

Manchester independent local radio licence applications

Questions and responses: Time FM

These are the responses received from Time FM to the non-confidential questions asked by Ofcom regarding its application for the Manchester licence.

1. The RAJAR analysis provided in the application is based on 15-34 and 35-64 year olds, although the survey was conducted among 35-64 year olds. Please clarify how you decided on a target audience of 45+ listeners.

We undertook analysis among all of the adult age groups reported by RAJAR. This led us to conclude that younger age groups were better served than older listeners by existing stations in Manchester, particularly the local commercial services. The sub-analysis between 15-34 and 35-64 clearly demonstrates the strength of Independent Radio within the younger age group and the dominance of the BBC amongst 35-64 year olds.

We accepted that the 15-34 age group was better served by existing local commercial stations and therefore focused on 35-64 year olds in our quantitative research.

In determining the target of 45-64 we reviewed all the available data, in particular RAJAR and the detailed preferences of respondents that we examined by 5-year age bands in our quantitative survey. This showed a large degree of cohesion in the tastes and interests of those aged 45-64 in particular, in terms of the balance sought between speech and music, the propensity to listen to popular music, the desire for specific eras and styles of music and the range of speech preferred. This age band is therefore at the heart of our programming proposals though, as our listening projections show, we expect to attract some listening among the adjacent under 45's as well as among those over 64.

2. Can you confirm whether you intend to broadcast any automated output, and if so, what the maximum extent of this would be, in line with paragraph 5(b) of section 6 of the advertisement?

It is not our intention to broadcast any automated output.

We are firmly of the view that a radio station that covers Greater Manchester should provide a 24-hour service to its listeners. We recognise the implications for staff and resources and have made provision in our business plans in this respect.

3. We note from your Format that "locally-produced news bulletins... will be broadcast at least hourly throughout the day". Would it be correct to

assume that this is meant to refer to the period 0600-1900 (i.e. "daytime")?

No; "day" refers to the full 24-hour day rather than the more limited "daytime" band. We would be happy for further clarification to be added in the Format.

As stated elsewhere in the application, we are committed to a 24-hour radio station including a live local mix of news 24-hours a day. In particular, this is set out on pages 7-9 of Section 105(b) in the Application. Whilst overnight audiences may be low, news is a core value for Time Manchester and we believe that the credibility of the station and its service to the area is enhanced by the full provision of locally-produced news.

Again, we have made adequate provision in our business plans to meet this commitment, in particular with a full-time staff of six journalists and an additional trainee. The business plan also makes provision for additional freelance cover, as required.

4. Please explain any specific steps that were taken to ensure that interviewing for the original market research (section 105(d) of the application) was not biased due to fieldwork taking place during the run up to Christmas 2004 (13-20th December) – normally a period avoided by market research companies

There is a "Christmas effect" on radio listening but it is the period from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day that demonstrates depressed listening. In fact RAJAR researches up to the weekend before Christmas (this year 18th December). Historically even during this period there is little bias between services but simply an overall reduction in hours of listening.

Our analysis of reach and listening is based on RAJAR data over the full quarter's "rolling" data. Our case sought to establish relative levels of listening to existing services for the purpose of qualifying responses to other questions. The pattern of listening shown in our survey largely reflects that of RAJAR, but was not relied on for absolute levels of reach.

The major part of the quantitative survey was designed to explore respondents' feelings about existing radio stations and establish their preferences for programmes from a new local radio service. These aspects are clearly not affected by the proximity of Christmas.

Ipsos confirm they had no difficulties with interviewers or interviewing, which was conducted by telephone. The CATI approach ensured that interviewing was conducted across the week, in the daytime, evenings and weekend, to ensure a broad spectrum of respondents that matched the demographic quotas for the area. In Ipsos' view, "careful consideration needs to be given to any research conducted in the run-up to Christmas as to whether the fieldwork period is appropriate. In some markets such as retail and FMCG, it is an atypical time of year and any research conducted will reflect this. From

a media consumption point of view, in particular radio listening, the holiday period itself (from the 23rd until the New Year) is an unusual time with listeners changing their mix of media behaviour. However, the preceding week is not affected in this way. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that opinions and attitudes are unlikely to be affected at all".

The application mentions specific "themed" music programmes (p5, and Schedule on pp18-79). Please explain the decision not to make any commitment to such programmes in the Format.

We view themed programmes as integral to our service and consider it likely that they would effectively be extended beyond those specifically mentioned in the Application (Section 105(b) pages 5-6). We would be happy to include a Format commitment to providing a range of such programmes outside weekday daytime and at weekends, but would naturally wish to have the flexibility to allow their development and evolution over the period of the licence.