

Banking product becomes 'soap' radio star

The new Standard Bank offering for the lower income market, AccessBanking, is fast becoming a radio star on 11 SABC and community radio stations in six languages, through the afternoon 'soap' Iketsetse-Zenzele, which has the show's writers weave the branded consumer information into the storyline of every episode.

Branded content has been part of the marketing toolkit for decades, but has recently attracted growing international and local attention as marketers explore executions that move away from advertising as an interruption, towards advertising as interaction.

Iketsetse-Zenzele may not be a new departure, but the bank believes the use of so many stations and languages at once may make this campaign the most extensive use of radio-based branded content to date.

The radio show is already linked to SMS and web-based platforms, mechanisms that help bank strategists assess impact and listener intake of key product messages.

The show started in March 2013 and by July 2013, more than 290,000 entries had already been received for the show's weekly SMS competition.

Download

In addition, the bank's blog enables the show's fans to download their favourite episodes or episodes they missed. Four-and-a-half months into the series, episode downloads topped the 16,000 mark.

Jacqui Carnelley, head of marketing for personal and business banking at [Standard Bank](#), says, "These response figures are unheard of in this market and clearly shows that our stories resonate with our customers." She adds that information is educational and helpful, rather than a hard sell. The bank sees branded content as a useful tool for reaching a strategically important market segment.

A recent Finscope survey indicates that 43% of South African adults are unbanked and 51% of adults have or use informal mechanisms for managing their finances while 19% have or use no financial products or services.

Product information, inserted into episodes of the show, highlights basic consumer benefits such as how to obtain an AccessLoan or how AccessPoints at spaza shops and retailers can be used to send or draw cash, or pay for groceries and airtime.

When it comes to educational drives in particular, fresh approaches are needed to keep the target market engaged and

willing to participate.

Engaging story sells services

"While branded content may be a novel concept in South Africa, radio dramas have been around for decades. Listeners enjoy the dramas, as they are a great source of entertainment," says Carnelley. "However, a lot of information can also be conveyed in a way that does not detract from a listener's everyday routine.

"In looking for an innovative way to reach our customers, we tried to find platforms and channels that customers were already comfortable engaging with. We have seen a phenomenal response. Whether listeners are tuned in while travelling, or while busy with household activities, they are listening to information that is conveyed in an easy-to-understand and entertaining way. Our objective was to use alternative methods to traditional marketing to reach our customers. We found that learning about banking products and services is easier when you tell a story."

Research on the target market and relevant messaging and story lines was carried out jointly by the bank, its media company OMD and RadioHeads, the specialist radio marketing agency that conceptualised and produced the shows.

The bank has invested in a range of interventions to support the show, including Standard Bank TV, radio, social media and its blog.

"This is one component of a much bigger integrated marketing strategy that will unfold across various media in the next month," Carnelley concludes.

View the video of making the radio drama:

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