

# YFM youth about to be clued up to the *BBC Minute*

 By Leigh Andrews

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Saturday, 14 February isn't just about bumped-up prices for red roses and chocolates - it'll also see the launch of *BBC Minute*, a one-minute global English news round-up on YFM...

But why is the BBC World Service suddenly focused on radio? Why did they select YFM? What goes into targeting today's connected youth with a specially compiled news minute twice an hour, 24-hours a day, 7-days a week?

I chatted to *BBC Minute* presenter Victoria Uwonkunda for the answers to these and other burning questions...

## ■ ***Let's start with the basics - how did the idea for BBC Minute come about?***

**Uwonkunda:** We've identified a demand for a quick round up of international news from younger audiences. Our global research has demonstrated that audiences - under 35 in particular, which makes up half the global population - are interested these short round ups of news, they can access from the platforms they're already on, like FM music stations and music-sharing sites. We thought about the quickest, most efficient way to generate and relay the news and *BBC Minute* was born as a result of this sense of urgency amongst youth, globally.

## ■ ***Has this been done elsewhere, to suggest the SA version will be a success?***



Victoria Uwonkunda at the YFM mic

**Uwonkunda:** *BBC Minute* is a brand new product from BBC World Service aimed at young audiences around the world. In addition to the launch on YFM in South Africa, *BBC Minute* will also launch on radio stations around the world.

In Africa, stations including Kiss FM in Tanzania, Radio 2 and QFM in Zambia, and XFM in Uganda will all be carrying *BBC Minute*.

The feedback from these partners is that *BBC Minute* fits the high-energy, music intensive formats they operate. They were thrilled at the potential of carrying a new global news product, produced with the expertise of BBC journalists and fed directly from the BBC Newsroom.

## ■ ***What made YFM the radio station of choice for the South African version of the show?***

**Uwonkunda:** YFM is the biggest platform for the 16-34 age group in the greater Johannesburg area and is music-driven. This puts them directly in touch with the interests and habits of a young South African audience.

YFM is also already the biggest source of news for this audience, and the partnership with *BBC Minute* will provide a global perspective to their bulletins offering youth audiences an additional way of consuming news.

■ ***It must be quite intense to repeat this twice an hour, 24/7 - tell us more about the team involved...***

**Uwonkunda:** It requires quite a lot of intense work to make *BBC Minute*, and to ensure it reaches our partners and audiences in time.

The team is made up of senior and broadcast journalists and producers who bring the global expertise from across the breadth of the BBC News division. That, and of course an editor to oversee our work.

■ ***Then let's look at the actual work involved - describe the process involved in condensing global news into a 60-second bulletin.***

**Uwonkunda:** We in the *BBC Minute* team are lucky to have one of the world's largest newsrooms at our fingertips. We use the core bulletins - news stories that are already in our system - choosing stories that we know will interest our audience. We also use other news sources such as newspapers, TV and online, and check social media platforms to see what's trending and what's being talked about, and why. We do look for news that isn't necessarily on the BBC but that we know will be interesting and fun for our target audience.

In our editorial meetings, we talk the stories through - how we are approaching them, which treatment to give them and what clips we think will best complement the stories.

When writing, our rule is that all sentences should be short, punchy, catchy and conversational. A senior journalist in the team will look over the scripts and make changes where necessary, before we record them at our desks using lip mics, editing them as soon as they are in, and adding in anything else needed, like clips or sound effects. Finally, we have a senior member of the team listen in on the finished product before it's signed off and ready to go.

■ ***What will the actual content be like, as it's described as 'youth music radio and aimed at younger, connected audiences'...***

**Uwonkunda:** The one-minute summary aims to keep audiences updated on what's trending on social and the latest international news headlines - as well as - major global stories across the worlds of sport, technology, entertainment and science. We're always thinking about what our audience is interested in and we want to know what they want to know! Social media is a great source for capturing the hottest conversations of the hour.

We focus on the plot of the story, and ensure that the main objective is covered - to fit a story in to one minute.

■ ***Might we soon see TV being available on radio platforms, as part of the digital mix?***

**Uwonkunda:** *BBC Minute* is primarily an audio product, but we love to play with ideas, and are experimenting with ways to visualise the news. So perhaps in the near future? We know younger audiences are very visual, hence the popularity of platforms such as YouTube, Vine and Instagram. Eventually we'd like to be able to offer this experience to our audience as well.

■ ***Lastly, is there any special reason for launching on Valentine's Day?***

**Uwonkunda:** None at all! It was simply just a date - but do we hope South African audiences will fall in love with *BBC Minute*!

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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