

Desire for electronic entertainment in Africa

By [Ndirangu wa Maina](#)

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Next time you take a matatu and find everybody nodding to themselves with iPods on their laps, don't sneer. Just walk to the next empty seat and flip to the entertainment section of your daily newspaper and make a date with your favourite TV soap. The latest research by Consumer Insight Africa shows that majority of Kenyans, 53% to be specific, spend their free time either listening to music or watching TV.



But before you cringe in anger and curse the liberalisation of the airwaves for turning Kenyans into music and TV addicts, take heart that this is not a Kenyan-only peculiarity.

Across the border in Uganda and Somaliland, music is a pastime for seven in every 10 people. In other words, at least 70% of the population thinks, sleeps and walks music. Is this the secret for the runaway success of Ugandan musicians when their Kenyan counterparts can barely make ends meet?

Leading the pack

And when it comes to watching TV, Ugandans and Somalis still lead the pack, with at least 67% and 71% of their respective population watching TV for leisure and entertainment.

This is surprising, given the fact that Uganda has only three major TV stations — the state-owned UTV WBS, the first private broadcasting station and EATV, the regional entertainment livewire, while Kenya has six stations, including NTV, KTN, KBC, STV, Citizen and Family — excluding the pay satellite stations.

If you switched off TV transmission stations in Tanzania, only 46% of the population would howl at you, 41% in Nigeria, 28% in Ghana and 50% in Mozambique.

Dare you not try any mischief in Somaliland, the regional citadel of electronics, where the TV is a treasure to 74% of the population. The same applies to Angola, where listening to music and watching TV are the most popular pastimes, with at least 84% listening to music and 76% watching TV.

What stokes the craving?

Could the absence of variety have stoked the craving for electronic entertainment in the region? Our research on how people in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Somaliland, Mozambique, Nigeria, Angola and Ghana spend their free time and the social places they usually frequent shows that entertainment is the most popular pastime, and it cuts across cultures and borders. That is why Somaliland, though being the cradle of the war-torn Somalia, has the highest number of TV and music (71 and 74%) fans in Eastern Africa.

It also tells us one or two things about the power of music. A casual glance at the statistics show that music would be the most effective vehicle for social change in society. That from Nigeria in West Africa, Somalia in eastern Africa and Angola in southern Africa music is food for many souls.

But where musicians don't reap in revenues, bars and pubs harvest in full measure. Even after the Government banned sale of liquor in sachets to protect our excitable youngsters from degenerating into zombies, bars are still doing brisk business.

From the ever-jammed Nairobi pubs along Kimathi Street to the evergreen joints along Moi Avenue to the relatively affordable Tom Mboya hang-outs, one thing is definite: You can never go wrong with investment in pubs and bars. If you want higher returns, rush to Angola, where at least 25% of the population take alcoholic drinks in their free time. In Uganda, it is 20%, Kenya 17% and Mozambique 13%. Restaurant operators with expansionist tendencies better keep off Somalia and Nigeria where consumption of alcohol during free time is negligible.

Very religious

Africans are a very religious lot. With the exception of Tanzania where only 50% of the population go to church or mosque, in Kenya (67%) and Uganda (86%), churches and mosques are the most visited places. In Nigeria, churches and mosques attract 69% of the population and 33% in Angola. In other words, if you are a clergy with an eye for investment, you cannot go wrong with religion in Uganda, Nigeria and Kenya. In Uganda, where the First Lady Janet Museveni is the self-proclaimed leader of born again Christians, popularly known as Balokole, 36% of the people attend crusades.

This is followed closely by Mozambique (35%), Nigeria (16%), Tanzania (21%) and Kenya (11%). But it is Angola that is an evangelist's paradise. At least 77% of the people interviewed while away their time in crusades. This means that you are more likely to meet a lost friend at a crusade than any other place in the former Portuguese colony.

Perhaps because of interacting with animals from an early age, only 9% of the population polled visit game parks and 1% museums. Uganda takes the Adventure Award of the century. Twenty five percent of Kampala residents while their time at the beach. Kenya, with its rich coastline, only 5% of Nairobians find time to visit the beach. At least Dar-es-salaam residents have no phobia of beaches and 29% sunbathe along the sandy coastlines, compared to 22% Nigerians.

In business terms, if you wanted to introduce beach football, you are better off trying Kampala and Dar-es-salaam. For Kenyans, it seems, beaches are a preserve of tourists and oceans for fishing. And if you thought Nigeria is a continental sports superpower because of fanatical domestic support, what with their superb runners, footballers and NBA stars, think again. For all its might, only 21% of Nigerians visit sports grounds for leisure, as opposed to 32% Tanzanians and 37% Ugandans.

Most superfluous

While Ugandans are the most outgoing people, they are also the most superfluous of the lot. Shopping malls are big attractions in Uganda, and not just for window-shopping as Kenyans are wont to. While only 25% of Kenyans go shopping

on their free time, 39% of Ugandans take over shopping malls, compared to 11% Tanzanians, 18% Nigerians and 29% in Mozambique.

But where East Africans lead in consumerism, Ghanaians lead in domestic tourism. At least 83% of the population visit tourism sites for leisure, followed by Angola 52%, Mozambique 34%, Uganda and Tanzania 12% a piece and Kenya, with all its parks and beaches, only 7%.

Want to know why Ugandan towns always smell food? For 41% of Ugandans, cooking is a hobby. Twenty five percent of Tanzania and 16% of Kenya take their time to cook. This explains why restaurants and hotels are doing booming business in Kenya. Forty three percent of people, four in every 10, visit them. Only 18% in Tanzania and 39% in Uganda.

But it is Angolans who are having the best of both worlds. While cooking is a hobby for 41%, 48% of the population flocks to hotels and restaurants.

For lack of pubs, 45% of Somalis spend their time in movie theatres. In matters discotheque, southern Africans, humble East and West Africans. While only 16% Kenyans, 15% Tanzanians, and 13% Ugandans patronise discos, 31% Angolans and 23% Mozambiqueans love being on the rave. Little wonder that the southerners are dance hall kings, with 37% Angolans and 17% Mozambiqueans shaking a leg for leisure, compared to Kenya's 14%, Tanzania's 13% and Uganda's 16%.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ndirangu wa Maina nm@ciafrica.com is group MD of Consumer Insight Africa, a market research firm with offices in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria and South Africa, and associates in much of the rest of Africa. Established in 1998, it has developed particular knowledge of the African consumer with regard to the brands, products, services, and media they consume and the socio-economic explanations behind these behavioural tendencies.

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