

Appsolutely awesome insights from the final AfricApps session

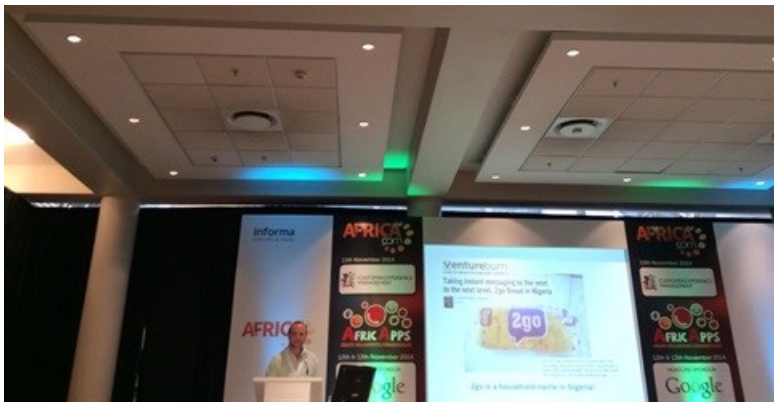
 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

18 Nov 2014

Have you factored slow EDGE and desktop link incompatibility into your mobile app design process? These hot topics were bandied about on the last day of AfricApps at AfricaCom 2014.

I attended the final AfricApps workshops of AfricaCom 2014 on the topic of mobile marketing app opportunity. This included sessions on creating multiplatform apps for African consumers, as well as integrating mobile engagement as part of overall brand strategy and case studies on how the myEdit and GoMetro apps were launched.

Riccardo Pasqualotto, head of advertising at [2go](#), the free mobile social networking app, started by speaking about the need to stop seeing Africa as a country, as a campaign that does well in Nigeria won't necessarily translate successfully to the rest of the continent, each market is different.



Pasqualotto in action at the final day of AfricaCom's AfricApps session...

He then spoke of creating multi-platform apps for consumers. There are already so many apps out there that Pasqualotto suggests rather using existing infrastructure, reach and expertise than to start over from scratch. Added to this, he suggests using a multi-platform app so you don't miss a key market segment. In a survey of 2go respondents, the bulk of respondents stated they access entertainment while sitting commuting and the clear majority, at 68%, said they stay connected to friends and family through mobile chat, with only 8% citing face-to-face as their preferred method of communication. Pasqualotto says this is scary, but a global phenomenon as we prefer to interact to on screens.

Has the word 'million' lost its relevance and mobile meaning?

If you haven't heard of 2go, you're missing out on a key African marketing opportunity. It's no small fry, with 12 million monthly active users in Nigeria and 1.1 million in South Africa. Pasqualotto acknowledges that we throw around the word 'million' a lot these days but the figure is still important as it shows the network reaches the most mobile users in Africa and is accessible on basic handsets. This is key as roughly 80% of the handsets in Africa and 65% of those in South Africa are still feature phones. "It's really important not to use a desktop link then, and with the EDGE network, the download speed is too slow for active engagement," he says.

With this in mind, he says to create mobisites and apps that render on 'dumb phones', too. Don't feel this makes them inferior as you can still target age, gender, location, and, by using a platform like 2go that works across platforms, you don't have to specifically tailor the campaign to a number of apps. The brand is so popular across the continent that when a bread brand named 2go became available in Nigeria, people [commented](#) that next we'll see 'Twitter detergent', while [Memeburn](#) stuck to the food theme by suggesting it'll actually be Twitter cookies or Facebook chocolate - definitely a

household name then.

“ [#habarituongee2013](https://twitter.com/habarituongee2013) sincerest flattery...! 2go bread spotted in Nigeria! <http://t.co/GPNN3UNEqP>
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A few tips on successful mobile marketing to Africa

Pasqualotto said to keep in mind that certain apps are more popular in certain pockets, meaning that different platforms work better in different markets - Facebook notwithstanding, as that tends to be a success no matter where it's used - so it's a good idea to string it altogether across different channels, and 2go is a good way to do so. As an example of this, he pointed out that while the BBM craze was at its peak about five years ago in South Africa, it's really taking off in Nigeria at the moment, so you shouldn't rule it out if you're looking to access this market. It's also interesting that advertising can now click out to a client's site directly, meaning lots of engagements are possible.

So if you're not on a chat network and social media apps, you're just not going to catch the real time audience. Football, fashion, society and entertainment do well as interest sites, so these are a good bet.

Pasqualotto ended by saying we will get there in Africa, it's just a case of getting retailers on board. Then, realise that the user is paying out of their own airtime to connect with you, so you need to make the experience as simple and pain-free as possible,

Desere Orrill, CMO of Ole! Media Group, took to the podium next, speaking as MD of MobiMedia. She elected not to speak on technology or specific examples of products or services, rather on how mobile marketers can employ the [mobile tools we have](#) to bring brands closer to audience in Africa.

Darwinian thinking, dumb phone majority and finding that marketing sweet spot

Orrill started off by talking about how the communication model has changed, with social media now offering access to all market segments. But there is no holy grail on doing so effectively, so we need to use common sense, as [Darwin's theory of evolution](#) confirmed it's not the strongest but the most adaptive to change that will succeed.

Consumers are bombarded with information, as many marketers are stuck in a broadcast mentality where they simply send information out and don't take in feedback to best tailor the feedback. There's no denying that smartphone use is increasing at a rapid rate, but by 2018 it's expected that for every smartphone there will still be 3.5 'dumb phones' in Africa, therefore mobile marketers need to think inclusively and not overdo it as the current basic technology of SMS and USSD is effective.

“ [TECNO](#) to launch sub-\$30 [#smartphone](#) next year <http://t.co/bzQu36k9Ee> [@BiztechAfrica](#) [#mobile](#) [#africacom](#)- [ICT Business Africa](#) (@BizTalkAfrica) [November 14, 2014](#) ”

Therefore Orrill suggests sticking to text-based content and letting the digital complement other traditional marketing

methods, and don't forget to let consumers talk back and tell you what they actually want. But we still need to find the sweet spot where all parties benefit, so marketers build an active database and consumers get the information and entertainment they're after, such as when you include a reward mechanism in the interaction as well as a free ringtone or quiz so that it's not just about getting consumers to register their details. These are the basic ingredients needed to increase mobile engagement and getting that all important feedback from the audience.

After all, an effective mobile marketing campaign should reach a carefully targeted audience. The best way to do so is to use clear visual concepts, simple technology, and to engage mobile consumers with a compelling value proposition. Keep it simple. It's also a good idea to make use of [gamification](#) in the non-emerging markets, by using people's innate competitiveness to drive loyalty for your brand. By getting people to engage and accomplish certain tasks, then reap the rewards in the form of badges and having their name posted on a leader board appeals to our 'show and tell' mentality and that bragging element that people enjoy. Remember that social media is where we want to talk and be spoken about and it's part of human desire for acknowledgement. While Facebook's the obvious choice with its 50 million+ users, Orrill says Mxit is also a worthwhile platform with its five million active users locally and having just launched in India earlier this year - it's even [available on Apple](#), now so don't discount it as viable alternative to a smartphone app.

In closing, Orrill suggested a good way to test the effectiveness of a mobisite is to hold a cup of hot coffee in one hand and successfully navigate through the site with the other.

I'mbored.co.za - Facebook marketing lessons from a mobile services start-up

Lorraine Steyn, simplifier-in-chief at [I'm Bored](#), touted as the most comprehensive 'what's on' app for families, spoke about her lessons in fighting Facebook.

In planning the app launch, Steyn decided it would be tricky to start on the web and port it across to mobile, so instead she started mobile first, particularly on Android as had growing mobile share. At first Facebook marketing seemed to do the trick, with 'friend of friend' targeting giving an incredible lift, so Steyn recommends targeting people who already like your page, as this adds an element of trustworthiness.

Steyn also found that posting a text status with a picture or link got smaller reach than if she simply posted a text-status as there was less chance of Facebook filtering this out of your friends' newsfeeds. Once launched, she also found that the audience who visited the Joburg page were more responsive than the Cape Town audience and that the bulk of moms the app targets don't actually download apps. Steyn now feels iOS or Apple would have been better than Android.

Despite discovering that [Facebook's engagement rates](#) are low, Steyn says they will still use the mechanism, but will

experiment outside South Africa, with the mindset that even when people are liking, clicking and sharing content it doesn't mean that content had the best reach.

Steyn concludes that chasing engagement is a difficult game and despite what anyone says, content is still king. The possibility of testing is what is so fantastic about digital, and you learn a lot by getting involved yourself, so don't hand your social media off to someone else.

Mobile marketing case studies: myEdit and GoMetro

Following lunch, Renato Balona, business manager at Media24, spoke of the [myEdit app](#), which pulls in all magazine and blog content from the stable, so he cleared up a misconception that the content on the app is already available online - instead, it's premium. In launching the app, Balona says he learned not to assume anything, to test everything, always look at analytics, to see what, where and when people look at, and to turn problems into opportunities if you get negative feedback. He recommends being agile and developing quickly, but also keeping the whole process simple, from operations to how the app is used. A new team took over in May, with the app having launched a year ago. The team listened to users and advertisers, found what they wanted and were unhappy with, did lots of testing, then customised and tweaked and forged new relationships. In addition to implementing a new user interface and improved user experience, marketing efforts were refocused in order to make sure the app content was going to the right people in the right way.

Next was Andrew Gillett of GoMetro who spoke of the app's success and plans to expand it around Africa. GoMetro was launched in 2012 when Gillett's business partner, Justin Coetzee, a regular user of public transport got sick of a lack of information regarding train delays and the like. The [app's doing well](#), with over 750,000 downloads and a strong Mxit following with 150,000 monthly users. It was initially launched as mobi-first, with funding from Blackberry and Nokia, as well as a USSD channel as the partners acknowledged that the majority of people they were targeting have dumb phones.

Gillett says it's critical to understand the business model on who your users are - with GoMetro they target train commuters, but built beyond that to incorporate multimodal transport such as the MyCiti bus service. He added that from a design point of view, users are no longer just users, they are also producers, collaborators and consumers. In giving users a voice on the app by letting them add their own updates and ask questions, comment or rate others' posts adds a layer of virality, helping users see that their input is making a difference in other people's lives.

“ Don't halve the equity, double the money. Fundraising lessons by [@GillettRazor #africapps @AllAboutCom](#)- Lianne du Toit (@Barefoot_Binary) [November 13, 2014](#) ”

Gillett's final advice on launching a mobile apps is to [launch quickly](#) - don't wait for it to be perfect or pretty. You can and will do bug fixes along the way, and there will always be feature requests as long as your arm. He closes with a reminder to be realistic with your business valuation and to leave the big dreaming for when you're in bed.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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