

Title:

Mr

Forename:

Peter

Surname:

Sheath

Representing:

Self

Organisation (if applicable):

What additional details do you want to keep confidential?:

No

If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Additional comments:

Question 1:Do respondents agree with Ofcom?s initial assessment that apps for mobile devices have the potential to be useful for those people with visual impairments who feel confident using touch-screen technology and can afford a suitable mobile device? If not, why not? :

Yes, I think however that anybody should be give the ability to access EPGs, whether they can afford it or not.

Question 2:Do respondents agree with Ofcom?s initial assessment that apps for mobile devices are less likely to meet the needs of the majority of visually-impaired people who are 65 or older, both because they are less likely either to own a suitable mobile phone and because touch-screen apps present a number of actual and perceived barriers to use. If not, why not?:

Yes – I'm over 65 and I would find mobile apps quite difficult to use.

Question 3:Do respondents consider that it would be reasonable for visually-impaired viewers to pay more than sighted viewers for the ability to use EPGs or substitutes for the same purposes as sighted viewers? If so why? :

No, I don't think so. I've been on Sky for 2 and a half years, and I didn't know about the SkyTalker until your consultation; I called Sky to get some information about it and I was told that the price for the SkyTalker is £60, which is absurd given that navigating the EPG is something that sighted people can do for free.

Question 4:Do respondents agree with Ofcom's initial assessment that the speaking EPGs integrated into TVs and set top boxes may be easier for people with visual impairments to use than touch-screen apps? If not, why not? :

Yes I think so.

Question 5:Do pay TV service providers such as Sky, Virgin, Talk Talk and BT TV see additional obstacles that would prevent them from committing to including text to speech capabilities in the next planned upgrades to the receivers they offer to subscribers? If so, what are these obstacles? Absent regulation, would these obstacles make it impossible on commercial grounds to commit to the necessary investment?:

I don't think so; after all, there is a Freeview box that has text-to-speech capabilities already, and it should be easy for other providers to include the same technology in their set-top boxes.

Question 6:If the cost of providing speech-enabled receivers to all those who subscribe to particular pay TV services would entail a substantial delay to the roll-out of such receivers to all subscribers, would it be feasible, quicker and more cost-effective to offer suitable equipment first to viewers with visual impairments?:

I think that would make sense, as making the necessary changes to all boxes at the same time would delay the roll-out of the receivers. I would personally wait a bit more to have a set-top box that works properly, and that has all the functionalities that I need, but other people are generally less patient, and if priority needs to be given to any particular group it should be the blind and visually impaired people.

Question 7:Do respondents consider that it would be reasonable to expect visually-impaired viewers to pay extra for equipment that allows them to use EPGs or substitutes for the same purposes as sighted viewers? If so, why? :

No, I don't think it's reasonable. If blind people had to pay more for the technology that allows them to do the same thing as sighted viewers, then at least we should pay less for television equipment.

Question 8: Do licensors such as Freesat and Freeview see obstacles to using their leverage to require manufacturers to incorporate speaking EPGs in future versions of products authorised to use their brands, such as Freetime and Freeview Connect?:

I'm not sure about that. Freesat and Freeview probably don't have the necessary leverage to include these requirements in their licence agreements. If manufacturers understood that visually impaired people do not constitute such a niche market as they think, they would probably be persuaded and even motivated to do all the necessary modifications to their products to make them more accessible to us.

Question 9: What are the main types of cost that pay TV service providers would face in incorporating speaking EPG features into the next generation of their set top boxes?:

Buying the software / software licence. However there are a number of software designer companies in the market, and the competition should drive down the price.

Question 10: What is the scope for connected platforms to avoid the need for specific TTS provision within consumer equipment by using cloud-based resources (e.g. speech files on a central server delivered to the device as required)?:

Cloud computing is growing in the consumer marketplace, it's definitely more prominent now. There is a pretty good scope for cloud-based solutions, however it depends on the age group that is being targeted: older people might be less used to internet-based solutions. I also think that cloud computing might reduce the overall cost of making set-top boxes more accessible – the software would be on the “cloud”, reducing memory requirements for the box.