

The role of media audience research in emerging markets

 By [Oresti Patricios](#)

26 Sep 2013

There is a need for transparency, and to tell not just one story, but many.

The 15th Pan African Media Research Organisation (PAMRO) conference this year was held in the fourth largest island in the world, Madagascar. In the wake of the recent discussions around SAARF and NAB for South Africa, this conference had much bigger obligations than just sharing information. Held in Antananarivo, Madagascar's capital, papers presented this year covered Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Holland, Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, and South Africa.

The three-day conference kicked off with a talk from Riaan Manser. Manser, twice recipient of the Out There Adventurer of the Year accolade for 2006 and 2009 shared life lessons from some of his adventures. Some of them dangerous - he was held hostage by child soldiers, got locked up for being suspected of being a spy, witness people's limbs being cut off - and yet he did not stop in his quest for adventure.

After cycling the perimeter of Africa alone, circumnavigating Madagascar also alone on his kayak and circumnavigating Iceland on a double-kayak with a partner Dan Skinstad, Manser has experienced a myriad cultures and people.

Always deliver what you promise

"There's an ocean between saying and doing," said Manser, adding that this mantra has taught him one crucial lesson: To Always Deliver What You Promise. This life lesson is one that we as marketers need to learn. At a time where competitive activity locally and globally is stiff across most categories, this message could not be echoed enough. Keeping promises goes beyond being true to a piece of advertisement, to being honest brands that positively impact the lives of the African communities.

I presented a paper with Joe Otin from Ipsos-Pan Africa, Kenya and we focused on content from and about Africa's emerging markets. The presentation touched on how media content in the global arena tells the story of Africa and perpetrate stereotypes. We discussed how these stereotypes although not false, are not the only truth there is about Africa. In fact, the stories are much bigger, and as marketers and media researchers, the importance of telling many stories will justify a better place for African economies globally. Echoing the words of Nigerian author and TED fellow Chimamanda Adichie, we asserted that the danger of a single story is in that it is not the complete story.

Africa is a continent of many countries... Each with its own stories

Nielsen hosted the breakfast spot on day two, sharing information from their operational areas. The research powerhouse shared that they are now in direct contact with up to two million people across Africa, proving to be a stronghold in consumer research. Dwight Watson and Craig Johnson echoed that Africa should not be lumped into just a continent but rather, 54 distinct countries with different forces that shape the markets.

On day three, GfK's presentation crunched down to independent audience research. For South Africa, this presentation spoke directly to the SAARF/NAB conflict, backing up the assertion that independent research, led by an independent marketing industry body is more credible than research led by media owners. Nielsen's gave a case study citing Spanish stations in the US audience research. The take-out was that independent research was trusted better by advertisers and resulted in increase in advertising spend, in comparison to audience measurement done by media owners.

The importance of transparency cannot be underscored enough when it comes to statistics and the lesson for South Africa, and other African countries whose broadcasters may be contemplating to pull out, was that joint industry committees provide more credible and preferable research from an advertiser's perspective.

This year's PAMRO was again a melting pot of experiences from the media and marketing fraternities. The cross pollination of ideas and knowledge is necessary if media research taxonomies and methodologies for the 54 market strong continent are to be substantiated. The gap that still remains is the harmonising the different data metrics and ensuring that the numbers from therein are nothing but impeachable.

ABOUT ORESTI PATRICIOS

Oresti Patricios, CEO of the OrnicoGroup (www.ornico.co.za), has long been on the cutting edge of the media, advertising and branding industries. He has an MBA at GIBS and did his thesis on social media when Twitter was barely a twit. He has always driven his vision of dominating African media & brand intelligence. Contact Oresti on tel +27 (0)11 884 5041 or email Oresti@ornicogroup.co.za and follow @orestaki on Twitter.

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