

Radio, TV channels rapidly increasing in Africa

A rapid increase in the number of radio and TV channels in Africa over the last three years has piqued interest in the continent by international media players. A recent report, African Broadcast and Film Markets, published jointly by Balancing Act and InterMedia, has documented this growth.

The report – a detailed look at the state of broadcasting in 40 African countries, including 17 in-country audience surveys – provides data and insights broadcasters, advertisers and governments can use to find and develop markets, increase their reach and strengthen their impact among African audiences.

Explosion in number

The report finds that the liberalisation of radio broadcasting in many countries has led to an explosion in the number of radio stations, particularly those broadcasting in local languages. Known in East Africa as the "vernaculars," these stations have been a high growth area over the last five years. The most vivid example of this trend is in Uganda, where there are now more than 150 radio stations, 69% of which cater to audiences in the country's 38 different languages.

Television broadcasting outlets have also increased steeply; out of 40 markets surveyed in sub-Saharan Africa, the report finds nearly half (18) have licensed free-to-air TV channels.

"African broadcasting is undergoing a period of major growth as more countries are liberalising and increasing the number of channels," says Russell Southwood, author of the report. "The level of radio and television ownership has kept pace, also increasing very rapidly. International media players are paying close attention to the new opportunities that are opening up."

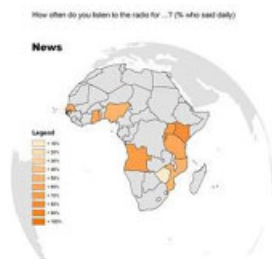
Rise in radio listenership

The most striking trend in terms of audiences is the rise in radio listenership. There is a huge appetite for FM music radio; consumers also hunger for entertainment television, says InterMedia analyst Hugh Hope-Stone.

"Africans, both sub-Saharan and North African, surround themselves with music in cars, public transportation, shops and homes. Wherever deregulation has taken place, multiple FM channels have emerged. Growing cable and satellite subscriber bases suggests more people are willing and able to pay for services," he says.

Alongside this interest in music and entertainment television, African listeners and viewers also hunger for news (see map below). However, the report finds they tend to trust either the new private broadcasters or NGO-run radio and TV stations for news more than they do government-run broadcasters. This is particularly true in North African countries such as

Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt, where channels like Al Jazeera attract large audiences.



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Additionally, the report finds that with the introduction of competition into the pay TV market, there are an increasing number of people with access to a wider range of programmes than are currently available on terrestrial television, particularly sports events, such as the UK Premiership and the recent Africa Cup of Nations.

Further boost

These services are largely delivered by satellite, although there are now a small number of IP-TV and cable operators. The majority of pay TV subscribers are found in Africa's urban areas. This trend towards pay TV is likely to receive a further boost when a number of operators introduce "triple play"— a combination service that includes voice, internet and TV programming services – later in the year.

The African Broadcast and Film Markets report also includes:

- an overview of the broadcast industry across the continent
- the impact of liberalisation versus state control
- the battle for pay-TV subscribers and potential market size
- the costs of local and international programming
- the digital switchover and high-definition
- the continent's mobile TV roll-out

It also has survey-based analyses of 17 countries: Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Details are available at www.balancingact-africa.com/publications.html and www.balancingact-africa.com/broadcast_markets.html

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