail environments, from a wide range of target groups***. Our retail network reaches consumers in shopping centres (Mall Voice cooperation) as well as the stores like Motonet and Tokmanni and gyms.

Pssst...

In June, our network will expand to include a nationwide network of approximately 200 Tokmanni stores! Stay tuned and follow us on **LinkedIn!**

*Retail media refers to the multi-channel environments of retail and marketplaces and the channels leading to them.
Sources: ** IAB Finland Retail Media working group, ***Kantar Mind



Audio advertising in retail media with a win-win model

More powerful audio advertising and more people who notice it

By utilising retail audio as part of audio advertising as a whole, the advertiser takes over the media day with audio at different stages.

The Total Audio buying method significantly increases the coverage of campaigns in all target groups, and the penetration of messages becomes more effective when all different interfaces are included in the campaign in the same way as video advertising is exported to all different distribution channels in addition to TV!

Compared to spot campaigns, Total Audio offers 750,000 more people on average who notice the advertising. * _

Audio advertising targeted at retail media brings the impact of audio advertising close to the moment of purchase and activates people! The consumers we reach through the network have a positive attitude towards audio advertising, which has an effect on impulse purchases for 36 per cent of consumers**, for example. _

Network partners get more out of their brick-and-mortar without investments

For advertising network partners, Bauer Media's Outdoor Audio partnership opens up a whole new way to get the most out of their retail spaces and environments by commercialising the listening ears of their visitors as part of their audio inventory. Bauer Media takes care of equipment and technology costs and media sales.

The cooperation brings the network partner money for each pair of ears that visits the business premises. _ Even if the visitor doesn't buy anything at the time.

With network partnership, audio advertising will become a planned part of the soundscape of the business premises, with a strong focus on the comfort of customers and staff. Did you know that according to research, 78 per cent of people are more positive about audio advertising heard in radio and retail networks compared to advertising in other media**. In other words, audio advertising in your business premises will put a smile on people's faces and euros in your company's bank account!_



Revolution of mediocrity – let's not let it happen

Lauri Domnick
Creative Director,
BAD Agency



The year 2025: from the point of view of audio, it's pretty much the same old boring stuff. The soundscape around us is filled with content that is valid, functional and safe. But is that enough? Are we really satisfied with everything sounding the same and feeling indifferent?

Audio advertising, which at its best is memorable and arouses emotions, is at risk of drowning in the mass of mediocrity. AI has already made every person a semi-professional in audio advertising, and anyone can produce average copy text for an ad.

This is why we have to stop for a moment and ask ourselves:

Do we just want to fill the silence with something indifferent or create something that is memorable and makes a real impact?

Audio is not just words or melodies. Above all, it consists (or it has the potential to consist) of moments that move and engage the listener. Advertising that truly makes an impact comes from humanity: stories and emotions. From memories – good and bad, successes and mistakes. This cannot be outsourced to algorithms. The algorithm does not truly understand how bad my roommate's farts smelled or what my face looked like when I bit into a lemon for the first time. Another human being does.

The best audio advertisements are not created by calculation, but by the courage to say something truly meaningful. They come from insights that make us laugh, tear up or stop and think. This cannot be achieved with just 'average validity' – it takes vision and heart.



Mediocre is safe but boring

It's easy to be on the safe side. To make sure no one is going to get angry or feel uncomfortable. But has a completely secure message ever changed anything? Has any cautious advertisement made a mark in history? Under no circumstances am I trying to say that advertising should insult people or that it should take the path of populism that has taken over the airspace. No. It is lazy to argue that insightful content cannot be made without offending someone. It would be the same as to claim that the you can't write an emotional text without emojis.

Have the courage to create more content that arouses emotions. Dare to say something that doesn't appeal to everyone, but will be remembered. Don't settle for simply having some sounds fill the silence. Sound can do so much more.

Today's audio advertising needs more than just certainty. It needs edge. It needs marketing decision-makers who dare to break patterns and question familiar models. It needs people who have the courage to stand firmly behind their own vision and expertise. If we want to create something truly impactful, we have to step into the discomfort zone from time to time and accept the risks. Rewards do not often come without taking any risks.



AI is a bad team manager

Let's forget for a moment what artificial intelligence can do. Let's focus on what we humans can do when we know how to use AI to support our work.

We have the ability to create something that not only works, but leaves a lasting impression. Let's create content that not only can be heard, but that people want to listen to.

Artificial intelligence is a great teammate, but it's not worth recruiting it as a team manager.



Perhaps my ideas are just early signs of the flu – try it out yourself

What is creativity? I was asked this question in a job interview years ago. I don't remember exactly what I answered, but it was something vague and uncertain. As each word left my mouth, I felt my thoughts were getting more uncertain and twisted under the interviewer's questioning eye. If I was asked this question again, I would say that it is an activity based on thinking that aims to produce ideas that are new and somehow appealing. If I were asked the same question tomorrow, I would answer something else.

So how do I know if my ideas are good? Or creative? Recently, there has been talk about the effect – or lack of it – of advertising. At the beginning of the year, Leena Koskinen, who works as a strategist at Dagmar, **wrote** about how more than half of media advertising was perceived by consumers as neutral, or, in other words, indifferent. Measured in money, the price tag of indifference is more than 700 million euros per year.

How can you ensure that your own brand's marketing investments do not end up in the bin of mediocrity? Simply by doing better. Better advertising that, above all, is emotionally appealing. Because not only do emotions affect our bodies, minds and behaviour, their consequences are also visible below the line. Emotionally appealing advertising has **been shown to be more** effective, especially in the long term

Antti Pehkonen
Creative Director,
BAD Agency



You often hear someone say that creativity is an abstract concept that is difficult to grasp and difficult to set for joint evaluation. When discussing creativity, you also encounter subjective and cultural challenges – an idea that is fresh and inspiring for one person is boring and clichéd for another. Despite its slippery surface, creativity can be measured. There are ways to evaluate and analyse work based on non-subjective preferences and biases. The aim of different creativity indicators is to find a common language that allows cross-cutting perspectives and objective understanding of opinions.

The easiest way to make an impact with your advertising is to review your own work through standardised indicators and critically assess your creative work. It may sting a bit at first, but it helps to set the bar for ambition at a level where you can start to expect seeing an impact on your business. Here are a few tools for evaluating your creative work and recalibrating your own meters.



Creativity indicators for assessing your own work

Heineken Creative Ladder

What is it?

A 10-point scale.

What gets the lowest score?

One means a very destructive work that is offensive and creates negative conversation around the brand.

What gets the highest score? Ten stands for legendary, once-in-a-lifetime creative work that lives for a long time in collective memory.



AB InBev's Creative Spectrum

What is it?

A 10-point scale from unconsidered to iconic.

What gets the lowest score?

One stands for unconsidered – it is something inappropriate (culturally or otherwise), offensive and damaging to the brand.

What gets the highest score?

Ten is the peak. It's iconic, legendary, world-changing and revolutionary. A work that changes the culture.



Creativity indicators for assessing your own work

The Creative Effectiveness ladder

What is it?

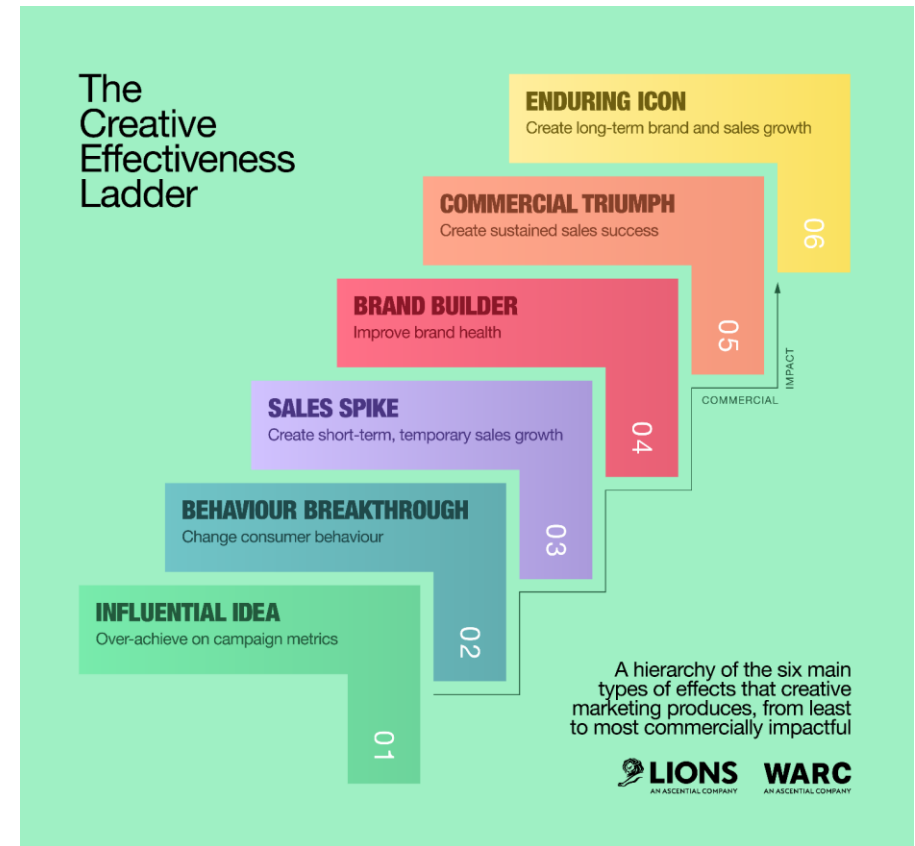
A hierarchy of types of impact created by creative marketing, from the least commercially impactful to the most commercially impactful. Scale of 1 to 6.

What gets the lowest score?

The first level looks at an individual impactful idea. It takes into account how the creative work has exceeded the campaign indicators and objectives. Indicators to be reviewed include campaign recall, social sharing and earned viewability. The campaign has an impact on consumers and the creative idea is a breakthrough. These ideas can be evaluated quite quickly, usually within three months.

What gets the best score?

Six means the work is iconic and marks the highest level of creative work. These campaigns will generate long-term sales growth for at least three years. The impacts are visible in the brand and its result even after the creative work has been completed.



Creativity indicators for assessing your own work

Leo Burnett Humankind Scale

What is it?

A one-to-ten ladder based on the idea that people and their behaviour play a decisive role in evaluating creative work.

What gets the lowest score?

One is destructive. It's worse than wasting money. It's a campaign or idea that makes consumers reject a brand. It pollutes the public space and people are ashamed to appear with that brand because of creative or strategic misjudgement.

What gets the best score?

Ten is an idea that changes the world.



Creativity is the advertiser's best weapon

All of the above creative assessment frameworks share the same language and purpose. They all strive to express the level of impact of an idea and to underline the areas that need improvement. They help creators and brands assess where they are achieving their goals and where they are missing out and need improvement.

Continuous evaluation, measurement and self-criticism are ways to produce better and more meaningful creative ideas. Systematic critical review also means that good work is recognised as soon as it is heard.

When other things are equal and accessible to everyone, creativity is the advertiser's best weapon.



Audio advertising trends around the world

The trends in audio advertising did not change completely in 2024, but new developments were evident. A big trend in competitions is still the combination of technology and new audio channels. I may overinterpret a bit, but I noticed that there were fewer sustainability-related works awarded than last year. I assume that audio advertising is not an independent desert island among the media, but that phenomena and flows follow broader trends.

As the significance of sound has increased in marketing, it has been understood that sound can be heard everywhere, and its accessibility has been extended far beyond traditional audio-spot-driven activities.

For the first time, Cannes Lions launched a broader Audio & Radio series instead of just radio spots. This is a positive change, although it is known to make the judges face difficult questions.

For example, Vuoden Huiput has had an audio series for many years, and participating works can be anything from background speech to theme tunes. It's really challenging to organise a 'beauty contest' for completely different ideas and evaluate which entries are the best, and I raise my hat to the judges who do this.

Ismo Heikkilä
Creative Director



Sources: Cannes the work: lovethework.com, Liaawards.com, Eurobest.com, Dubailynx.com, Clios.com, New York festivals advertising awards, Contagious: Cannes Lions 2024: Audio & Radio winners, Insight & Strategy: The Misheard Version, Economic Times / Brand Equity: Cannes Lions 2024; where audio outnumbered radio 10:1, Marketing Dive: Budweiser turns songs... into targeted ads on Spotify, Shots: Budweiser Brazil turns songs... into targeted ads, D&AD Awards 2024 – Breathe Through It, LIA Awards Press Release – Halls Breathe Through It, Social Samosa: Interns who pitched a poop joke..., LBB Online: Heineken transforms historical Irish pubs into museums, THINKHOUSE: Heineken Virtual Pub Museums, Famous Campaigns: Pedigree creates a Tail Orchestra..., VML.com: I See Coke, Social Samosa: Interview, Cannes Lions Audio jury



Trend 1: Branded songs

In **Specsavers'** award-winning campaign ***The Misheard Version***, the chain joined forces with 1980s pop star **Rick Astley**. The lyrics of the iconic 'Never Gonna Give You Up' were intentionally changed to versions that people had misheard. For example, Astley sings 'A broken mitten's what I'm thinking of' instead of his original line, 'A full commitment's what I'm thinking of'.

In Finland, Specsavers is known for their vision-related services, but elsewhere they also sell hearing aids. The humorous branded song worked well: the viral Misheard Version collected over 20 million listens during the first few hours and increased Google searches for hearing care by 138 per cent. Specsavers also reported an impressive 1,220 per cent increase in hearing test appointments.



Trend 1: Branded songs

Budweiser's UninterruptAds campaign favours the logic of the music service: when Budweiser is mentioned in more than 500 songs on Spotify, the song itself becomes an advertisement; when a song featuring lyrics that mention the brand's name appear in a playlist of a user listening to advertisement-funded Spotify, in place of an advertisement break, the song is played in its entirety instead. This allows the brand to blend seamlessly into the listening experience.

For example, the Brazilian artist **Kafé's** song 'My Luv', featuring a mention of Budweiser, was programmed to be played on playlists of his genre in the advertising slot. The result was a new, 'uninterrupted' form of audio advertising that strengthened Budweiser's connection to music culture without the listener actually feeling that they had heard an ad. The idea received a Golden Lion award in the audio series in Cannes.

Music was also used playfully in the **Pedigree Tail Orchestra** event, where dogs' tails were turned into symphony music: the live performance was turned into a Spotify album and the streaming products were used to support rescue dogs. In other words, music is no longer just background noise in advertisements, but increasingly the actual idea that carries the whole piece.



Trend 2: Humour and skilful script on the radio

Another phenomenon that united the award-winning works throughout 2024 is the use of **humour** – clever ideas and sharp dialogue took traditional radio advertising to a new level. In Finland, humour has always played a large part among the competition winners, but abroad it has taken a couple of years since the pandemic to recover enough for the 'comeback of humour'. Several winning entries showed that sound alone can arouse strong emotions when the script is good. For example, the **Breathe Through It** radio campaign for the cough drops brand **Halls** won gold in Cannes for Best Script. The campaign applies Hall's traditional message of 'breathe deep' into new situations: instead of the previous dramatic mountain peaks or job interviews, the advertisements encouraged you to breathe deep in the embarrassing little moments of everyday life: when a father notices that he was left out of a family portrait done by his child or when you make the mistake of telling your spouse to calm down. The campaign has won many competitions. It also won international awards in special categories: in London, the LIA jury awarded it bronze in both Radio & Audio humour and script categories.

Similarly, the **Otter** radio advertisement for the drug brand **Macrogol Hexal** from Sandoz proved that you can make a hilarious radio play even about a topic that is considered taboo. The idea, which starts boldly with a poo joke, was presented in the form of an artfully created BBC nature documentary. The spot, narrated by a British commentator voice, illustrated stomach activity in a surprising way. The jury laughed and 'Otter' won the Golden Lion in Cannes for the script.

In audio advertising, humour is still an effective way to dispel prejudices and arouse positive emotions in the audience, whether the subject is hearing loss, a coughing fit or even constipation.



Trend 3: New audio channels and audio technology in advertising

This year, the winners of voice advertising also made use of technology. Coca-Cola's **I See Coke** was awarded in Dubai. It is a skill created for Amazon's Alexa that connects TV and e-commerce in a unique way. Whenever a viewer spots a Coca-Cola product in a film or series – whether it's a brief glimpse of a crate of bottles in the background or the main character holding a bubbling glass of coke – they can say, 'Alexa, I see Coke'. Over a century of product placement history was transformed into an interactive shopping experience: Alexa directly opens up the possibility of ordering a drink or redeeming a reward every time the viewer sees a Coca-Cola. *I See Coke* was automatically activated on all Alexa devices in Saudi Arabia in Arabic and English, and the campaign result was amazing: Coca-Cola's brand awareness jumped +234 per cent and almost all those who received the offer redeemed it.

Baileys also made creative use of the audio capabilities of mobile devices. The **Baileys Sound Scales** innovation solved an everyday dilemma: the Baileys liqueur bottle is opaque, making it difficult to guess how much there is left in the bottle. The solution? Blow into the opening of the bottle and the web app will tell you how much liqueur is left. The noise generated by blowing varies depending on the liquid level, and the campaign's web app analyses the sound and tells you how much of the drink is left. At the same time, you'll get tips on how to use it – whether it's enough for baking or as a base for a cocktail.

Sound Scales is an insightful example of how sound can be used in a brand experience in a practical, fun and technology-driven way. The idea won silver in the Audio & Radio innovation category in Cannes.



Trend 4: Voice in experiences and content marketing

This year, many award-winning works took audio advertising beyond traditional advertising media into experiences and content. Sound can build an atmosphere in a physical space or add depth to a brand story in ways that aren't advertising.

Heineken's Pub Museums, which was carried out in Ireland, won the Audio & Radio Grand Prix at Eurobest. It transformed historic, centuries-old Irish pubs into virtual museums where visitors could dive into the past of the pub using AR technology. Voice guidance was a very important part of the experience.

By scanning the QR code on the sign on the door, the visitor could see a layer of augmented reality on their phone, where the pub's objects come to life as stories. Soundscapes and the narrator's accounts guide the listener through centuries of stories, just like in a real museum. With the existence of pubs generally threatened, sound is a key mood-maker in this cultural act.

The valuable stories are transferred as narratives, which helped remind the audience of the cultural importance of these places. The campaign won a total of eight Lion Awards in Cannes and showed that sound can be a driving force even in environments that are not traditionally perceived as media.



Trend 4: Voice in experiences and content marketing

Another example of experience-based audio marketing is the previously mentioned **Pedigree Tail Orchestra**. It was an event, a viral video and a music release at the same time: the dogs, ascending to the podium of the conductor, led the orchestra with their tail movements, and the compositions created from this joy were published on streaming services to be heard by a wider audience. While the campaign appeared to be entertaining for consumers, in the background Pedigree was communicating the well-being of dogs while raising funds for rescue dogs. This is a good example of a non-advertising marketing activity that focused on sound: the brand provided entertainment and benefit to the audience in the form of audio content, while still being able to naturally promote its value and product.

The 2024 award-winning audio work shows that the sound of marketing is anything but monotonous. Through music campaigns, humorous radio plays, smart audio technology innovations and immersive audio experiences, brands have found new ways to speak to their audience and make them laugh. Sound extends from radio to streaming services, AR experiences and homes. The red thread running through it all is still creativity that truly can be heard. The trends among the winning entries suggest that audio is a growing and constantly renewing field for marketers.

Ideas like those mentioned above are not impossible to implement from a budget point of view in Finland, either. A winning combination requires insight, creativity and courage instead of mediocre, unnoticeable and non-emotional advertising.



Bold innovation and sustainable development at the forefront of audio technology

Sini Kervinen
Head of Innovation



Bauer Media continues to be at the forefront of audio technology development, integrating AI solutions responsibly as part of its content and technology strategy.

In 2025, our focus will increasingly shift to the development of technological infrastructure to ensure efficient integration of new partnerships and avoid wasting our own resources on unnecessary manual processes. At the same time, we are investing in staff training so that every Bauer Media expert is aware of the opportunities and risks of AI and has the necessary tools to handle them. The growth of AI expertise plays a key role in the wider, more responsible and creative use of AI, both in media and advertising.

Over the past two years, Bauer Media has invested heavily in AI solutions, and this development continues. The aim is to utilise AI in all the innovations and processes where it brings significant improvements from either a quality or efficiency perspective. We do not compromise on the reliability and quality of the content.

A lot has already been done. Here is a look at our most significant projects in 2024 and their key insights.



AI radio: the first AI-produced radio channel

In November 2023, Bauer Media launched the first AI-powered radio channel in the Nordics, Tekoälyradio. Tekoälyradio later also got round-the-clock hosts based on sound cloning of well-known audio artists.

- ▶ July 2024: An AI host created from the bass voice of **Tuukka Haapaniemi**, who is familiar from the band Club for Five, started on the channel.
- ▶ August 2024: AI host based on **Nina Tapio's** voice joined the team.

The host voices were produced in cooperation with Lexofon Oy, which specialises in high-quality AI-based sound productions and also acts as a defender of the rights of voice actors. Bauer Media and Lexofon are working together to ensure that the use of AI respects the work and talent of creative professionals.

In addition to the AI hosts, AI has also been used to produce audio productions, nationally significant traffic announcements produced by AI and bad weather warnings, as well as news delivered by STT and read by AI.



AI news anchor and automation are revolutionising radio news

Bauer Media made radio history by introducing an AI news anchor on its 11 radio channels as a reader of news from STT. The first AI-read news was heard on 5 April 2024. This development was based on Bauer Media's investments in audio technology and STT's desire to take its technology to the next level.

- ▶ On Bauer Media's radio channels, you can still hear news that has been written by STT's professional journalists and has gone through the editorial process, which the Bauer Media news team curates into the news stream.
- ▶ The AI reader improves flexibility and enables a broader news offering without compromising journalistic quality or accuracy.
- ▶ The news team actively monitors the situation and reacts to exceptional situations as necessary.
- ▶ As a recent update, Bauer Media also added news to night-time broadcasts, offering up-to-date listening around the clock.

There is now a lot of research being done on combining artificial intelligence and media, which is great. Bauer Media has also done significant research to base its development on real data, not just guesswork.

- ▶ A survey conducted in November 2024 showed that confidence in radio news is at a high level (84%) despite the use of AI.
- ▶ 78 per cent of respondents felt that synthetic sound was suitable for radio news, even though it was still perceived as a bit monotonous.



The power of innovation – AI as part of the development of media and advertising

In the future, it will be possible to offer even more dynamic and personalised content solutions that combine live delivery, listener experience and quality. The development of AI also opens up new opportunities in the field of marketing, bringing with it more effective and impactful advertising solutions. Although AI does not replace humans, it serves as a strategic tool that supports creative planning and the creative process.

At its best, AI provides content producers and advertisers with even more meaningful data, enabling even more sophisticated and relevant content. In addition, AI can improve the efficiency of commercialisation processes and help identify new business opportunities.

The use of AI requires responsibility and ethical consideration. Copyright, data management and transparency are key factors that guide its use in media as well as advertising.

It is important that technological development goes hand in hand with ethical principles, transparency and reliability.

The future belongs to those who dare to innovate and use the opportunities offered by technology responsibly and creatively. At Bauer Media, we are committed to developing AI solutions that offer real added value.

