

Manchester independent local radio licence applications

Questions and responses: Alice 97.7

These are the responses received from Alice 97.7 FM to the non-confidential questions asked by Ofcom regarding the group's application for the Manchester licence.

1. Please provide specific details of the fieldwork dates for the quantitative market perceptual and segmentation study.

Interviews were conducted in two waves: 16-22 December 2004 & 6-14 January 2005.

2. Please indicate the number of individual interviews that were conducted as part of the research amongst the advertising community, and indicate to what extent they were “a cross-section of individuals responsible for buying radio advertising”.

We spoke to the five leading media buyers: McCann Erickson, Euro RSCG, Carat, Mindshare and Initiative Media, who represent 80% of the regional advertising in Manchester. We also interviewed a local radio station in the region which sells into the Manchester radio market.

3. Please provide evidence to support the statement on p.38 of the application that “Manchester’s broad Rock audience is greatly underserved by the market’s existing players”.

We came to the conclusion that Manchester’s broad rock audience is greatly underserved after reviewing the evidence from our three research-based activities: the RAJAR analysis, the music monitoring exercise, and the quantitative market research study.

After listening to our broad Rock montage, all respondents were asked to name the one Manchester station which first came to mind. Among those who were able to name a station, BBC Radio 1 topped the list of station associations, albeit with just 22% of the total-sample mentions. Other station associations with our broad Rock montage included Key 103 with 12%, BBC Radio 2 with 11%, and Century with 5%. Nearly one-third (31%) of the entire sample were unable to name any station that resembled this broad Rock format montage. Neither was any one station associated with our broad Rock montage by a majority of any station’s own listeners.

Half of the total sample was unable to name any station as a source of Rock music, indicating that while there may be elements of Rock on several Manchester stations, there is none which specialises in Rock.

Based on the findings from our station monitoring exercise, Rock tends to be used as spice on existing commercial and BBC outlets. Manchester's local commercial stations are focused on chart, oldies, easy listening and dance. The greatest percentage of Rock music was heard on Key 103. Fifteen percent of its output could be defined as Rock, but the tracks were clearly taken from the pop end of the Rock music spectrum.

Everywhere we turned for research-based evidence of a station which already serves the market's broad Rock audience, we came up empty-handed. Manchester's broad Rock audience is not just underserved by the market's existing players, it is unserved.

4. Please provide evidence which supports the statement on Page 2 of the application that older and younger listeners “tend to listen to the radio at different times of the day”.

This statement relates to a finding which was summarised in our “Evidence of Demand” section which states:

“...members of the Classic Rock segment tend to listen to less radio after 7PM than do members of the Alternative Rock segment.”

As profiled in the “Evidence of Demand” section, the age composition of the Classic Rock audience segment is older than the Alternative Rock segment.

Looking at levels of post-7pm radio listening, we discovered that 50% of the Alternative Rock segment listens to the radio at least once a week at this time of day, while only 44% of the Classic Rock audience segment does likewise.

Similarly, looking at post-7pm listening levels by age, we learned that 60% of the 15-19s, 58% of the 20-24s, and 50% of the 25-29s listen to the radio at least once per week at this time of day. These figures compare to the total-sample average of 46%.

These higher levels of post-7pm radio usage among younger age groups and members of the Alternative Rock audience segment led to the creation of our Alice By Night format, providing an opportunity to meet the needs of a younger segment of our likely listeners – and strengthening the business model by attracting larger numbers of listeners during “non-peak” hours.