

18 new stations coming to the commercial radio market

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The addition of 18 new commercial radio stations will bring brand new opportunities into the market, plus a wealth of talent to go with it.

In 2014, a second national commercial radio DAB multiplex was awarded to Sound Digital – a combination of Arqiva, Bauer Media and UTV Media – which earlier this month announced its plan to switch on the network on 29th February 2016. The new multiplex is further support of the continued development of digital radio, with known and well-loved brands living exclusively or predominantly on digital platforms.

The switch-on will see the launch of 18 national radio stations including two original speech stations talkSPORT 2 (launching 15th March) and talkRADIO (21st March) from UTV, increasing choice and variety for speech stations and challenging the BBC's dominance in

this sector. The iconic Virgin Radio will be launching 29th March, making its return under a partnership between the Virgin Group and UTV on the multiplex, with the well-known ex-BBC presenter Edith Bowman presenting the breakfast show. Bauer's Mellow Magic, Kisstory and Absolute 80s, to name just a few, will launch in the following weeks. There will also be a range of compelling independent stations to cater for specific areas of interest, including jazz music, financial information, Christian programming, Asian music and children's programming.

Advertisers can benefit from more availability and a more diverse station selection. New stations open up the opportunity for sponsorships and promotions in dayparts that are already in high demand such as breakfast and drive. With these new stations there's more opportunity to stimulate incremental revenue into the market. We won't know how these stations perform in terms of listener figures until next quarter's RAJAR but everyone will be eagerly tuning in to hear how they've done. Latest RAJAR figures (released 4th February) show commercial radio has its highest ever audience, with 35.1m listeners per week, overtaking the BBC for the first time in 15 years. Commercial radio is in a fantastic place and there is real potential here for even more growth.

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