

Edinburgh independent local radio licence applications

Questions and responses: The Arrow

These are the responses from The Arrow (Edinburgh) to the non-confidential questions asked by Ofcom regarding the group's application for the Edinburgh licence.

1. Please explain further the analysis/calculations shown under the heading of 'Musical Tastes' on pages 60 & 61.

I understand from a conversation with your colleague that this question refers specifically to application of a formula to reach the numbers shown in the tables on those pages,

The formula we applied is designed to determine the appeal of different music genres by taking into account not just how respondents felt about each genre, but also how strongly they felt, whether positively or negatively. As such, it is a measure of 'passion' rather than just appeal. We believe this gives us a better feel for the effect of particular types of music on actual listening behaviour.

Inevitably, the application of formulae to data is arbitrary – different formulae may be equally applicable. This does not diminish the validity of the formula – it is applied equally to all the music genres tested, so still gives an accurate picture of the relative appeal of each. The formula we have used is one that our experience tells us works well with our existing radio stations, and we know is employed by other radio groups elsewhere in Europe.

The effect of the formula we have applied is to upweight the views of those who feel passionately in favour of a type of music (by multiplying those who gave score of '5' out of 5, by 1.5), and similarly to downweight those who feel passionately negative towards it (by subtracting those who gave a score of '1' from the total). We also add in respondents who like the music (by including those giving a score of '4'), but disregard entirely those who are lukewarm or indifferent (those giving a score of '2' or '3').

The rationale behind this is largely explained by our own interpretation of the meaning of each score. By necessity, this is a subjective judgement but, as we have said, it seems to be borne out by our experience with our existing stations.

A score of '5' indicates that the respondents really love the music. Hearing that type of music on a radio station would prompt them to turn up the radio and listen more attentively, and will have a significantly positive impact on their perception of the station overall. A score of '4' suggests that the respondent likes the music and that a station playing that music consistently would definitely be one they would listen to. Music scoring '3' or '2' is clearly less well received, and we would not expect a station playing just this music to

attract a large audience in the long term. However, because it has not been scored at the very bottom of the scale, there is an indication of tolerance of these types of music if they were featured for short periods of time. A score of '1', however, suggests such a strong aversion to the music that we would expect a listener to turn off or retune their radio if any music in that genre were played. Music scoring '5', '4' or '1', therefore, has an active and immediate impact on listening behaviour amongst respondents allocating those scores – either by encouraging or discouraging listening.

Taking account of this 'passion' provides a slightly different and, in our view, more instructive guide to listeners' music tastes as it applies to their radio listening behaviour than simple calculations of mean score. It allows us to identify better those types of music that are likely to attract a strong, loyal, dedicated following amongst our target audience (such as, in this case, 60s Pop Rock), and very clearly shows, through low or even negative figures, those genres that would actively reduce the size of our audience (such as Hot Urban).

2. What is the maximum extent to which you plan to automate programming?

We do not believe the Edinburgh market is large enough to sustain a service that is live 24 hours every day, and that some intelligent use of automation is necessary, at least initially, to maintain the financial viability of the service. It is our expectation that some overnight programming will be voice-tracked or pre-recorded, and played out using an automated system. The maximum extent of this would be 0100-0600 each day.

By using the latest available production and automation technology, we would expect any such output to maintain the highest standards of quality and local relevance. Most of this output would be voice-tracked 'as live', and would therefore be largely indistinguishable from the live programming during daytime hours. As the sample programme schedule in our application shows, we expect our overnight output to have a similar 'richness' in feel to daytime programming, with interactivity and a range of music-based features.

As also noted in our application, we anticipate re-broadcasting The Arrow Edinburgh's output overnight across the digital radio network (including not just DAB but also Sky and cable platforms). As well as allowing us to showcase Edinburgh music to the nation as a whole, this also creates the opportunity to re-broadcast high profile programmes to the wider Arrow community. Thus, for example, an interview with a major rock band playing in Edinburgh, or a recording of a concert or studio session, might be repeated for the benefit of a national audience. With the advent of time-shifted listening, and the ability to store digital radio content on personal MP3 players, the creation of 'appointment to listen' programming overnight has the potential to make this part of the broadcasting day significantly more important than it has been in the traditional radio world. Should we be successful in other future licence applications, we would envisage extending this philosophy,

giving The Arrow's digital network access to a range of live and new music from around the country.