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TODAY'S CASE

» Medium: Radio

A new app from Austria's private station brings interactive skipability to radio.

Skip FM – personalise your radio stream

Rüdiger Landgraf, Program Director of the Austrian radio station KRONEHIT sums up the challenge radio is facing: "*Traditional radio is very good at providing and selling linear, impersonal audio-only content in an easy to use way. The biggest challenge is to become good in providing and selling personalised, illustrated, in good quality and easy to use linear and nonlinear audio content.*"

With services like Spotify and Pandora offering customisation and personalisation of audio, online radio services are often lagging behind. In most radio apps, listeners cannot skip DJ talks or songs they don´t like, they cannot customise their music, and they have to accept network losses and dropouts. Radio broadcaster KRONEHIT has developed a solution that would allow radio to do all of that with a simulcast through its new app Skip FM, which is also available as a white label solution.

Concept

One way to deal with the challenges of customisation and personalisation in linear radio streams would be to introduce an alternative, customisable program, in order to give listeners an option to switch between different streams within the same radio brand. It would, however, lack all the compelling live content from the main channel, which is one of radio's main strengths. So why not combine the advantages of Spotify and Pandora with FM simulcast?

With Skip FM, every element is skippable, the livestream is customisable, and there are no network errors interrupting the stream. On top of the instream audio ads, radios can also include ad server-based video commercials to their simulcast delivered exactly at the moment of interaction with the app – skipping song, changing stream, etc. – providing 100% viewability to the ad. And all that with no need to change studio and production settings.

How does it work?

Skip FM splits the live signal into segments, which enables listeners to skip every element. The live programme is treated like a playlist, with the longest segment being three minutes in length, and the simulcast is delayed one to three minutes to guarantee a seamless listening experience.

By swiping horizontally, the listener can skip a song, talk segment or news, and the next element from the live programme will be played. All of that happens seamlessly with no interruptions. If listeners do not skip, the simulcast will continue to play from the studio. The station itself decides which parts can be skipped and which will be served by assigning relevance to individual elements. This new system brings no additional tasks for programmers and presenters; however, the music department must supply filler songs that are different to the ones on air, to be played when a user skips a song.

The only non-skippable element is the advertising. The spots are not the same as those in the FM stream, as they are replaced by a lower load of online audio ads. The app also allows broadcasters to include video commercials into the simulcast; these are ad server-based and delivered after every fourth interaction with the app. The audio ads are not inserted programmatically at the moment but are booked through the AdsWizz software. All ads are DAAST or VAAST compliant.

Even if the network signal is lost, the audio continues – for up to 15 minutes – depending on the network and device. When the network comes back, the audio continues seamlessly. This avoids signal problems and audio being interrupted when listeners are, for example, entering a tunnel.

Listeners can also customise the playlist by adding songs to their personal love or hate lists. Songs on the *loved* playlist will play more often, while those on the *hated* list will never be played again. Depending on the local royalty conditions, customisable streams are created in this way.

Only registered users will have access to the full interactive features, non-registered users will have access to a simple simulcast. Once they try to interact with the app, registration will be required. Registration will allow KRONEHIT to collect rich first party data about users, improve their listening experience and increase advertising value of its audio and video inventories by providing advanced targeting opportunities.

Future plans

KRONEHIT is exploring the possibility of integrating Skip FM within voice control devices like Amazon's Alexa. The app is currently in beta testing phase and will be fully launched in June. It is also available as a white label solution for radio stations and broadcasters, and if you are interested in this app, contact egta and we can put you in touch with KRONEHIT directly.

Why this matters for egta members?

There is a lot of competition for listeners in the online audio market, and being able to offer a personalised and interactive experience is a key feature that has been missing from radio … until today.

Being able to provide a customisable experience while making the most of unique live content can be the winning strategy for radio. Radio already has a big audience, and it can now make it interactive with innovative solutions such as Skip FM. With innovation and making the most of its strengths, radio remains relevant and effective.

Apps like this, with their rich registration base and advertising options, also bring new monetisation opportunities to radio brands and help to fully integrate radio within the digital media and advertising domains.