

PRESS RELEASE

8 October 2015



BBC RADIO FALLING SHORT ON DISTINCTIVENESS, SAY LISTENERS

The BBC Charter Review process is an opportunity to improve the distinctiveness and diversity of BBC radio services, backed up by tighter regulation, says Radiocentre.

Listeners expect BBC radio services to be different from their commercial rivals but new research, conducted by Kantar Media*, found that listeners rate key services Radio 1 and Radio 2 lower than other BBC stations for 'distinctiveness'. These findings were included as part of a response to the Government Green Paper on BBC Charter Review which closed today (8 October).

The response acknowledges that the BBC plays a valuable role in UK radio but cannot – and should not – interpret its requirement for universality to mean providing everything it possibly can without limits, rather than focusing on distinctive output. Trying to be all things to all listeners has resulted in mission creep at BBC radio over the last 15 years, as Radio 1's audience got older and Radio 2 attracted a younger demographic.

Ambiguity in the service licences set for BBC radio, together with the significant advantages of cross-promotion across its multiple networks has in part led to the BBC's services dominating the radio market with a 54% share overall. This risks limiting the range of content for listeners and weakening, or crowding out, commercial competitors.

In a separate study, Radiocentre used the CompareMyRadio monitoring service over a seven week period earlier this year to study BBC Radio 1 and Radio 2. This research* shows that BBC Radio is not as distinct as might be expected. While BBC stations can be varied and diverse at times, the majority of the music played on the most popular BBC services has considerable crossover with commercial radio, especially during the day. The overlap between Radio 2 and commercial radio is 65% during weekday daytime hours. There is also overlap on Radio 1 at the same times: 53% of tracks are played by both BBC Radio 1 and commercial radio during the daytime slot.

Siobhan Kenny, CEO of Radiocentre, said:

"Charter Review is an opportunity to improve the distinctiveness of BBC radio. No one disputes the BBC's right to make popular programmes. But it doesn't serve the listener if the publicly funded broadcaster's repertoire too closely resembles what the commercial sector provides."

ENDS

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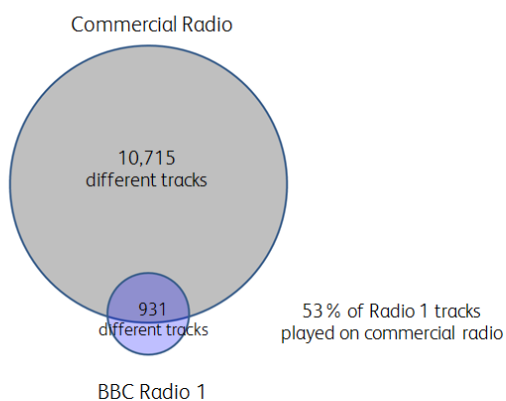
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*The key CompareMyRadio and Kantar Media findings are below:

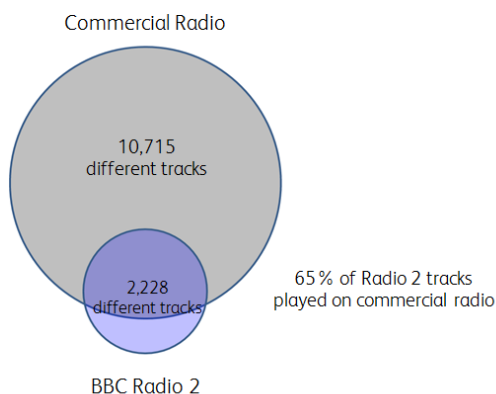
Commercial Radio vs Radio 1 (weekday daytime)



Source: CompareMyRadio

NOTE: different tracks played in weekday daytime (06.30 to 18.30) between 1 July – 18 August 2015

Commercial Radio vs Radio 2 (weekday daytime)



Source: CompareMyRadio

NOTE: different tracks played in weekday daytime (06.30 to 18.30) between 1 July – 18 August 2015

CompareMyRadio

In terms of spectrum and reach, there is no individual commercial station which can compare directly to a national BBC popular music service. Therefore we have looked at comparisons between Radio 1 and Radio 2 and a representative sample of 31 commercial radio stations and local networks monitored by the CompareMyRadio service over a seven week period. Tracks played in weekday daytime (06.30 to 18.30) between 1 July – 18 August 2015.



Listeners who say their main station is distinctive

Commercial station	%	BBC radio station	%
Planet Rock	69%	Radio 4	49%
Classic FM	50%	6 Music	44%
LBC	37%	4Extra	32%
Absolute	29%	5 Live	27%
talkSPORT	28%	Radio 2	23%
Smooth	24%	Radio 1	19%
Kiss	22%		
Capital	19%		
Magic	14%		
Heart	10%		

Source: Kantar Media

Kantar Media

A sample size of 3003 commercial and BBC radio listeners, weighted to be nationally representative. Fieldwork conducted between 21st August and 7th September 2015. Listeners on age, gender, social grade and region as well as weight of listening to BBC and commercial radio.