# New Balancing Act reports address media landscape

Two new briefing papers from Balancing Act published this week highlight the dilemmas faced by TV and radio broadcasters and, more broadly, media houses which also include newspapers. A range of factors are converging that will produce significant fragmentation of audiences in the faster developing countries.

By Russell Southwood 17 Nov 2010

And although advertising spend is set to increase, changes in how it is spent will again pose significant challenges.

## Companion pieces

The two new briefing papers, "Africa's fragmenting media landscape - changes in audiences and advertisi in broadcast", and "Advertising in Africa - retaining broadcast's share of the pie", are almost companion pieces, as the one looks at changing audience patterns and the other reviews the levels and pattern of advertising spending from those countries where data is available.

Liberalisation has bought competition that has fragmented both TV and radio audiences. In addition, the u of mobiles, the internet and programme recording devices is offering new platforms for distribution that is further fragmenting those audiences.

## Traditional media audiences being eaten away

The overall argument of the "Africa's fragmenting media landscape" briefing paper is that traditional broadcast media will find its audiences being eaten away at the edges by new media but that this trend will happen faster in some countries rather than others.

For example, factors as diverse as the increase in households with second televisions and the rise of soc networking are fragmenting who watches what. For example, at a breakfast briefing at AfricaCom 2010, th telecoms' industry's annual gathering, browser software company Opera revealed that in Kenya, there wer an average of 800 pageviews per user on mobiles.

This phenomenally high use of the internet among the 13-34 age groups will eat away time spent on other activities like broadcast television. Whilst radio can continue to be a background media, it is almost impossible to both watch television and update your Facebook page, even in today's multitasking world.

Obviously these kinds of changes do not affect some countries: for example, the briefing paper uses data from Sierra Leone to look at media use patterns in poorer countries where television still barely reaches o a quarter of the population.

## Newspaper advertising to lose out

The overall argument of the second briefing paper, "Advertising - retaining broadcast's share of the pie", is that broadcast advertising will continue to grow at the expense of newspaper advertising but will be subjec to marginal pressures from newly emerging internet and mobile media. However, the balance between rac and TV will swing in the latter's direction as overall transmission coverage levels increase.

It includes advertising spend projections for all of the major markets in Africa. Advertising spend is closely linked to overall economic growth and Africa has been lucky to have above average economic growth over the last ten years. It also looks set to continue to grow at the global averages found in many parts of the world.

## Data availability

The availability of data on advertising spend (particularly in sub-Saharan Africa) depends a great deal on the market having enough media owners and advertisers who are willing to pay agencies to monitor spending. Currently this happens on a consistent basis in about a dozen countries. But the data is gathered on the basis of the time of spots (radio and TV) or size of advertising (in print media).

This monitoring provides headline figures that do not take into account levels of discounting that in some areas (competitive radio markets) can be as high as 30-40%. It would be good to report that Africa's brand advertisers made well-informed choices when those media provided relevant audience research.

## Research-based media planning lacking

The sad truth is that there is not widespread research-based media planning, even in those markets where the market research exists that would make it possible. Decisions tend to be made on the basis of the "perceived value" of a particular channel, both on radio and TV: the translation of this statement is that advertising agencies still back the programmes they themselves like.

However, there is a clear trend in the audiences for products that are bought between Africa's middle classes who are buying things like financial products and the rest of the population (both urban and rural) who buy only daily household items like washing powders and soft drinks.

The latter has benefited vernacular radio stations that have been much more successful at reaching these audiences than the more urban-based television audiences.

For more information on the "Africa's fragmenting media landscape - changes in audiences and advertising in broadcast", and "Advertising in Africa - retaining broadcast's share of the pie" briefing reports, go to www.balancingact-africa.com/reports/list.


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Russell Southwood is the chief executive of Balancing Act and the editor of its weekly e-letter on telecoms, internet and computing News Update. He founded Balancing Act as a broadcast, telecoms and internet consultancy and research house focused on Africa. As a consultant, he has worked for a variety of clients looking at: satellite vs. fibre infrastructure in Africa; the creation of a regional internet exchange point; the future for triple play services in Africa; the development of local internet content and services; and policy development on the African continent. Southwood spends half his time travelling across Africa, visiting clients and attending major telecoms and audiovisual events. He can be contacted at [[editorial@balancingact-africa.com]].