

8 years of Iketsetse Zenzele "Wallet Wise": Leaving a brand legacy through radio dramas

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16 Nov 2020

Radio dramas have long been a powerful tool to captivate audiences through creative storytelling. The format touches on education, information and entertainment in a way that others can only dream of, and as a result it's no surprise that many corporate marketing campaigns still lean on it as part of a broader strategy to reach their target audience. It also provides brands with a platform to share important messaging through the subtle art of the soft sell.

In a world where authentic storytelling is getting harder and harder thanks to shrinking consumer attention spans, the format continues to thrive.

Standard Bank has always valued radio and the reach of the medium. As a brand that recognises the power of audio and is progressive in approach, Standard Bank entrusted the Mediaheads360 team to conceptualise, write and produce *Iketsetse Zenzele*.

The concept is a five-minute radio drama that airs as part of Standard Bank's "Wallet Wise" financial literacy programme. Flying in 10 of the 11 official languages, the drama series airs for 20 weeks of the year with its primary goal being, to help a segment of the bank's target market empower themselves on financial matters like fraud, keeping an eye out for scams and knowing what to do to avoid being a victim of cybercrime. In the recent season of the radio drama, research has indicated that Listeners have found the drama to provide useful information on financial management to help them get through Covid 19.

Long-running programmes like the SABC's *Iketsetse Zenzele* serve to prove the merit of the radio drama, having successfully captured the imagination of millions of listeners (including existing and would-be clients for Standard Bank) since the first episode aired back in 2012.

So why has it been so popular, what is the current state of the radio drama format as a whole, and is there a way for brands to use this marketing tool in a way that helps them leave a lasting legacy over time?

The success of the radio drama format

Radio dramas continue to be successful because they haven't lost touch with their roots over the years. In the earlier days, programmes focused squarely on life pillars like tradition, values and social issues, making them a talking point for people living in all corners of the country. This type of storytelling lives on in 2020, and radio dramas still serve to connect a specific audience of listeners with similar backgrounds, economic positions, and basic interests.

It didn't take long for brands to realise that these shows could be used in a multitude of ways to get messaging out into these markets:

- Dramas could be an **educational tool** for one, especially when new products or services are being launched, and in particular if there was unfamiliar jargon to be introduced.
- The programmes could also be used to **spread critical information** related to an ongoing news event or rising social issue, where brands may have wanted to gently place themselves within the conversation in order to portray relevance;
- Brands also realised that there was a lot of **entertainment value** in how storylines could be a way to get people excited, and better yet, get them talking and spreading the word.

These three areas are interchangeable within any radio drama, and can vary from show to show, or season to season, as the concept develops and as the needs of the brand change over time. It's also worth mentioning that as shows get renewed, the recall value increases, and with an established audience it is far easier (and cheaper) to get specific messaging out in comparison to some of the other competitive marketing avenues on offer.

The Curious Case of *Iketsetse Zenzele*

Iketsetse Zenzele is unique in the sense that the SABC gave the MediaHeads 360 team permission to create what was one of the first of its kind when it was first being developed. The programme was given the greenlight to be a *client-led* radio drama, rather than just being a conventional show where the brand builds branding into the show irrespective of storylines. The agency was effectively able to lead the storytelling process with the goals of the client in mind, rather than writing a story and adding the brand in later as an afterthought.

Listeners responded well. As the show continues into its eight season, these days it plays a significant role in helping to develop financial literacy within the specific target market of the bank (consumers R8000 or less per month). The concept was initially created with a goal to shape consumer perceptions favourably in a bid to grow leads, acquisitions and loyalty within the market. Has it done what it set out to do all those years ago?

To answer this, the MediaHeads 360 team continues to conduct annual consumer research to measure the impact of the programme and its corresponding campaign. This research suggests an increase in market awareness of the drama itself from year to year, despite format changes. "*Iketsetse Zenzele* has proven more and more effective year on year," says Nicole Banks, Director of FGI. "The change in format in 2019 showed an encouraging increase in the drama's ability to deliver on its purpose".

Nicole's findings suggest that *Iketsetse Zenzele*'s efficacy score increased by a staggering 21% from 2018 to 2019. This has no doubt helped by the fact that the drama continues to introduce realistic storylines, offering scenarios that the audience can relate back to their own lives. The information is always delivered in a manner that is easy to understand, empowering listeners to improve their financial knowledge, which they can put in practice for the years to come.

Other radio dramas shaping the South African industry

Iketsetse Zenzele is one of a long list of radio dramas created specifically for brands looking to tap into a specific audience segment. The MediaHeads 360 team has also been involved in campaigns for McDonalds, Engen, Cape Town Fire and Safety, Drive Dry and even the South African Reserve Bank. The agency has subsequently become specialists in the field, with a team of writers in tow, access to studios and equipment, a strong list of on call TV actors and producers, and more.

"It's a privilege to work on these types of campaigns, there is a real passion in the Mediaheads360 Team to deliver content that educates communities and allows them to uplift themselves." says Refue Mofokeng, Head of Creative and Production. "Our team offers brands the prospect of conceptualising and executing innovative dramas in a way that satisfies needs and goals, all the while giving listeners something unique and memorable in the process too".

Doing just that requires being mindful about the SABC and its responsibility to preserve the vernacular languages of South Africa. This is an important component of how new dramas are developed, and the agency prides itself on having a perfect record in relation to their scripts containing the correct language use. In a multicultural country like South Africa, protecting and preserving long-term culture should be a priority, and certainly *is* a responsibility for any agency with the power to influence millions through their ongoing campaigns.

Radio dramas: The sky's the limit

Consumer financial education is a key priority at Standard Bank, Lindy-Lou Alexander - Head of Marketing: Personal and Business Banking South Africa says, "We are passionate about empowering consumers with the education they need to

make informed financial decisions in their everyday lives. It is not only rewarding and purposeful, but it is essential in changing the wellbeing of financially excluded South Africans. Radio dramas help us do that”.

As *Iketsetse Zenzele* and the other successful programmes have shown, radio dramas continue to be an effective way for brands to get specific messaging out in a creative way that steers clear of quick-fix, hard sell promotions. These shows are compelling in their ability to use storytelling to encourage customers to not only engage with the brand as they grow more familiar with it over time, but once sufficient trust has been established, the idea is that the specific brand is front of mind as soon as the consumer is ready to make a buying decision. This type of authentic connection - which takes time to nurture and grow - also helps brands to differentiate themselves from their competitors in a highly competitive world.

With this in mind, and with some of the best creatives in the country working on these campaigns, the sky's the limit for what can be achieved through this special and unique format.

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