

HARNESSING AFRICA'S DIGITAL FUTURE

Edited by

**Francis Mdlongwa
& Moagisi Letlaku**



Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung

Harnessing Africa's digital future

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Francis Mdlongwa and Moagisi Letlhaku

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The pursuit of an affluent African Information Society

Media leaders across the African continent are all grappling with the burning issue of our time: globalization, information and Africa's role therein.

Media executives are clamouring for new and alternative business models and industry associations everywhere are holding seminars and conferences on how to create and discover them.

Because of the enormous changes in technology, economics, and lifestyle in recent years, the needs of customers have changed, the kinds of content they want, and the ways they obtain news, information and entertainment have been dramatically altered.

If media firms do not address these changes in consumer needs and behaviour, no amount of worry about revenue streams will stem the fundamental challenge that audiences are leaving traditional print and broadcast media behind for content providers and distribution platforms that better serve their needs.

Without a doubt, the challenges facing African media in the so-called digital age are daunting. It is clear that a growing number of managers in media industries understand the need for innovation because of the declining sustainability of current operations and because internet, mobile, e-reader, and on-demand technologies are providing new opportunities.

The real innovation challenges in established media, however, are not perceiving the need for change or being able to get needed technology, but organizational structures, processes, culture, and ways of thinking that limit willingness and ability to innovate. This is compounded because many managers are confused by the opportunities and don't know what to do or how to pursue innovation.

This is a reality which has not been lost on Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), and our partner, the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership, who speak to this urgent need through our annual Africa Media Leadership conference (AMLC), which in 2009 convened in Ghana under the theme "Learning from the Future: Africa's Media Map in 2009."

By promoting high-level interaction among Africa's media chiefs, we aim to seek home-grown, practical, innovative and creative solutions to the very many challenges faced by African media organisations and professionals.

These annual high-level gatherings represent an important component of our continuous efforts to help prepare Africa's media leaders for a constantly changing media landscape.

When we started the AMLC series in 2002, the traditional media were dominant. But the content of traditional media products was created in specific technical, economic, and information environments that no longer exist. In order to evolve and prosper, media companies must revisit the foundations of their businesses, ensure that they are providing value that customers want, and provide their products/services in a unique or different way from other media firms. This is why the opinions of internet entrepreneurs, bloggers and other new media practitioners must be included in any discussions on media survival these days.

It's worth noting also that the gap between poor and rich has been made starker, and not better, by the power of information and communications technologies. While these technologies have liberated lives, created stock market miracles and improved economies, they have only touched a fraction of the world's population.

Furthermore, the hardware disparity between poor and rich nations is not nearly as troubling as the scarcity of information, which directly undermines the ability of a nation to keep its citizens informed.

The rapid development of human resources and employment opportunities are also critical challenges facing African media leaders in the information age. Low levels of education and literacy are crippling the

ability of Africans to exploit the new generation of ICTs.

Limited use of English has also been cited by many as a constraint. Although increasingly multilingual, the internet is still largely an English-language medium. It may be that the long-term deployment of the internet by developing countries will depend less on technology and costs and more on their capacities to educate their young populations in basic literacy, a prerequisite for using text-based content.

Information affluence is, in my humble opinion, the sine-qua-non to development. Without it, attempts to alleviate poverty, bring health, wealth and education – indeed our attempt to create a sustainable, compassionate, civilization – will be without success.

I firmly believe that the urgent imperative of our time is the creation of an affluent African Information Society, and the 2009 Accra AMLC is testimony to our commitment to this very important process.

We must believe that we have a lot more power to effect change, both individually and collectively. The great anthropologist Margaret Mead once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world." Indeed, she says, "it is the only thing that ever has".

I would like to thank all the people who made this book possible – editors Francis Mdlongwa and Moagisi Letlhaku, as well as all the contributors for their critical insights. I hope that the content adds useful ideas and knowledge as we urgently pursue the cause of a vibrant, independent African media, which can meet and exploit the many opportunities presented by the new information age.



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Harnessing Africa's digital future

This anthology of essays, stories and testimonies by heads of Africa's leading media vividly brings out the ubiquitous nature, power and influence of emerging digital media channels on our lives and how Africa is tapping into these channels to better serve their markets and be better informed by them.

Most African and even top global media firms are still to reap sustainable profits from the emerging platforms, but Africa's 'old' media has taken the first steps to harness these technologies to improve their businesses so that the latter are better prepared to serve a rapidly transforming market.

But this anthology, distilled from the eighth Africa Media Leadership Conference (AMLC) held in Ghana's capital Accra in late 2009 by Rhodes University's Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership and its partner, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, is not only about the impact of digital technologies on the traditional media outlets of print and broadcast.

In a moving story on Betegna, the web-and-radio project of Ethiopia's AIDS Resource Centre, analyst Kibnesh Chala tells how the digital media channels are being mobilised by Ethiopia to help in the country's fight against AIDS and the HIV pandemic.

And Mesfin Negash, an Ethiopian editor whose leading private newspaper *Addis Neger* has been forced to close because of governmental pressure, takes us through the many hopes and unfulfilled freedom promises that the Ethiopian 'democratic revolution' triggered a decade ago and what it now means to work as a journalist in the Horn of Africa country.

Which shows that in parts of Africa, despite the advent of the all-pervasive and ostensibly more open 'digital world' of the 21st century, many editors and media owners are still battling the 'old' forces which have long stunted its journalism and media business.

In line with the futuristic theme of the 2009 AMLC – the conference focused on what African media could learn from the emerging digital future of doing both media and journalism – some of the anthology's articles leap into the unknown.

They anticipate a future which, judging from the sweeping economic, political, financial and social impact of the internet, mobile phones and social media networks, promises to be as exciting as it could be challenging for media and journalism sectors and our larger world communities.

The overarching message from this anthology is that media firms in particular need to break away from the dominant management thinking and literature which has conditioned us to manage and lead media enterprises in conditions of stability, predictability, regularity and harmony. This is because our present, real world is no longer stable, predictable or certain any more.

The traditional solutions of trying to 'replicate' and imitate successful business models of others and of hoping to learn from their 'magic' maps and strategies are dead. This is because we now live in an age of revolutionary change that is also discontinuous for most businesses and professions, an era largely bounded by chaos and a semblance of order.

Today's media leaders must therefore rapidly learn to come up with novel business maps, novel routes and novel destinations that mark business success by managing the unknowable.

This is a tough challenge, a challenge many media houses around the world have already failed to pass and have thus been wiped off the face of our beautiful earth.

Just witness the closure in 2009 of 166 newspapers in the US alone, with the loss of more than 10 000 media jobs. The bloodbath there in 2008 was equally horrendous, and yet many more newspapers and media companies around the globe will go under before things get better, if at all, as the relentless forces of discontinuity from digital technology usher in a new era of permanent instability and uncertainty.



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01

Chasing the future

What content do youthful audiences consume and why?

In April 2005, media magnate Rupert Murdoch addressed American newspaper editors on the rising threat posed by digital media. He was speaking as the newspaper industry in the developed world was losing its readership at an alarming rate to Internet-based news services. His message was simple: It was time to fully embrace new technology and offer content on platforms that had hitherto not been taken seriously enough.



Ray Hartley

Introduction

In April 2005, media magnate Rupert Murdoch addressed American newspaper editors on the rising threat posed by digital media. He was speaking as the newspaper industry in the developed world was losing its readership at an alarming rate to Internet-based news services. His message was simple: It was time to fully embrace new technology and offer content on platforms that had hitherto not been taken seriously enough.

At that meeting, Murdoch coined two phrases to describe the difference between those who were raised in a pre-Internet world and were adapting to it and those who were born in the digital environment.

These were his words:

*“Like many of you in this room, I’m a **digital immigrant**. I wasn’t weaned on the web, nor coddled on a computer. Instead, I grew up in a highly centralized world where news and information were tightly controlled by a few editors, who deemed to tell us what we could and should know. My two young daughters, on the other hand, will be **digital natives**.”*

He went on to say:

“...we have to answer this fundamental question: what do we – a bunch of digital immigrants -- need to do to be relevant to the digital natives? Probably, just watch our teenage kids. What do they want to know, and where will they go to get it? They want news on demand, continuously updated. They want a point of view about not just what happened, but why it happened.”¹

The changing technological context

The context in which media operates has changed dramatically as information has become digitised. Digitisation makes information that was previously the tightly held property of one institution the property of all who have access to the necessary technology to download it.

The single biggest change that has taken place is that information is no longer scarce. If anything, there is now “too much information” available. Traditional media models such as newspapers sold scarce information, empowering readers with a critical competitive advantage over non-readers. Such information had a clear value and readers were prepared to pay for it.

Some of the best thinking about the impact of digitisation has been done by John Seely Brown, formerly of Xerox’s Palo Alto Research Centre and now developing the first serious metrics on The Big Shift with Deloitte.

His team has identified three distinct “waves” that define the digitisation of information:

1 Speech by Rupert Murdoch to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 2005

*“The **first**, the ‘foundation’ wave, involves changes to the fundamentals of our business landscape catalysed by the emergence and spread of digital technology infrastructure and reinforced by long-term public policy shifts toward economic liberalisation.*

*“The **second** wave looks at the flows of knowledge, capital, and talent enabled by the foundational advances, as well as the amplifiers of these flows.*

*“The **third**, the ‘Impact’ wave, centres on the consequences of the Big Shift. Given the time it will take for the first two waves to play out and manifest themselves, this third wave – and its related index – provides an even greater lagging indicator.”²*

The foundation wave is advanced in the developed world where there is huge broadband penetration. While South Africa lags behind, the digitisation of corporate and government information is almost complete. What is lacking is widespread access to the digital technology needed to access this information due to the high cost of Internet bandwidth and the relatively high cost of computer hardware.

But this foundation wave has nonetheless encouraged a substantial second wave as media organisations develop the skills needed to open their content to digital users. Tertiary institutions, newsrooms and businesses have already produced a new generation of digitally literate content producers.

What is certain is that the notion that information has an intrinsic value because it is scarce no longer applies. In the words of Seely Brown:

“Twentieth century institutions built and protected knowledge stocks — proprietary resources that no one else could access. The more the business environment changes, however, the faster the value of what you know at any point in time diminishes. In this world, success hinges on the ability to participate in a growing array of knowledge flows in order to rapidly refresh your knowledge stocks.”³

Once Internet bandwidth and the cost of hardware comes down, as it must in an environment of increased competition, this technology is likely to be rapidly adopted by those with stable income.

In the US the Internet penetrated 50% of households faster than any previous new technology, including telephones, electricity and computers.⁴

“The cost of one gigabyte (GB) of storage has been decreasing at an exponential rate from \$569 in 1992 to \$0.13 in 2008. The increase of both

2 Measuring the forces of long-term change -The 2009 Shift Index –John Hagel III, John Seely Brown and Lang Davison (<http://www.johnseelybrown.com/shiftindex.pdf>)

3 *ibid*

4 *ibid*

storage and bandwidth has helped to enable the boom in user-generated content.”⁵

The emerging digital literacy

What has become clear is that the new generation of digital media consumer is doing a lot more than just consuming.

Social media has emerged as a totally new way of engaging with news content.

A critical change in how the value of news is determined has taken place. It used to be valuable because it was scarce. That has fallen away but news remains valuable for different reasons. It now has a social value that is realised when it is exchanged on digital social networks.

This has accentuated aspects of news that were previously less important. The depth of coverage and the detail in reporting has been demoted in favour of the speed of reporting. The new young consumers want to get the news first so that they can be the first to realise its social exchange value by posting it on their social-networking profile, tweeting it or even forwarding it by e-mail or SMS.

News consumption used to be a private process of increasing the readers' depth of knowledge, improving their ability to engage. This knowledge acquisition process was a private engagement between the reader and the newspaper. The quality of information was of paramount importance.

The emerging young news consumer wants to “thin slice” the news environment, obtain news that has a social exchange value and realise this value as quickly as possible.

To borrow once more from Seely Brown, the modern news environment requires a rewiring of the brain that is best captured by the notion of “fast context switching” as the youth deal with a growing torrent of information.

“People my age tend to think that kids who are multiprocessing can't be concentrating. That may not be true. Indeed, one of the things we noticed is that the attention span of the teens at PARC—often between 30 seconds and five minutes—parallels that of top managers, who operate in a world of fast context-switching. So the short attention spans of today's kids may turn out to be far from dysfunctional for future work worlds.”⁶

In his book, *Blink*, author Malcom Gladwell used the term “thin-slicing” to describe this browsing of the information environment.

“Thin-slicing is not an exotic gift. It is a central part of what it means to be human. We thin-slice whenever we meet a new person, or have to make sense of something quickly or encounter a novel situation.”⁷

5 Measuring the forces of long-term change -The 2009 Shift Index –John Hagel III, John Seely Brown and Lang Davison (<http://www.johnseelybrown.com/shiftindex.pdf>)

6 Growing up digital – John Seely Brown

7 Blink by Malcolm Gladwell

He was talking about the critical “first impression” that people have of each other when meeting for the first time. But it is useful to borrow this term to describe the quick browsing of the media where the browser is skimming over content to find what interests him – and what will interest his friends. This variety of thin-slicing has begun to coalesce around social-networking platforms. What these platforms offer is the opportunity for someone to aggregate the thin-slicing of a selected universe of people. Friends or followers are selected because they will offer information on anything from breaking news to old school ties.

This vastly increases the amount of information that an individual can scan and then offer once more to the pool of friends, perhaps augmented with something that was found along the way.

Social networking is not the only mechanism. Blogging platforms offer a similar service. They allow an individual to tap into a chosen personality who will aggregate information and offer a ready-made opinion.

The same is true of news anchors. Personalities who offer opinion and tap into the new social exchangeability of news are emerging as the most popular with youthful audiences.

“Jon Stewart, host of The Daily Show on the Comedy Central network, was identified as the most trusted of the TV anchors among the group that chose the Internet as their top news source, while among the entire group, Stewart tied with then-NBC anchor Tom Brokaw and came in ahead of ABC’s Peter Jennings and former CBS anchor Dan Rather.”⁸

At the time that Seely Brown was writing, the blurb for the Jon Stewart show read as follows:

“One anchor, five correspondents, zero credibility. If you’re tired of the stodginess of the evening newscasts, if you can’t bear to sit through the spinmeisters and shills on the 24-hour cable news networks, don’t miss The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, a nightly half-hour series unburdened by objectivity, journalistic integrity or even accuracy.”

This is a succinct statement of what the young viewer does not want in a television show, but it does not state what they are after. The answer to that could read something like this: “One anchor who shares my cynical view of current affairs and who does it on a social media platform so I can share it with my friends.”

What is being searched for has changed from one generation to the next. But just as profound a change is affecting the way media is interacted with. It is no longer a linear experience of transmission.

Instead, media is the starting point for a series of distractions that take the audience on a multimedia journey, the final destination of which is not known at the outset.

A study conducted in the US on media consumption by the youth described this journey, which I call the social media and the interest trail:

As KT, an 18-year-old male from suburban California, describes:

*"I go to the most viewed page. . . . Mostly I want to know whatz up whatz cool, like what was funny on the Colbert Report yesterday, and it is just there, you can browse and look for stuff. Awesome!" Similarly, "When I start watching YouTube, I cannot stop. Each video takes me to another video. . . . It takes me to the author's profile page. . . . I like to click on related videos that YouTube gives you on the side, you know what I mean. . . . There are always pointers to other videos."*⁹

There is no equivalent research into the habits of South African youth that I am aware of, but some research has been done on their preferred activities by Youth Dynamics.

Face-to-face interviews with 1 800 youth at school, working, studying or unemployed ranked their activities as follows:

1. Watch TV (79%)
2. Spending time with friend (71%)
3. Listening to own music (59%)
4. Watching videos/DVDs (58%)
5. Spending time with family (56%)
6. Listening to the radio (55%)
7. Going to malls (43%)
8. Phoning/SMSing (36%)
9. Resting/sleeping (35%)
10. Getting fast food (34%)

What is immediately apparent is that newspapers don't rank at all while electronic media is prominent.

There are some incredible efforts being undertaken to try and "reach" this new digital generation with traditional print media.

Aralynn McMane, director of young reader development for WAN-IFRA, sums up what newspapers that are reaching this market are doing right:

"These papers tended to do something that was a life stage 'first' for young people. This is a key strategy for young reader development, to be there for the first time a young person does something, or their family does something."

This approach of taking the important events in young readers' lives seriously is vital. But unless there is a fundamental shift into the digital terrain this sort of reporting offers only temporary comfort.

What must be done

It is no longer useful to design or operate newsrooms around a particular platform such as print. They must be organised to generate content that will have a life in print, online and on mobile.

To achieve this, newsrooms must be organised around breaking the news first. Resourcefulness, mobility and an ability to write, edit and post rapidly must become the most prized outcomes.

In addition to this, newsrooms must embrace the chaos of the social media consumption trail and offer content that matches the many browsing spaces that youth occupy.

The augmentation of rapid, breaking news with multimedia in the form of podcasts, slide shows and video is crucial to playing into the full cycle of media consumption.

So, too, is the development of personality-driven blogs that offer much-needed navigation in this environment of many and frequent messages.

To quote Seely Brown one last time:

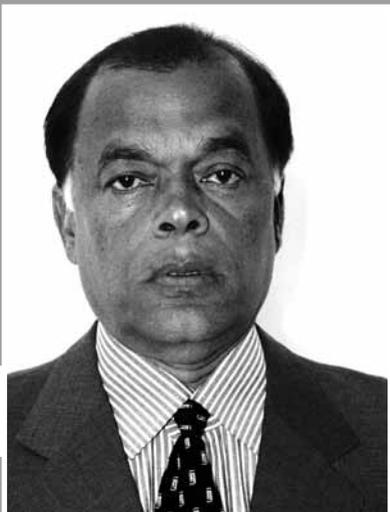
“The new literacy, beyond text and image, is one of information navigation. The real literacy of tomorrow entails the ability to be your own personal reference librarian – to know how to navigate through confusing, complex information spaces and feel comfortable doing so. ‘Navigation’ may well be the main form of literacy for the 21st century.”

02

News is now FREE

Who will pay for quality journalism?

Never before in history
have we witnessed such
an explosion of news.
First carried by the
traditional newspaper,
then radio and television,
news is now available
beyond the traditional
platforms, thanks largely
to the unprecedented
development of
Information and
Communication
Technologies.



Subash Gobine

Never before in history have we witnessed such an explosion of news. First carried by the traditional newspaper, then radio and television, news is now available beyond the traditional platforms, thanks largely to the unprecedented development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

The scope for the expression of traditional journalism is likely to be challenged in the new environment created by the exponential growth of ICTs largely driven by mobile technologies. Statistics released by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in its annual report (*The World in 2009: ICT Facts and Figures*) indicate an unparalleled personal technological empowerment of citizens around the globe. The ITU estimated that at the end of December 2009, out of a world global population of 7 billion, 1.9 billion had access to a computer at home; 4.6 billion were subscribed to mobile technologies; 17.8% of the world population had access to fixed telephone lines and 9.5% of users were connected to mobile broadband.

(http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/material/Telecom09_flyer.pdf accessed on March 7, 2010)

As can be inferred from the above statistics, ICT tools provide new and limitless platforms for the creation and dissemination of news. ICTs have helped create a community of users that transcends natural and political frontiers. The new tools are also offering opportunities on a global scale for instant response to news. Such on-the-spot feedback could not be engineered in the traditional media. Thanks to new technologies, a reader in Bangladesh can react instantly to a story published in *The Sun* in London. News consumers are being offered a multiplicity of sources, well beyond the boundaries of their own countries. Cultural behaviour has been evolving to the point that ICTs allow for instantaneous global consumption of news from different parts of the globe. The tradition of the paperboy delivering the local newspaper prior to the reader taking his or her morning cup of tea is fast dying.

The world has witnessed a massive migration of news outlets to the web. The world is going increasingly paperless. The new phenomenon has created countless sources of news on the web. The news is mostly available for free.

In the traditional mode, news was produced and published by the professional journalist. Somewhere, the consumer paid for the news by generating revenue from the cover price and advertising. In the new environment, consumers have only to pay for the access to telecommunications tools which, anyway, are being used for a variety of purposes, not just for connecting to the web. Access to news comes as a bonus. One is exposed to a wide variety of news, from trivia and gossip generated on social networks like Facebook to footage originating from mobile phones on the Haiti earthquake.

Now, with the ICTs fast developing, we get news for free from amateurs who happen to be fortuitous witnesses of events. A new class of players described as citizen journalists now engage in the collecting and posting of news items. Described as grassroots media or people's media, the new sources of information get worldwide dissemination, thanks to the availability of ICTs.

No professional proficiency is needed as long as one is equipped with electronic tools which are becoming increasingly user-friendly and more and more affordable. Such tools allow citizen journalists to break the news before professional journalists.

The new form of ‘participatory’ or ‘street journalism’ challenges the age-old assumption that news is best provided by newspapers, radios and television stations run by professional journalists. The availability of news from different sources around the world for free also gains credence among consumers who tend to subscribe to conspiracy theories. It is believed that traditional media are owned by an international coterie supporting one world order and promoting the interests of the power elite of individual countries. Such conspiracy theories are also fuelled by data indicating a concentration of media ownership both at the national and international level. Citizen journalism perceived as being participatory and democratic— as well as being offered for free – is therefore regarded as the new forum likely to challenge the established order.

A recent example of how exclusive and spicy news is available for free in defiance of established media is drawn from France. Because of the peculiarities of France’s political culture and its privacy laws, the mainstream media have always refrained from exposing the private life of politicians, let alone that of the Head of State. It was only after his death that the mainstream media reported that former president François Mitterrand had fathered an illegitimate daughter.

The new media did not exist in Mitterrand’s time in the eighties. By 2010, the media landscape had changed in France. Overriding the mainstream media’s reservations about the private life of the French ruler, the country’s blogosphere has questioned the fairy tale marriage of French President Nicholas Sarkozy and his wife Carla Bruni. Several blogs reported in early March 2010 that both the president and his wife were having extramarital affairs. One website reported that Bruni had fallen in love with the best male singer of France, Benjamin Biolay, while Sarkozy was having an affair with junior minister Chantal Jouanno. Jouanno, aged 40, is also a karate champion.

Through the French blogosphere, the story gradually leaked out and was eventually picked up by the mainstream media. One French paper, *Le Journal du Dimanche*, hinted at the presidential rumours but quickly removed the post claiming compliance with French law on privacy.

The French were nevertheless fully informed of the alleged presidential saga – for free, thanks to the numerous blogs.

(<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/france/100308/sarkozy-bruni-rumors-affairs> (accessed on March 21, 2010))

However, the big question remains: how reliable were the blogs in exposing the supposed indiscretions of Sarkozy and his wife? Both Sarkozy and Bruni, neither on their first marriage, have had a rather colourful record in their private lives but were the blogs on the latest alleged ‘affairs’ plausible?

We meet here with a serious problem of credibility. The credibility issue is compounded by the fact that the blogs’ exposure of the Sarkozys’ private lives came at a time when French voters were in the process of electing regional councils. The results of those elections show that leftist parties ‘trounced [Sarkozy’s] conservatives in regional elections’ as reported by the *New York Times*. Twenty members of the French cabinet ran for regional office and they were all defeated.

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/23/world/europe/23briefs-Francebf.html?ref=world> accessed on March 23, 2010)

At issue here is not the French blogs' influence on the regional elections. What is at stake is the credibility of 'free' news available on the Internet. In fact, whatever be the volume and variety of news disseminated on ICT-enabled platforms, the big debate remains about the quality of news provided.

Citizen journalists and bloggers do not claim to be trained and seasoned news professionals. They are not expected to follow the rules of objectivity and accuracy. They do not systematically seek the other side of the story – a basic principle in professional journalism. Anything goes on the blogosphere but the strict adherence to the principles of accuracy and balance.

Now that more and more people around the world are exposed to free news, are they willing to pay for reports and articles available on the conventional media? New media users who have been exposed to the conventional media are better qualified to judge the credibility of different news sources.

The debate is on how much they are willing to pay to have access to the conventional media where rules of reliability are applied. It is believed that once users are exposed to free news, it is unlikely that they would be willing to pay for access.

The principle that news users will have to pay for access would be vindicated in the future if the most popular social networks decide to introduce a payment system. At this stage, the 400 million active users of Facebook access the service for free. (<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics> accessed on March 28, 2010)

Likewise, though popular microblogging Twitter is not charging for the service, the policy may be revisited in the future.

On the basis of the numerous benefits derived from subscription to social networks, common sense indicates that users would most likely agree to pay a nominal fee for access to the established networks, though some would opt out. Before terminating free access, the social media would certainly establish the tipping point where the critical mass reached for payment would outweigh any loss of audience.

On the other hand, first time users, especially young people, who have known but free access to news are less likely to pay for subscription to the conventional media. Inability to tap on the youth market would only mean that the average age of newspaper readership will keep going up, depriving traditional media of the opportunity to renew their audience.

Falling audiences of conventional media due to several factors, among them audiences' access to free news, newspapers' inability to generate new readership and disinterest of potential young readers – has brought about the closure of several newspapers in the world.

Realizing that drastic measures have to be taken to reverse the trend of losing readership, newspapers have decided to offer free access to news by developing websites and other related services. In fact, a disturbing trend that traditional media have noted points towards the decoupling of advertising from journalism. Advertising is more and more interested in the social media and other platforms spawned by ICTs.

In offering free access to news, traditional media are aiming at keeping their audience share and even expanding on it. Free access in this case is commercially-inspired. Traditional media want to prove to advertisers that their reach has not been challenged by the new media. Advertisers would certainly be interested in buying space or time in multimedia news organizations that command a wider market reach than blogs. Understandably, newspapers are interested in building as big an advertising base as possible to maximize revenue. To achieve that objective, traditional media tend to offer a mix of both free and paid access.

Traditional media can afford to offer free news as the process is cross-subsidized by revenue-generating platforms. The worst case scenario, however, would be reaching a point where sales have collapsed and advertising revenue has dried up. The fact that newspaper circulation figures have been going down in different parts of the world cannot be disputed. The best case scenario would be keeping both audience and revenue in an increasingly paperless environment.

Offering free access is not meant only to increase audience and advertising base. The professional media are building customer loyalty at the same time. Through this calibration act, media expect to reach a point where enough traffic has been built up to introduce a dose of paid access.

It is widely agreed that eventually users will have to be charged for access. When and how users will be charged is a matter of debate. What is already established is the determination of big players like Rupert Murdoch to actually charge for online access.

The possibility that once fed with free news, users would be unwilling to pay for access cannot be discounted. However, it is believed that professional media will go unchallenged on the quality and plurality of news they offer as a result of their investments in trained human resources and in newsgathering and diffusion infrastructure.

The conventional media have resources to cover events in different parts of the world as compared to the mostly parochial reach of citizen journalism. Readers will pay for stories written by journalists who offer a comprehensive, balanced and unbiased perspective on matters of public interest. Anyway, it is most unlikely that users expect to benefit from access to high quality news on a regular basis for free.

The big question now is how to make users pay for access? Different monetization formulae have been proposed so far. Already, the big players have established some form of payment. The most common formula takes the form of a two-tiered access: some content is free, some is paid. For example, if highlights are offered for free, the in-depth story can be accessed against payment. Some media charge for access to their e-paper version.

The formula of micropayment has been applied by some newspapers. For example, London-based *Financial Times* has introduced a metered use payment system. The metered formula sets a number of articles available for free. Then the reader is charged as per the number of stories accessed.

(<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9d1e82c8-05d6-11df-88ee-00144feabdc0.html> accessed on March 28, 2010)

The *New York Times* is starting paid subscription to its website as from January 2011. The formula adopted by the *New York Times* will allow free access to a certain number of articles. If the reader wants to read more stories, a flat fee will be charged for unlimited access.

(<http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=105317&p=irol-pressArticle&ID=1377114> accessed on March 28, 2010)

Justifying the decision to charge for access, the New York company announced that the payment formula “will enable *NYTimes.com* to create a second revenue stream and preserve its robust advertising business”.

The American paper which runs the most popular news website in America with more than 17 million visitors a month believed its “very loyal” readers ‘will pay for our award-winning digital content and services’. The paper is also the leader in advertising revenue generation.

It can be inferred from this case that the *New York Times* has built audience first, and then set out to tap revenue from subscription to its website. It is interesting to note that judging from users’ reactions after the paid service announcement, those supporting payment outnumbered those resisting the decision.

The *New York Times* has tried a payment wall system in the past but then it lost many readers in India and China where a fee of \$50 dollars was judged exorbitant. The payment scheme was abandoned.

Another big player in New York and several other media centres in the world, News Corp CEO Rupert Murdoch, has adopted the pay wall system for his *Wall Street Journal*. Murdoch, who owns a global media empire, is so adamant in charging for content that he has even threatened to block Google from accessing the websites of his newspapers.

Murdoch’s strategy in charging for online content is likely to be followed by major news organisations around the world in view of his weight in the global media. Murdoch is an inescapable trendsetter. Author John Pilger has described Murdoch’s global reach as the world’s first ‘Murdochracy’.

(<http://www.opednews.com/populum/linkframe.php?linkid=108349> accessed on March 12, 2010)

Pilger explains that in 1983, the world’s media belonged to 50 major corporations. In 2002, nine corporations were dominating the international media. He quotes Murdoch as saying that ‘eventually, there will be three, including his own.’

Murdochracy is both good news and bad news for the cause of paid media plurality. The good news is most probably Murdoch will manage to impose the principle of paid access because of his dominating role in the media landscape. The bad news is that only big players enjoying a user critical mass and media synergies like Murdoch stand to gain from paid access. Small players stand the risk of being squeezed out of the market both by Murdochracy and the free new media.

03

So much news, so little time

survival skills in the
networked world

Online tools and resources that enable large-scale participation and media sharing such as Facebook, Twitter and Wikipedia have been adopted into regular use by hundreds of millions of people in the last three years. This is perhaps because they enable people to collaborate, manage complexity and find information more efficiently than they would be able to without these tools.



David Duarte

Online tools and resources that enable large-scale participation and media sharing such as Facebook, Twitter and Wikipedia have been adopted into regular use by hundreds of millions of people in the last three years. This is perhaps because they enable people to collaborate, manage complexity and find information more efficiently than they would be able to without these tools.

In South Africa and other emergent markets, mobile phones have been similarly used to not only enable one-to-one communications, but to enable learning, banking, networking, healthcare and access to news.

It is in this context of cheap, on-demand, real-time, and social media access that traditional media around the world are either sinking or swimming. Quite obviously, a new value proposition needs to be identified, given that the competitive landscape is changing along with consumer expectations.

In this essay I propose that the core value proposition of traditional media is intrinsically tied to what I see as the most pressing challenge of media consumers today: conserving time while maximizing reward.

The three key themes that I believe will distinguish successful newspapers in the coming decade will be explored. They are:

- Attention as an Asset
- Usability as a Differentiator
- Free and Fee

Attention as an Asset

“Across consumer markets, attention is becoming the scarcest – and so most strategically vital – resource in the value chain. Attention scarcity is fundamentally reshaping the economics of most industries it touches; beginning with the media industry.”

Haque, 2005

Media consumers today are faced with a mind-boggling array of content to choose from. Their challenge is not finding news and information, but finding news and information that fits their needs and lifestyles and the time to consume it within the limited time that they have.

Most media consumers today are operating in a form of perpetual attention deficit: there is simply more content available to them than they could possibly attend to. So, people have books they'd love to read, but don't; movies they'd love to watch, but don't; newspapers they'd love to read, but don't. The media that goes unattended to is not necessarily of an inferior quality, but somehow it doesn't fit into the lifestyle of the person that misses it.

According to the polymath Nobel laureate Herbert Simon:

In an information-rich world, the wealth of information means a dearth of something else: a scarcity of whatever it is that information consumes. What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention

and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the over-abundance of information sources that might consume it (1971: 140-41).

The concept of an attention scarcity sits uncomfortably juxtaposed with the industrial model of news production. Information is intrinsically valuable in the industrial model because it is relatively scarce, exclusive and hierarchical. It makes sense then to build empires around a particular access channel that is exclusive and popular such as print. However, once information becomes freely available on the internet it may be easily accessed and shared by anyone who can operate a search engine and send an email. Thus, in sectors where information is abundant and available, the only 'cost' of information is the time and effort that it takes to engage with it.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2008) observes that our nervous systems are only capable of processing 110 bytes of information per second. We therefore have a limited physiological capacity to process information. Concentration on one presentation consumes around 60 bytes of that capacity and it is what usually makes it difficult for one to concentrate completely on more than two voices at a time (Shannon, 1948)¹. However, the growing array of consumer media devices and channels has given rise to a new form of attention, that has been dubbed "Continuous Partial Attention (Stone, 1998). If you are a parent, you may recognise this form of attention in your children. Author Steven Berlin Johnson describes it as a kind of multitasking. "It usually involves skimming the surface of the incoming data, picking out the relevant details, and moving on to the next stream. You're paying attention, but only partially. That lets you cast a wider net, but it also runs the risk of keeping you from really studying the fish."

The good news for the media in all of this is that businesses in virtually all consumer-facing sectors are facing a similar rise in competitors. They too operate in a marketplace driven by demand for thinly spread consumer attention. Media in general, being the purveyors of Attention, stand to benefit from this if they can effectively present advertising and other commercial content in a way that consumers appreciate and attend to.

In order to successfully adapt to this new economy, media outlets may need to start emphasising Attention, over Content and Form. By this I mean that consumers will be drawn to news sources that are able to add value to the information in ways that enhance their experience of it – through having a more trustworthy brand, effective design, accessibility, community and engagement, for example.

The Nielsen Company, which measures television viewership and Web traffic, noticed in February 2010 that one in seven people who were watching the Super Bowl and the Olympics opening ceremony were surfing the Web at the same time. In a New York Times interview, Leslie Moonves, chief executive of the CBS Corporation,

1 When all 110 bytes of attention are consumed, Csikszentmihalyi (2008) refers to this as being 'in flow'; when here there is not enough attention excess left over to monitor anything else. Hunger, tiredness, even identity disappears from consciousness. High levels of challenge and skill create arousal and in extreme cases, flow.

which broadcast both the 2010 Super Bowl and the Grammy Awards, said “The Internet is our friend, not our enemy. People want to be attached to each other.”

This kind of insight is indicative of a shift towards virtual engagement of communities – gaining greater shares of audiences’ Attention by allowing content to filter in to different channels, and be remixed and discussed by social media-empowered users. In some of my presentations, I refer to this as the shift from Ownership to Openness. The key to success is knowing what to own and what to open-up for sharing, remixing and discussion.

Usability as a Differentiator

For many people, the ‘instinctive’ response in the face of all the variety of content available to them is to go faster, multitask, and spend more time engaging with media. Even the most casual observer would notice, for example, the compulsive engagement of smartphone users with their devices.

Newspapers, for example, may need to start focusing more on the holistic experience of news consumption in the context of their readers’ lifestyles. On a simple level, this may mean changing the ways news is laid out and written, as well as ensuring a seamless brand experience across other channels such as the internet, mobile phones and e-readers.

Herbert Simon’s research (1996, 143-144) points out that designers of under-utilised information systems incorrectly represented their design problem as information scarcity rather than attention scarcity, and as a result they built systems that excelled at providing more and more information to people, when what was really needed were systems that excelled at filtering out unimportant or irrelevant information.

Simple ways of helping people to filter irrelevant information can be applied without needing sophisticated sorting algorithms. For example, The Daily Maverick (<http://www.thedailymaverick.co.za>), a new online publication-based in South Africa, makes navigating its email newsletter simpler by formatting informative article abstracts into three useful sub-categories:

- “While you were sleeping” (news from the world that happened overnight);
- “Coming up today” (important events for the day ahead); and
- “In case you missed it” (the previous day’s news that missed the last publication deadline).

The editorial role then plays a part in the layout.

These categories would be different for publications with different readerships, but in this case they fit perfectly into The Daily Maverick’s value proposition to make their reader “the smartest person in the room” by equipping them with tidbits of news to spark conversation.

In his book, *The Paradox of Choice* (2004), Professor Barry Schwartz asserts that “too many choices can paralyze people into inaction, and cause them to be dissatisfied with even good decisions”. To build on that idea, I would suggest that strong brands help reduce the cognitive dissonance that media consumers may experience when faced with

the overwhelming variety of content from various outlets.

To illustrate this point, I would cite Apple as a brand that has so effectively distinguished its brand that to many people their choice of which laptop to buy may amount simple to “do I want a Macbook or Macbook Pro” (as Apple fans, that was certainly our experience).

A strong brand is not about a font, a colour, or even a particular product. It is about branded experiences. Usability in media is the art and science of making it easy for people to consume, share, discuss and remix your content – and even go so far as to give them the tools for them to do so.

Free versus Fee

Stewart Brand, at the first hackers conference in 1984, famously said:

“On the one hand, information wants to be expensive because it’s so valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life. On the other hand, information wants to be free because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So you have these two fighting against each other.”

Few people would argue that newspapers shouldn’t operate online. The online news channel, along with online advertising and payments, continue to grow even as print readership and advertising revenues decline.

However, the online environment content is so abundant. When faced with the choice of marginally better content for a fee, or good-enough content for free, they tend to choose the free content.

Much online news content is serendipitously encountered – consumers haven’t gone out looking for it specifically, but have been referred to it by a peer, discovered it on an aggregator, or encountered it via a Search Engine. It is difficult to get people to pull out their credit cards to read an article they have encountered by chance and with cursory interest.

In the case of serendipitous encounters with news, it would be a mistake to hide content behind a password-protected “walled garden”. The main argument against this is perhaps that Google and other search engines will not index password-protected content, so a significant channel of new readership will be foregone. Likewise, audiences on social aggregators and filters online like Digg and Reddit will likely not vote for content that needs to be paid for in order to be read.

On the other hand, the challenge with completely free content is that it tends to rely on more advertising and advertorials. The problem with this is two-fold: firstly, it may lower the quality of the reader’s experience, and secondly, it may begin to infringe on editorial and journalistic independence.

There have been alternate calls for newspapers to go free or to continue charging fees, whether in print or online. I would argue for a blended approach, often called Freemium pricing.

Freemium pricing works with two basic pricing levels: free and premium. Free content is used to attract attention and showcase the product. Premium content is exclusive and may offer greater access, functionality, or a better quality of experience.

In the context of the attention economy, I would assert that all the newspaper's content should be freely available online since content is no longer a distinctive value proposition for newspapers. However, consumers should be charged for features that enhance their experience of the content – for example, to remove adverts, to receive the print edition, high-definition videos, the mobile application or even the email newsletter. This is in line with consumer lifestyles of convenience and speed. Quite simply, the internet seems to be a great place to discover free content, but we expect to pay for the convenience of getting that same content in other formats that may be more convenient or personalised.

Consumers of free news may have lower expectations of free content and may make advertising viable. However, many serious news consumers, would be willing to pay for a better quality reading experience or more immediate access. A blanket approach to either make content free or paid-for is shortsighted and limiting.

To take Stewart Brand's statement from the Hacker's Conference further, I would suggest that in the future most information will be free but getting it in your preferred format will be expensive.

Conclusion

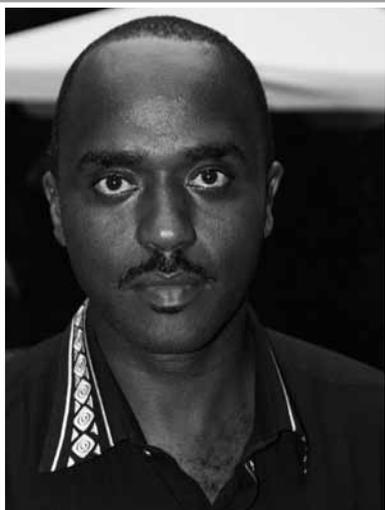
I would assert that media consumption is not only driven by the quality of content, but also the quality of the experience in engaging with the content. Increasingly, considerations such as branding, integration with social-communities, personalisation and elegance need to be integrated into the core value proposition of media organisations and their products.

04

Peering into the 'connected' world

Will you be there?

Young people today born into a digital world are experiencing a far different environment of information-gathering and access to knowledge than a generation ago. Who are these “digital natives” and what are they thinking? How are they using the technology, and are IT and Media experts adequately responding to them?



Linus Gitahi

Introduction

Young people today born into a digital world are experiencing a far different environment of information-gathering and access to knowledge than a generation ago. Who are these “digital natives” and what are they thinking? How are they using the technology, and are IT and Media experts adequately responding to them?

I will embark on exploring this interesting topic by quoting Maggie Shiels, a BBC journalist, in an article she wrote last year entitled “Are you a digital native or an old dog?” The interesting idea in the article is that most of the world today can easily be divided between two paradigms: ‘digital natives’, ‘digital immigrants’, and ‘analogue exiles’.

The article reveals a new study by the research company Forrester targeting consumer behaviour and viewed as “the largest ongoing survey in the world to explore consumers’ attitudes, ownership and use of technology”.

Some interesting trends are clear:

According to Charles Golvin, a principal analyst at Forrester, a major strength of the report is that it includes a broad swath of so-called Generation Y members. These are youngsters in the 18-28 age brackets, a group that “sets the pace for technology adoption”.

“Gen Y is the audience that most companies are struggling to understand right now because it is the key to their future revenue growth.” Surely you might think it is Generation X everybody wants to sweet talk because they have the spending power? Not so, says Golvin, who noted the distinction as thus.

Generation Y: the first native online population

While Generation X use technology when it supports a lifestyle need, technology is deeply embedded into everything Generation Y does. They are truly the first native online population. They are heavy users of new media. It is their default.

The survey showed that nine in 10 Generation Y members own a personal computer and 82% own a mobile phone. More crucially Generation Y spends more time online, for leisure or work, than watching old fashioned TV; 72% use their phone to send or receive texts and 42% watch internet video at least once a month. In short, what the study seems to say is that it is not just about how much technology these sectors of the digital society have, but how they use it.

Today’s Generation Y have enormous access to digital technology and display characteristics such as digital fluency and familiarity with new technologies never before imagined. They are digital natives. They are the speakers of the digital language of computers, mobile telephones, the internet and other associated technologies. They typically produce and share digital content such as blogs, digital images, digital audio or video files and SMS messages.

Generation Y have grown up in a world dominated by mobile telephones. Mobile telephones have perhaps been the fastest growing technology in recent years. In a world

population of 6 billion, there are 1.5 billion mobile phones¹. Mobile device adoption continues to rise. For example, in the US in 2004 there were 181.1 million mobile users, which surpassed the number of land-based lines of 177.9 million. In China there are 358 million mobile phones and this figure grows by 160,000 per day².

The global sales of smart phones, or internet-enabled PC-capability telephones, in 2003 overtook sales of PDAs and by the year 2010 it is estimated that the global sales of smart phones will reach 170 million. The mobile telephone provides users with access to communication channels, video and audio technologies, and internet access and text messages. The number of users engaging with these capabilities is reflected, for example, in statistics such as those from America where in June 2005 approximately 5 billion text messages were sent.

Today's Generation Y is digitally fluent and interacts with internet-based technologies in a variety of ways. As reported by a survey³ conducted in America on 625 youths aged between 10 to 17 years:

- 71% used the internet to get news or information
- 68% used their computers to send and receive emails
- 56% to get information about sports, entertainment and hobbies
- 54% to talk in chat rooms
- 17% to get health or medical information
- 17% to shop

These findings are indicative of worldwide trends, as 79% of youths reported having access to a home computer, 48% reported frequently using it for word processing and 55% reported using the internet for information⁴. Thus we can see by this brief examination of the characteristics of digital technologies in today's society that Generation Y is well described as digital natives.

Consumers today have a rich variety of new communication means at their hands, thus many behavioural patterns are shifting. Digital natives, born in the 1990s and later, take internet and mobile phones for granted and have adopted a life style truly encompassing new communication and media consumption paradigms. Digital immigrants still make up the majority of consumers, but are gradually incorporating internet and mobility-centric behaviour in their lives.

And there are still analogue exiles opting to stay outside the digital society but a majority of the exiles will connect when they get the means to do it. The behavioural changes identified encompass globalization, a focus on experiences, and individualization

1 Keegan, D. 2004. *The Incorporation of mobile learning into mainstream education and training*. Paper

2 ibid

3 YouthFacts. (2006). *Youth Facts: General Information about Youths in Australia*. Retrieved January 23, 2007, from <http://www.youthfacts.com.au/index.php?option=displaypage&Itemid=263&op=page>

4 OECD. (2005). *Programme for International Student Assessment*. Retrieved January 14, 2007, from <http://www.pisa.oecd.org>

of communication and media consumption, global tribalism and peering. These insights are essential for all players in the industry to grasp in order to drive new and innovative solutions that will pave the way toward an exciting future for broadband.

Let's take the long view. Consumers are changing. The early adopters of mobile phones and the internet ten years ago have been replaced by much more sophisticated users, especially youth who have grown up with information communication (infocom) technology such as the internet, mobile phones and game consoles, as ordinary, integrated parts of their lives. These users are educated consumers with the power to control the price they will pay for the services they want. They are also more experienced consumers of media than any previous generation.

Communication networks grow and take new forms with advances in, and increased understanding of, technology. Technology-enabled social networks, for example, allow people to manage a complex social web – one that is constantly growing and expanding, thanks to an increasing number of ways in which people can interconnect and interact with one another. Take the mobility of mobile phones, the convenience of e-mail, and the accessibility of mobile broadband, which comes with a plenitude of new communication devices. Then add modes of communication with a vested position in the consumer environment and you have all the elements for a rich communication landscape.

How will consumers be affected by this changing communication landscape and what are the implications? Our society today is quite different from that of just ten or twenty years ago. The rise of the internet, the growth and diffusion of mobile phones, and developments in global mass media has changed the world in fundamental ways, and will continue to do so. We are in the early stages of democratization; the power is shifting to users via new forms of media consumption and publishing tools such as blogs, communities for user-generated content, RSS tools, and so on.

Moving ahead, it will be difficult, if not downright impossible, to succeed in the marketplace with outmoded concepts about consumers. This is because contemporary consumers are going through major transformations in terms of what they seek, how they perceive the world and themselves, how they behave, and what motivates them.

Does Africa have its share of digital natives?

More specifically Kenya as an example has some landmark statistics pointing to trends forecast for Africa's media, mobile technology and integration.

- In a recent market survey conducted in March 2009 by a Kenyan research firm, Synovate/Steadman, more Kenyans have used or touched a mobile phone than have ever stared at a television screen.
- In August 2009, Safaricom – Kenya's leading telecommunications company – had what it described as the "world's first commercial release of a low-end solar-power mobile phone". Invariably, the non-availability of electricity is no longer a barrier to mobile phone ownership.
- Two years ago, less than 200,000 people accessed the internet via mobile phone on the Safaricom network. That number is now going toward three million

subscribers, all connected to their new comprehensive digital platform – Safaricom Live incorporating mobile banking via Safaricom's M-Pesa, accessing Live site, advertising, finding dates through its classified section and reading news through a mobile phone.

- Recently a Kenyan premium rate provider Cellulant recorded 3.6 million downloads for ringtones and wallpapers in 2008 and 2009.

Now that most of the developed world has reached high penetration levels of mobile phones, both current growth patterns and future projections suggest that virtually all of the mobile industries' new customers in the coming years will come from developing countries. In fact, as of 2007, there were more mobile customers in developing countries than in the entire developed world⁵.

At the tiny Gaithuri River in Giathi Village, a rural locality in Kenya, Mama Wambui stands. She is down in her arrowroot farm but has to answer a call from another woman across the ridge. She is 34 and a mother of six. Mama Wambui did not go beyond class five; she dropped out and was married off at a young age.

However, Mama Wambui has found herself a new territory, where she teaches other women how to operate their mobile phones. Checking credit and loading credit, Mama Wambui helps them all. She is a hero in Giathi village.

BusinessWeek⁶ reports that the GSM Association has released a report with data noting that the mobile phone has an undeniable positive influence on the social and economic development at the bottom of the pyramid in developing nations facing infrastructural challenges.

Jeffrey Sachs⁷ says of the mobile phone's impact on poverty: "Extreme poverty is almost synonymous with extreme isolation, especially rural isolation. But mobile phones and wireless internet end isolation and will therefore prove to be the most transformative technology of economic development of our time."

The digital divide is ending not through a burst of civic responsibility, but mainly through market forces. Mobile phone technology is so powerful and costs so little per unit of data transmission that it has proved possible to sell mobile phone access to the poor. There are now more than 3.3 billion subscribers in the world – roughly one for every two people on the planet. Africa has a soaring market, with more than 280 million subscribers.

The digital divide is beginning to close. The flow of digital information – through mobile phones, text messaging, and the internet – is now reaching the world's masses, even in the poorest countries, bringing with it a revolution in economics, politics and society.

5 ITU, GSMA Report 2007

6 http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/blog/europeinsight/archives/2008/08/data_supports_m.html

7 http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=236882&version=1&template_id=46&parent_id=26

Mobile phones are now ubiquitous in villages as well as cities. If an individual does not have a cell phone, they almost surely know someone who does. Probably a significant majority of Africans have at least emergency access to a cell phone, either self-owned, a neighbour's, or one at a commercial kiosk. Even more remarkable is the continuing "convergence" of digital information: wireless systems increasingly link mobile phones with the internet, personal computers and information services of all kinds.

The array of benefits is stunning. The rural poor in more and more of the world now have access to wireless banking and payments systems such as Kenya's famous M-PESA system, which allows money transfers through the phone. The information carried on the new networks spans public health, medical care, education, banking, commerce and entertainment, in addition to communications among family and friends.

On the fully commercial side, the mobile revolution is creating a logistics revolution in farm-to-retail marketing. Farmers and food retailers can connect directly through mobile phones and distribution hubs, enabling farmers to sell their crops at higher "farm-gate" prices and without delay, while buyers can move those crops to markets with minimum spoilage and lower prices for final consumers.

The strengthening of the value chain not only raises farmers' incomes, but also empowers crop diversification and farm upgrading more generally. Similarly, world-leading software firms are bringing information technology jobs, including business process outsourcing, right into the villages through digital networks.

Education will be similarly transformed. Throughout the world, schools at all levels will go global, joining together in worldwide digital education networks. Children in the US will learn about Africa, China, and India not only from books and videos, but also through direct links across classrooms in different parts of the world. Students will share ideas through live chats, shared curricula, joint projects, and videos, photos, and text sent over the digital network.

Universities too will have global classes, with students joining lectures, discussion groups and research teams from a dozen or more universities at a time.

Lessons for media in Africa

From the discourse about 'Digital Natives' just discussed it is clear that:

- The "digital natives" are born into digital technology.
- They are used to receiving information really fast.
- They like to parallel process and multitask.
- They prefer their graphics before their text rather than the opposite.
- They prefer random access (like hypertext).
- They function best when networked.
- They thrive on instant gratification.

Their attention spans are not short for games or for anything else that actually interests them. As a result of their experiences, digital natives crave interactivity – an immediate

response to their each and every action. It isn't that digital natives can't pay attention; it's that they choose not to. They have little patience for lectures, step-by-step logic and "tell-test" instruction.

Today's youth in particular want greater personal control over lifestyle choices. Connectivity plays an important role in creating a lifestyle that is rich in relationships and experiences. Changing attitudes, a greater desire to belong, and interconnectedness are driving this thirst for control. That and the fact that digital natives feel stressed when not connected.

Not only does connectivity increase one's opportunities to locate occasions for social gatherings not publicized by the media (and help bring them to the attention of one's friends in real-time), it also makes it possible to bring in, at the last moment, additional people without having to fix a rendezvous point beforehand.

Digital natives are better informed, better connected, more communicative, and in greater control than ever before. They are better informed, thanks to an increased ability to access abundance of information – anywhere and at any time. They are better connected, thanks to instant communication with others across time zones and social strata. They communicate more by publishing and sharing their ideas and opinions instantly on the net. And they are in greater control because they can personalize their information and entertainment consumption, the marketing messages they receive, and the selection of products and services they buy.

Globalization is a hot topic – for example the globalization of information, media and products. On the one hand, one could argue that globalization leads to homogenization. Due to global communications, specifically in terms of visual images (from television, movies, music videos and advertising) brand names are increasingly becoming global spectacles of everyday life. One could thus argue that trends, especially among youth, are similar and becoming more so the world over.

Notwithstanding, one product of globalization is fragmentation. More precisely, we are seeing the globalization of a broad variety of fragmented, local trends. That is all images, products, brand names and lifestyles which create excitement, sensation, appeal and interest on a sustainable basis can and do find their marks.

Regardless of nationality or cultural background, consumers are willing to sample and experience a variety of styles and cultural artefacts at different times and for different purposes. Therefore, globalization is not a process whereby one form or style dominates over, or eliminates, all others. Instead, it is the diffusion of certain forms and styles around the world.

Media fragmentation is here to stay, and on an enormous scale. To better understand fragmented media, watch teenagers zap between computer games and TV programs while also chatting or texting. Observe their attention span when commercials run. Watch them browse the web as easily as you turn the pages of a newspaper. Then consider that this behaviour will not change as this group grows older. On the contrary, you have witnessed a permanent shift in the way people consume media. This early adopter practice will gradually become a mass market resulting in a new media situation.

More and more households are moving from one TV in the living room to multiple screens – more TV sets, and internet-connected computers. Thanks to the internet, we have moved from expensive and high barriers to entering the media publishing market. Today, virtually anyone with a modem and computer can publish and broadcast TV-like content.

As a result, media companies have less influence on what and when we consume (one-way flow). Instead, we decide what we want to watch, when, and on what device. And this trend is still nascent: digital natives rip, burn, remix and share their media. In the future, even more devices will capture and display content. Time-and-space-shifted media consumption will grow, driven by “digital instant gratification”.

This in turn is leading toward a profound shakeup of all but a few media mega-brands. Established media channels such as Nation Media Group’s NTV will have to compete with podcasting and file-sharing; newspapers will have to compete with the online news alerts; and consumer magazines will have to hold their stakes against blogs.

However, the ready availability of content will soon turn the mass market upside down; the big sellers are selling less, and niche, “long-tail” markets are multiplying. In long-tail markets and with products that are in low demand or have low sales volume can collectively make up a market share that rivals or exceeds the relatively few current bestsellers and blockbusters.

Conclusion: Challenges and opportunities

The concept of individualization occurs at times when the supply of products, services and information is booming. We will also see more and more customized networks and products. Mass-customization will enable individuals to order “content for one”. The internet has gradually started to displace television as the main source of entertainment and information. Furthermore, we use the internet for more and more communication services and vital practical services such as banking.

The world is changing radically, and we are only part way into the journey to a society that is digital and networked. One major occurrence has been the transition from shared communication devices to personal communication devices. One other is connectivity. Today 48% of all consumers globally⁸ agree that a computer without an internet connection has little value.

The internet has become indispensable and more and more users want to have access to it everywhere – 50% say that having high-speed internet everywhere is important. Users want the freedom and mobility associated with the concept of mobile broadband; they want to be able to access the internet wherever they can use a mobile phone – because the concept conveys independence.

But this story is not just about people and connectivity. New wireless technologies will also be used to link objects. Nearly 10 billion microprocessors will be sold this year. As the cost, size and power requirements of wireless functions fall, some unlikely

candidates are being connected to networks, leading to more connected devices – not just stationary computers and laptops, but ultra-mobile PCs, portable game consoles as well as ordinary TV sets, cameras, and media players.

As these two technologies converge, with wireless capabilities being put on computer chips, we see all the benefits of the computing world (innovation, short development cycles, and low cost) being extended to mobile communications.

As a result, a myriad of hitherto separate objects are being connected to networks. The new technology enables owners/operators to exercise control from great distances, and allows a variety of devices to interconnect and interact to do something completely new.

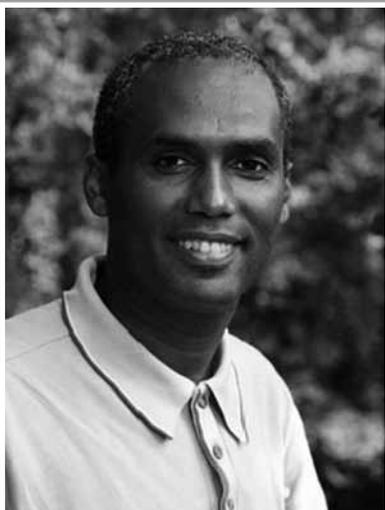
In the future, we will be able to access any services we want from the device of our choosing. Combined with the creativity of consumers and the collaborative effects of Web 2.0, this will pave the way toward an exciting future for Media in Africa.

05

A tale of two technologies

Growth of broadband and
mobile phones in Africa

The internet and mobile telephones are two technologies that have changed many aspects of our lives in the last two decades. The internet has reached virtually every corner of the world at an extraordinary speed. The internet also brought to us applications that have literally changed every aspect of our life, whether it is how we communicate with our friends and family or how we shop, how we learn or how we get our information.



Dawit Bekele

The internet and mobile telephones are two technologies that have changed many aspects of our lives in the last two decades. The internet has reached virtually every corner of the world at an extraordinary speed. The internet also brought to us applications that have literally changed every aspect of our life, whether it is how we communicate with our friends and family or how we shop, how we learn or how we get our information.

The internet has also been the major force behind the globalization that has made our world a small village.

Mobile telephones were supposed to be luxury items that would facilitate the lives of the rich and wealthy. However, it didn't take long before they became essential tools that everybody, even the poorest of the poorest, was ready to pay for. The revolution that mobile telephones brought to this world is as unexpected and as deep as that of the net. Thanks to mobile technology, it is now unnecessary for anyone to know the location where to reach someone else. Mobile telephones have also brought access to telephones to billions of people who would never have had the opportunity get these.

Africa has been late in adopting both technologies. For almost a century, Africa has been lagging behind in the telecommunications sectors. Before the 1990s, the situation in Africa with regards to telecommunications was so bad that many would consider it as hopeless. By 1990, there were only 8.6 million telephone subscribers in Africa, most of them in South Africa and North Africa, for a continent with close to one billion people. The African teledensity of less than 1% was far behind that of all the other regions of the world.

In fact in 1995, Thabo Mbeki, then vice-president of South Africa, underscored this dire situation by saying that "there are more telephone lines in Manhattan, New York, than in sub-Saharan Africa".

Mobile telephones were introduced in Africa in the late 1980s but, by 1990, their number was just ridiculously low since there were only 15,000 of them in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, for many years after their introduction, they were considered as only being attractive to a very small portion of the population.

For example, the first mobile network in Ethiopia could accommodate only 10,000 people in a population of more than 70 million. This was a major underestimation of the popularity that mobile telephones would have because it didn't take too long before the waiting queue for mobile line subscription reached millions!

The growth of the internet in Africa has also been as slow as that of mobile phones. In the 1990s, while the number of internet users doubled every six months in most of the rest of the world, the net grew rather slowly in Africa. In fact, many countries in Africa have still not reached an internet penetration of 1% and the continent's average is just 4.7%, which is very low compared to that of the world, which is around 22.5%. Moreover, most of Africa's internet users are condemned to use very low bandwidth which does not allow them to get access to most of the latest applications on the internet, while broadband has become the norm in most businesses and homes of the developed world.

Africa has also been the continent having the most expensive internet access,

while its population has the lowest GDP per capita, which makes the internet unaffordable for most of its population. One of the reasons for the high cost of the internet is that there are not many sub-marine cables linking Africa to the rest of the world. In fact, until very recently, the western coast of the continent was serviced by just one cable while no such cable served the south eastern coast of the continent. This condemned most of the countries of the continent to use expensive and lower quality satellite connections.

The low penetration of telephones in general and mobile telephones in particular, as well as the limited penetration of the internet in Africa, at least until recently, had major consequences on the socio-economic development of African countries. It is not a coincidence that Africa was practically devoid of economic growth until the mid-1990s, before the first signs of improvement in the telecommunications and internet technologies on the continent. While the rest of the world was living under the era of the globalization, Africa was struggling to build its telecoms infrastructure so that it becomes part of this new world. Even when some developing countries in other parts of the world such as India used this wonderful opportunity to lift themselves from poverty, most African countries were still fighting their old demons.

The African media was also directly impacted by the poor state of those technologies that prevailed prior to the mid-1990s. Media relies heavily on the available communication technology to perform its mission. As a result, the African media couldn't modernize as fast as the rest of the world because of the poor state of its telecommunication technologies. For example, most newspapers remained exclusively paper based since they did not have enough readers to justify an online presence.

Most journalists in African countries were also not benefitting from the extraordinary source of information that is the internet, either because they were not aware of it or simply because they couldn't afford to purchase an internet service. As a result, the revolution that these new technologies brought on the media arrived in most African countries much later than in the rest of the world.

Fortunately, Africa's situation changed for the better starting from the mid-1990s. Many African countries started to develop their mobile networks, aided by the liberalization of their telecommunications sector. As a result, Africa's teledensity reached 25% in 2007. The days when Africa was considered as the hopeless region because of its poor telecommunications are now gone.

In fact, Africa has shown the highest growth with regards to mobile networks compared to all other regions of the world for four consecutive years.

The internet in general and broadband internet in particular are picking up less quickly than mobile telephone but there are clear signs of improvement. Some countries in Africa have developed aggressive policies to develop access of the internet to their population. Small island countries like the Seychelles and Mauritius but also much bigger countries like Morocco and Egypt have reached internet penetrations nearing and even surpassing the world average.

Broadband remains still very limited in Africa, but there are major changes on this front because many submarine cables are reaching the continent, thereby

decreasing the cost of bandwidth and making broadband affordable for businesses and households.

In some countries such as Morocco, broadband has become so affordable that people no longer subscribe to dial-up connections to get their first internet access.

The improvement of the state of development of mobile telephones and the internet has definitely major consequences on the socio-economic realities of Africa. For instance, many believe that the unprecedented economic development of the continent starting from the mid-1990s has a lot to do with the advancement of these technologies that empower African citizens. The African media has also joined the rest of the world in the “new media” revolution, for better or worse.

It is not the first time that the media has been confronted by such a revolution in the communications industry. The advent of the radio nearly a century ago and that of television half a century ago were major technological shifts in the communications technologies that completely changed the media landscape.

Those media organizations which managed to adapt to the new environment not only survived but thrived because of the larger populations which they reached. However, there were many that didn't survive these changes.

The internet and the mobile telephone have also brought exciting new opportunities and major challenges to the media. The internet, by breaking distances, provides a base for much larger audiences for media organizations. It provides instant access to the audience and interactivity at a level never reached by other communication means.

It also enables the use of multiple and varied media types (text, voice, audio and video) to a worldwide audience without the need of buying expensive airwave frequencies. It also creates new types of participatory journalism unthinkable before the advent of the internet. The internet is also an extraordinary source of information, especially for small media organizations that cannot afford to have reporters all over the world.

Mobile telephones also contributed to pushing further this media revolution. They allowed the media to reach their target audiences even when these were on the move. But mostly, the mobile phone has been a tool for citizen reporters. Thanks to mobile telephones, events that would have had no or little coverage by the media just a few years ago because of government blockage on journalists are now enjoying lengthy coverage. The recent uprising following contested elections in Iran would have been completely unreported if it were not for the citizen journalists who were feeding news with voice, text, pictures and video testimonies that major news agencies and organizations could use.

However, the internet and mobile phones also come with great challenges for traditional media, whether in Africa or elsewhere. In most cases, the media has to adopt the new technologies in order to survive because the old business models based on older technologies that the media were accustomed to have become obsolete. This has not been easy even for well established media organizations since it requires a complete overhaul of how organizations work, with many of them having difficulties to undergo change. As

a result, many major newspapers have been obliged to close their doors.

Many governments throughout the world, and not only in Africa, have also difficulties to adapt their media and broadcasting laws to the internet. Most have difficulty in defining the borders between freedom of expression that most of their constitutions protect and other laws such as the protection of people's privacy. The fact that the media can operate across many jurisdictions, thanks to these new technologies, also complicates the issue. Some governments have enacted strong laws that paralyze the media while others have left a legal and regulatory void.

This uncertain environment is not favourable to the operation of media organizations. In 2005, following the World Summit on the Information Society, the United Nations launched a multi-stakeholder forum known as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) to think about this and other challenges faced by internet users. The IGF has advanced the understanding of the various stakeholders of issues such as those faced by the media and will probably help governments and the societies create a better environment for the media. However, there is a long way to go for most African countries.

In conclusion, the African media was shielded from the internet and mobile revolutions for almost a decade and did not enjoy the benefits that came with the advent of the two technologies. The development of those technologies in the continent will oblige many media organizations either to adapt or to perish.

By adapting, the media can get new opportunities that will enable it to grow to levels it would never think it would achieve. Africa has a very young population that can easily adopt these technologies and not only become major users but also operators of media organizations.

Governments should be aware of this revolution. Rather than being inhibitors of change, they should help their media organizations surmount any challenges in this regard so that their national media become major tools for democracy's progress and economic development.

06

Digital innovation, youthful fun and connectedness

A case study of South
Africa's MXit

MXit began as a paid mobile instant messaging service in January 2005 with a minimal subscription fee of about R15 per month. After battling along for four months and having secured only 40 users, we realized that we were on the wrong track. It was back to the drawing board, and in May 2005 we re-launched MXit as a free service. This proved to be our “open sesame” to the youth market – and from then on we experienced true exponential growth.



Herman Heunis

The beginning

MXit began as a paid mobile instant messaging (IM) service in January 2005 with a minimal subscription fee of about ZAR15 (+-\$2) per month. After battling along for four months and having secured only 40 users, we realized that we were on the wrong track. It was back to the drawing board, and in May 2005 we re-launched MXit as a free service. This proved to be our “open sesame” to the youth market – and from then on we experienced true exponential growth.

The vision of MXit is to provide our users with free messaging to connect with people, products, services, information, and entertainment relevant to their lifestyles. With approximately 4 billion mobile phones in the world, there is an opportunity to capture a significant portion of that market. Part of MXit’s success and one of the driving forces of our innovation is our philosophy “We do not compete, we create”. Add to this the fact that MXit is always evolving, and hence our slogan “Join the Evolution”.

Our eco-system

Although MXit started as a pure mobile Instant Messenger, progress was fueled by MXit, our users and the other players in our eco-system, and so we evolved and started playing in a variety of fields:

Social networking

In answer to requests by our users, MXit implemented many of the features that one would find in a typical social network. For several years now, users have had access to moods, emoticons, and can forward digital artifacts from their “Galleries” to their friends, such as photos, music, sound recordings, stored messages and more. Status updates were implemented in mid-2009 by popular user demand.

Advertising

Mobile advertising was one of the core drivers of revenue that resulted in the South African operation being profitable within 17 months. The way MXit implemented mobile advertising differed substantially from the traditional SMS-based advertising. We offer splash screens (static graphical images) in full colour that appear on a user’s mobile when the user signs on. This has proved to be a very powerful advertising form and many major brands in South Africa use it on a regular basis.

Entertainment

From inception, one of the MXit slogans was “Communication is free, entertainment is paid for”. MXit sells entertainment in the form of games, music, chat rooms, virtual companions, greeting cards, etc. which makes up a significant part of our revenue stream.

Dating

Although MXit is not an official dating site, part of the user evolution steered MXit to design and flight a game for dating. Chat rooms and our recently launched classifieds

systems are well patronized by users intent on finding their perfect match, either for friendship or romance.

Classifieds

MXit Xchange was launched as a test prototype in mid-2009 and has proved to be so successful that it is today one of the core systems of MXit, used by more than 750 000 people (by Dec 2009) on a daily basis.

Education

The lack of internet penetration in South Africa (and Africa) has been a boon for MXit. Many institutions have realized the power of mobile internet through the use of a mobile phone with a powerful application such as MXit. This becomes their gateway to the outside world without the data overheads of normal mobile internet web browsing. A number of educational projects (trials) have been completed in 2009 and their success has been astounding, paving the way for further involvement with educational institutions. A successful maths project where MXit partnered with a European group was the forerunner and proved that MXit can be used effectively to teach one of the more difficult academic subjects.

TV interaction

Since MXit is free and instant, several TV interactions were successfully completed of which reality shows *Pop Idols South Africa* and *Big Brother Africa* (African countries) were the biggest. Viewers used MXit to read up on the contestants' profiles and then voted for their favourite personalities.

Counselling

For a few years now, MXit in South Africa and Childline have worked together to enable Childline to provide mobile counselling for traumatised youth, allowing them to remain anonymous by using MXit. Since then, various other counselling initiatives have evolved using the MXit platform, from drug addiction to educational issues to religious projects.

Mobile banking

In 2005, MXit started its own economy, called the Moola economy, whereby users sent a Premium-Rated SMS (PRSMS) to buy credits (Moola) on MXit. Since the Mobile Network Operators (MNO) take a substantial part of the revenues, the Moola economy is "expensive" not only for MXit but also for their users. To remedy the situation, initiatives are in progress to establish a real money economy, in addition to Moola, to enable users to buy not only virtual goods, but real goods. To this end, MXit signed agreements with Beyond Payments, a division of Standard Bank, in 2009.

Micro transactions

Millions of micro transactions take place per day on the MXit platform where users purchase entertainment items with MXit Moola.

Location-based information

Currently, MXit segments users statically per location such as in chat rooms. There is a major drive to make location-based information more dynamic without any involvement by the users and this will receive focused attention in 2010.

Social development

MXit sees the mobile phone as one of the catalysts of growth for Africa for the next decade and plans to play a significant role in education and social development. The vehicle for doing so is currently undefined, but MXit will be working on a solution during 2010.

The role players

A group of important role players operate in the eco-system created by MXit and they are reviewed below:

MXit

By creating a new type of eco-system, MXit first provided the infrastructure for its users to communicate with each other and then added a variety of services to its offering. As the leader, MXit steers the evolution in conjunction with its users and fellow role players, and plots a course for all to follow. More than 1,940 different phones are supported by MXit with this number increasing monthly.

Mobile operators

The mobile network operators (MNO) provide the airwaves for communications in the form of GPRS or 3G. MXit is an internet service that allows the user to connect to the MXit systems, using GPRS or 3G, and not through SMS (as many believe we do). The MNOs generate revenue by selling data to the MXit users and do not share this revenue with MXit. Another form of revenue for the MNOs is the Premium-Rated SMS that users send to acquire Moola.

Some MNOs see MXit as a substitute for SMS and believe that IM will erode their SMS revenues although our experience so far points to better ARPU (average revenue per user) for MNOs in the form of substantial additional data revenues and, in some cases, premium-rated SMS revenues. With SMS having a perceived limited lifespan, MNOs need to find alternative data revenue opportunities. A number of MNOs have realised that a social network such as MXit cannot only generate substantial revenues in the form of data, but there is a real opportunity to tap into other combined revenue opportunities such as content sales and advertising.

MXit Community

According to Metcalfe's law¹, the MXit community and MXit are in a perfect symbiotic relationship where we provide free messaging at the same time as generating revenue

1 Metcalfe's law states that the value of a telecommunications network is proportional to the square of the number of connected users of the system (n²). Source: Wikipedia

through advertising and content sales. While social networking is of enormous value to a community, the pitfall remains of undesirable elements using the available networks to indulge in anti-social or criminal behaviour. MXit and other social networks have been blamed for many of the societal sins of the 21st century and this proves at times to be a serious challenge.

Phone manufacturers

An abundance of features are crammed on to mobile phones today and any social networking/technology company such as MXit needs to evaluate the landscape continuously to utilize these features to the advantage of its user base. For example in 2005, very few phones had imbedded cameras. This soon changed and, as a large percentage of phones went to market with imbedded cameras, MXit had to adapt to be able to utilize the new phone features (multi-media messages, etc.) – and so photo-sending became one of its default features.

Content providers

MXit is not a content provider and relies on other companies to provide content. The challenge here is to provide the right content at the right price and at the right size since users have to pay data costs to the MNOs when content is downloaded via MXit to their phones. Localized content is preferred by users, although some international content is in great demand.

Advertisers

Many brands have realized the power of mobile social networking and spend significant amounts continually advertising on the MXit platform. Advertising takes the form of splash screens which are displayed for a few seconds when a user logs on, as well as broadcast messages which are sent to users as a normal text message.

The future

What does the future hold for MXit?

During 2010, certain input parameters have been earmarked to become part of the MXit evolution, and as a start the following aspects will receive detailed attention:

Multiplayer games

MXit will launch various multiplayer games. Not only are multiplayer games a significant tool with which to build communities, e.g. enhance basic education by boosting basic literacy; but they are also an exciting tool with which to mine revenue-generating opportunities. Moreover, the possibility exists of providing an open games API to third parties to accelerate the variety of games on the MXit platform.

CRM (Customer Relationship Management)

We hope to embark on a range of initiatives to enable business and other institutions (including schools) to create sub-communities within MXit. One way of doing this is

to open the MXit application to anyone who wants to use it to enhance their business. To facilitate this, a widget can be placed on any website which would enable its owner to allow visitors to that website to communicate via the MXit widget. This opens up different avenues for business owners to use MXit as an instrument to conduct market research, promotions and customer support.

Closer MNO involvement

MXit believes that the eco-system in which MNOs and MXit co-exist has reached a stage where both parties can benefit. MXit hopes to work more closely with MNOs, especially in Africa, to ensure an improved service for the user.

Education drive into Africa

MXit is planning to establish an organization, preferably a non-profit, where its platform can be used for social upliftment. One thing is certain: the PC is not Africa's "silver bullet" and will not be for many years. For the foreseeable future, mobile phones with internet capabilities will be the only internet access available to many people in the developing world. Not only is a mobile phone relatively cheap compared to a PC or even a laptop; it is portable and the user learning curve is insignificant.

MXit anticipates a greater involvement not only in education, but also in social awareness and health-related fields. Where education is concerned, educational games to improve basic literacy will be provided, as well as text books and access between schools, teachers and pupils via MXit portals. Additionally, MXit is capable of offering other feasible and sustainable initiatives, as already proved by SMS providers, such as agricultural trading, farming methods advice, medical advice, and teaching aids.

Success factors

Part of our success lies in the following factors:

- Launched in the right place at the right time
- Brand new form of communication
- Inexpensive compared to SMS and voice calls
- Embedded entertainment
- Socializing capabilities (dating and making new friends)
- Single place of connectedness – everything is available from within MXit
- Every user is part of a big community
- Youthfulness of the brand

07

Youth participation in news generation

The key to newspapers'
survival

The youth is often stereotyped as the lost generation who do not care much about the news and what is happening in the world other than the latest news in pop culture. This labelling and boxing patronises the youth and risks alienating young people. In my experience as a coordinator and trainer for a youth journalism training programme, given the opportunity and some guidance, young people can be active participants in news generation.



Moagisi Letlhaku

Introduction

Knock, knock? Who's there? Youth? Youth who? You think you know us, but you don't.

The youth is often stereotyped as the lost generation who do not care much about the news and what is happening in the world other than the latest news in pop culture. This labelling and boxing patronises the youth and risks alienating young people. In my experience as a coordinator and trainer for a youth journalism training programme, given the opportunity and some guidance, young people can be active participants in news generation.

I run a journalism and new media training programme called Future Journalists Programme (FJP), an initiative of Highway Africa and the Open Society for South Africa (OSF) which was established in 2007. The programme seeks to address the lack of journalistic skills among black students studying journalism at South African tertiary institutions. Via training (vacation schools) and mentoring, the FJP provides black students with an opportunity to acquire the necessary competencies and exposure to compete in the employment market.

An alumni of the programme recently published a post on the FJP blog, www.zajournalist.blogspot.com, titled "Declining Youth Newspaper Readership a Concern" (Buthelezi, 2009). In this post she writes about the worrying fact that young people are not reading newspapers enough, preferring instead to get their news online, which is threatening newspaper readership.

But she feels that the bigger reason for the declining youth readership is the fact that young people are excluded from the production process. She writes:

"...the issue of having a 55-year-old 'youth editor' does not sink well with me. (Instead) have the youth manage its own issues because they will best represent it in a manner and language understandable to fellow youth -- preventing being 'talked down to'..." (Buthelezi, 2009).

My experience is that the youth are much more capable than we sometimes give them credit for and that they are not completely averse to consuming news at all. They do want to be part of news generation, but they do not necessarily want to do it the old school way.

Are we where the youth are @?

Danny Schechter (2003), a writer on media issues for [Mediachannel.org](http://mediachannel.org), wrote in his article "Are We Reaching Da Youth?": "Far too much of our news ignores young people or puts them down. All too often they are stereotyped as trouble makers to fear, not to learn from" (Schechter, 2003:13).

Schechter points out that the youth's rejection of news and newspapers may be a reaction to how journalism has rejected them (Schechter, 2003:13). I tend to agree with him in that young people were not traditionally let into the newsroom and seen as valuable contributors because they were not as seasoned as their older counterparts.

We are now increasingly witnessing the 'juniorisation' of newsrooms as more and more media organisations try to catch and make up for lost time, thanks to the pressures of new media technology which has broken down barriers of entry in both broadcasting

and publishing. But also more young reporters are being employed because younger reporters come a little cheaper than experienced ones.

Thanks to the digital revolution, these days just about anybody can get published through blogs, broadcast and stream live video and audio on websites such as YouTube, MySpace, and CoveritLive. What's even better is that this user generated content can be published free of charge, while traditional media deal with increasing costs of production and survival.

Traditional media is challenged in the fight to attract young people because young people are getting news and information from various media sources such as the internet and their mobile phones (World Association of Newspapers, 2006:3).

Some of the reasons contributing to the decline of newspaper readership in especially developed countries like the United States of America are that young people find the broadsheet format of some of the newspapers not to be reader-friendly but cumbersome. They prefer smaller formats such as tabloids but with the quality information that is found in the broadsheet format (World Association of Newspapers, 2006:7). They also perceive the traditional media as non-relevant to the times they live in and not appealing to their interests.

Despite the spread of new media usage globally, newspapers on the African continent are doing much better than their First World counterparts because of the lower penetration of broadband and access to ICTs in comparison to the developed nations. According to the Internet World Stats 2008, South Africa is in the top ten countries on the African continent when it comes to internet access and has 4.6 million internet users, and 10.3% of people aged between 16 and 24 year have internet access (Basson, 2009:137). Considering that there are approximately 50 million people in South Africa, this is only a small number. What seems to be widely acknowledged is that the youth are the ones learning and using the technology more readily than adults.

Participation is king (after content, of course)

French editor Francois Dufour made the following three prescriptions regarding attracting the interests of young readers to newspapers.

- Make it quick. Teenaged readers will give you 10 minutes if you're lucky, so your paper better offer fast-paced writing and easy layouts to navigate.
- Make it newsy. Of course sports and entertainment are important. But your target is young readers who might pick up a newspaper, and those are most likely to be readers who have a genuine interest in world news.
- Make it useful. Information that helps them succeed at school, in or out of class, will bring these readers back for more. (Curley, 2003:16).

So young people like it quick, newsy and useful. But what new technology has taught us is that young people, above all, value their being able to participate in the news production process.

Taking part in making the news is probably one of the key attractions to the news media for youth, especially if the news affects them. It allows them to voice their

opinions and speak from their lived experience. They are, after all, living in a different world to their parents and what goes on in that world is news to them, and you will find that they talk openly about it on social networking forums.

Young people can tell very quickly if they are not welcome. When they feel they are being kept out, stereotyped or spoken down to in the mainstream, they simply move on and do their own thing. This is because they do not feel the need to fit into the adult world at all. What they know, which some adults do not seem to know or understand, is that it is the adults who actually have to adapt to a world that is becoming increasingly 'young'. These days you can't even tell the difference between adult clothing and what the youth are wearing as fashion trends become more youthful and we try to look like the latest pop sensations, despite our age differences.

The point is, if the traditional media does not move and grow with the times, the times will (and in some cases have already) outgrow them. Young people are not only the future; they are driving the change into the future. This presents a real and urgent opportunity for collaboration across the generations because both are valuable in their own right.

Youth Editorial Advisory Boards

In the popular television game show "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" (where huge cash prizes are offered for 15 correctly answered multiple choice questions which become increasingly difficult as the contest progresses), contestants are given three lifelines when the going gets tough and each of these can only be used once.

Contestants can choose between the Fifty-Fifty (50:50) where the computer eliminates two incorrect answers; they can Ask the Audience which answer they believe is correct; or they can Phone-a-Friend. This friend is someone chosen by the contestant whose 'expert' knowledge they trust can get them out of the woods.

Just as we have trusted sources and go to people for key contacts, why not create a youth advisory board whose role would be to come up with ideas and contributions for newsrooms? College students would grab the opportunity because they are always looking for ways to fill their portfolios and brighten up their CVs.

With the technology available today, meetings and work can be done easily online and their input could prove to be very valuable. After all, young people are a significant part of the world's population and they too experience and are affected by world events, just like all adults. Why wouldn't they have an opinion?

Again, it is all about the old and the new working together. The meeting of experience and young ideas is a recipe for success.

Innovative use of technology

Youth are not only interested in taking part in the news agenda; they are also very keen on creating platforms through which news and information is published and distributed. Facebook and Twitter, two of some of the most popular social networking platforms, were created by innovative young people outside of the mainstream industries.

Part of the success of these new social media networks is that they are interactive

and participatory in their nature and are constantly looking for new and better ways to cater to the organic needs of their users. The users themselves are also part of the creation of this technology, contributing daily to the conceptualisation of new applications and uses for existing technology.

Flexibility in the digital age is a major advantage, something traditional media can learn from. Non-mainstream media platforms have become mass distributors of mainstream news and information, reaching millions of people across the world almost simultaneously. By using the social networking platforms, the youth are able to take part not only in news generation and distribution but also contribute to the creation and improvement of new media technology.

Mobile phone reporting

A recent study conducted by Youth Dynamics indicates that of South Africans aged 7-15, 64% have access to cell phones and 35% own a mobile phone (Basson, 2009:137). In an exploratory study on the usage of new media by adolescents done by the University of South Africa in partnership with the Film and Publication Board (FPB), it was revealed that young people are not only interested in cellular phones, but are also very knowledgeable about the features on their gadgets and make use of them, with the mobile phone camera enjoying the highest use at 74.5%, followed in the 70s by games, MXit, and mobile internet (Basson, 2009:139).

What has been very exciting in working with the FJP students is seeing the students spontaneously use their mobile phones to produce multimedia stories, using them to take photos and record video (see “Pantsula for life” <http://fjp08.wordpress.com/2008/07/04/pantsula-for-life/>, “Rhodes student launches clothing label” <http://fjp08.wordpress.com/2008/07/03/rhodes-student-launches-clothing-label/>).

The digital revolution has forced editors and journalists to adapt their way of reporting, and media managers have had to rethink their business model in order to survive the change. Today’s journalism graduates are already adopting mobile reporting techniques as part of their training and, for them, it will not be a matter of having to change but it will be what they already know.

Today, the number of mobile phones has far surpassed the number of fixed telephones on the African continent. This everyday communication tool is changing the way we live, do business and is becoming a reporter’s best friend where conventional technology like cameras are not at hand.

A new language

An interesting (and sometimes irritating) phenomenon that has been born out of the mobile phone short messaging service (sms) technology is the abbreviated informal language of these text messages, popular with young people who are continuously shortening and inventing new words. This is a pet hate for many language purists who are irked by this writing style.

As a young person, I’ll be the first to admit that this text message language is not always understandable because, unlike in most languages, there are no rules. One

sender's 'later', is another's 'l8r'. And the ever increasing list of acronyms that you can actually Google if you are even confused (I do) is another pain. The 'ha ha' which we were all comfortable with became 'LOL' (laugh out loud). This was clearly not expressive enough because then came additions such as 'LMAO' (laughing my a**off), which did not quite crack it and so we had 'ROTFLMAO' (rolling on the floor laughing my a** off). There are many more variations and every time I come across a new one I just 'smh' (shake my head).

But what some feel is the butchering of language is, to me, very expressive. The fear is probably that this mangled language will find its way into formal platforms such as academic and journalism writing. Well, actually it has. Not officially of course, but we've heard teachers often complain about poor grammar and spelling in school work.

The New York Times recently reported that a group of people have appointed themselves the Twitter plolice, and have developed programmes that can sniff out tweets with grammar and spelling mistakes and chastise offenders with scolding replies (Metcalf, 2009).

But the text message and instant messaging language, or 'cool speak' as I call it, is only one part of what I refer to as the new language. It is the language of technology and youth's approach and writing style that gives it that authentic youth voice that I believe can only come from the youth themselves.

Young people want to be part of the news, but they like it mixed with a bit of attitude and even light-heartedness. Newspapers tend to use highly formal language that can estrange not only young readers but even ordinary readers. New media has enabled youth to interact with and contribute content to news media in their own style, language and voice.

Conclusion

The youth are continuously reinventing themselves and how they do things. Trying to pin them down and figure them out is not very difficult at all. Unless we start seeing the youth as participants and thought leaders in news generation, traditional media will always feel like they are constantly chasing them.

Young people are a very important market to the sustainability of the newspaper industry. If newspapers ignore this market and fail to captivate and cultivate them while they are young, the newspaper industry faces a bleak future. Any attempt to capture the youth will require a multi-faceted approach.

The feedback that we get from students who have passed through the Future Journalists Programme has not only been positive, but a testament to the fact that given the opportunity to express themselves in an environment where their opinions are valued, young people can really amaze you with their insights on a variety of topics.

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Connect with FJP on these social platforms: Blog: www.zajournalists.blogspot.com; Twitter: www.twitter.com/fjptweets; Facebook: FJP Coordinator www.facebook.com

08

Welcome to Addis

What it means being a
journalist in Ethiopia

Shakespeare's famous line resonates now and then in different situations and for diverse reasons to people of all walks of life in Ethiopia: "To Be or Not To Be – that is the question". Journalists in Ethiopia are not insulated from facing this seemingly existential riddle, translating and interpreting the "to-be or not-to-be" of journalism and the essence of being an independent journalist in their society.



Mesfin Negash

Shakespeare's famous line resonates now and then in different situations and for diverse reasons to people of all walks of life in Ethiopia: "To Be or Not To Be – that is the question". Journalists in Ethiopia are not insulated from facing this seemingly existential riddle, translating and interpreting the "to-be or not-to-be" of journalism and the essence of being an independent journalist in their society.

I am one of those journalists who have been confronting the question for the last 10 years. The question takes different forms and magnitude at different times as I go through a tough journey, which now sees me in exile as I write this reflective paper.

Last year in October I had the privilege of speaking at the eighth "Africa Media Leadership Conference 2009" in Accra, Ghana, as the Managing Editor of *Addis Neger* newspaper. The conference, which took an ambitious title of "Learning from the Future: Africa's Media Map in 2029", echoed a kind of science fiction compared with the media reality in Ethiopia.

My speech there titled "Media, Youth and Democracy: The Tale of a Newspaper's Quest for Transformation of Discourse", argued for the democratization of media, particularly in Ethiopia. My thesis stressed the fact that media in Ethiopia, similar to other fields of life there, is highly dominated by the revolutionary generation that has been leading Ethiopia since the ill-fated revolution of 1974, in every aspect: policy, regulation, ownership, agenda and discourse.

The short-lived newspaper of ours, *Addis Neger*¹, had been a platform to argue for a post-revolutionary generation which had a new agenda, new form of national discourse and transformation.

On my return to Ethiopia from Accra, I found the final phase of my newspaper being marked by a smear campaign orchestrated by the generation I had criticized in Ghana for not being transformative.

My contribution at the proceedings of the Accra conference will highlight but cannot exhaust what it means to be a journalist in Ethiopia². Furthermore my reflection here focuses on the most apparent facades. During the Accra conference, I openly lobbied the organizers to have the next conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital. Though I was not sure if the government would be willing to host such a meeting unless it could use it to its advantage, my earnest plan was to welcome you, the participants, in Addis Ababa. Right now I am a refugee or, with the most diplomatic language, "an exiled

1 *Addis Neger* is a weekly current affairs newspaper that was published in Amharic from October 2007 to November 2009. It was established and run by six journalists until three of them fled the country after being tipped by reliable government and international sources that a clandestine committee, which was involved in a smear campaign against the newspaper for allegedly associating with "terrorist" organizations and "international forces," was taking the final step to take the founders and some staff members to court to charge them with the newly approved draconian "Anti-terrorism Law".

2 I have been in exile since December 2009, with very few resources. A newly exiled person needs some time, I learnt, to settle and organize his research materials. Therefore, this paper shouldn't be considered as an academic or research paper. Rather it would be fair to take it as a personal reflection. However, I have listed my resources whenever possible.

journalist” still contributing to the Ethiopian media. Therefore, the “welcome” in the title of my article remains relevant if only because I will now attempt to take you into the world of an Ethiopian journalist, as I have known it. Here are some glimpses into it:

What it takes to be a journalist

Journalism is a profession for those who argue for it. The flip-side of journalism may not constitute “a profession” as such for those who give preferences to the exercise of freedom of speech. For a layman who is publishing his opinions without any conscious regard or disregards for the technicalities, his act is a physical materialization of his exercise of freedom of speech. Such arguments are not familiar in the Ethiopian media scene concealed in the facade of basics.

Being a journalist in the post-1991³ Ethiopia is a matter of luck and passion rather than choice or competence for most in the industry. The independent press that emerged in 1991 was an accidental offspring of a political change that was centered in ethnic politics and ideological contention. The sector had no history or experience to translate into a decent exercise of freedom. Everyone was assumed to be an able man or woman to start his/her own newspaper or magazine. Paradoxically, the issue of ownership of press outlets in the early days of 1991 was not a matter of financial interest but an extension of political struggle or pursuit of one’s passion in some instances.

Most of the journalists who joined the new emerging sector were former journalists during the previous governments, individuals with a vested political interest, particularly in opposing the new group in power. There was also a new breed of journalists who came in with a burning interest for journalism or literature. Job security was a necessity for the first and third groups of this period. Eighteen years on, journalists in Ethiopia find themselves in a hardly changing environment in many aspects.

The economics of journalism

The economics of journalism is the combination of factors that determines the overall standing of the media sector/industry in the national economy pyramid. Media has never been considered a viable economic sector by the haves in Ethiopia, signaling the success of a government policy to keep investors away from this sector.

One can hardly find a serious investor opening a newspaper/magazine in the last 19 years. The broadcasting sector is suffocated by political interests of the ruling party to attract any business. Media in Ethiopia is one of the most discouraged by government policies and strategies as a potential economic sector for political reasons in the face of a huge media market.

In most cases it is the journalists themselves who open up and manage newspapers with little resources. Those few, not more than three by any measure, who manage to stay in the market for more than five years lack a sense of institutionalization to restructure the economics of journalism. Lately, very few private newspapers

3 A free and independent press was allowed only after the 1991 change of government.

are trying to pay a competitive salary to their editors in the hope of attracting knowledgeable writers. I don't think this strategy of economics is working to attract competitive talent to the industry mainly because attraction is not only a function of income.

Quite reasonably, journalists are considered to be poor or less paid. Indeed, for those with a good potential and opportunity to work in the private sector, the pay structure of the media is not attractive. Not only is the income that a journalist can earn small to have a decent life; the job itself is not secure. Journalism is the most insecure profession in Ethiopia, not to mention the danger of attack and imprisonment. Currently a junior reporter working for a private newspaper earns an average monthly income of US\$70-140 and editors US\$210-360. This figure, however, does not represent freelancers' income of around US\$30-50.

The social face of a journalist – Weregaw meta!

Every society attaches a certain well defined or crudely identified value assessment to all professions and its practitioners. These value judgments will affect those who are joining those professions, their social status and economic benefits. The social value given to journalism and journalists in Ethiopia is mixed in the extreme. There are those who regard journalism as a profession of “seeking or defending truth”; by extension journalists are viewed as soldiers of the “truth” who strive to expose wrongs in defense of “truth”, whatever “truth” may be. This highly unwarranted perception, particularly if we see it from the experience of the Ethiopian media, bestowed an inflated sense of “patriotism” and “importance” on some journalists. It is this same view that encourages people to think that all journalists criticizing or opposing the government are well equipped to pass a judgment on every subject.

The other position viewed journalism and journalists as a mere tool of the highest bidder or of the more powerful in society. However, those who subscribe explicitly or otherwise forward a blown-up disrespectful attitude towards journalists and in most cases to journalism itself. Sadly, there are journalists who are living testimonies of these extreme social images given to them and the profession. A well scrutinized and moderated version of these two extreme views may take one closer to the reality from both directions.

The most dominant social perception about journalists in Ethiopia is not inviting to anyone with some sense of self respect and dignity. Despite the fact that anyone on the street is ready to lecture you on how journalism is the profession of “defending truth”, very few have a due regard for those practising it. Journalists in this category are considered to be financially poor, academically less competent and freaks or eccentrics in their personal and social life. They are also seen as unreliable partners, people who are irresponsibly manipulative and can be manipulated – typically appendages by nature who have no potential for independence. Journalists are thus taken for granted to be ‘bought’ with two beers in exchange for a news item. These are some of the social costs anyone becoming a journalist in Ethiopia must bear.

It is common to hear these negative views from the head of the government to

a layman in the street. When it comes to journalists and newspapers in the private press, the government has been endorsing these negative images in official statements. It is very frustrating and sometimes annoying to hear such “passing remarks” about newspapers⁴.

For a layman in the streets of Addis Ababa, we journalists are those who must be asked for any kind of information that needs to be verified; for others we are there because we don't have any other job opportunity or competence; we are cheap fellows for most business owners/managers; we are appendages of the opposition; and we are servants of the governing party if we are working for the government. It takes a lot to swallow these demeaning associations to be a journalist in my country. They will say, “Here comes the garrulous” (weregna meta!) when a journalist friend or family member joins a gathering. What has journalism got to do with being garrulous?

Political and Legal Pressure

If there is one perilously dangerous tradition in Ethiopia for potential development of journalism and journalists, it is the over-politicization of its practice. Apparently it would be naive to disconnect the political ethos, implied or explicit, of journalism from the body politics of a country. However, over-politicizing the practice of journalism, whether to support or oppose a given political view or group, will ultimately jeopardize the positive role of “independent”⁵ journalism/journalists.

This bluntly propagated view from both sides of the political isle in Ethiopia, coupled with the deeply rooted cultural skepticism of individual's independence or enterprise, undermines the freedom journalists are supposed to have in their daily practice.

Unless a newspaper or journalist is strong enough to prove his relative “independence”, it is almost unthinkable to be a trusted source of information and analysis. Sometimes the claims and counter-claims sound absurd. My newspaper, *Addis Neger*, has been accused by both political sides of siding with the other.

Some senior officials of the ruling party, EPRDF⁶, gossip in the corridors of big hotels and embassy receptions about how the “West”, particularly the Central Intelligence Agency, is supporting our newspaper to promote “liberal democracy” at the expense of their Marxist-oriented “ideology” of “revolutionary democracy”.

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has often accused my newspaper of conspiring with “external organizers” of the “colour revolution” by acting as “internal agents” to discredit

4 PM Meles Zenawi proudly declared that he doesn't read either *Addis Neger* or *Addis Zemen*. The first is my defunct newspaper and the second is a government daily controlled by his own party apparatus and cadres. Meles' statement epitomizes the deeply rooted driving view in his party. To the chagrin of his government and party, he told journalists that he has never missed a single issue of *The Economist*. He appears to be keener to hear the West than what the Ethiopians are saying [December 11, 2009 Interview].

5 I put independent in quotations intentionally to remind readers that the practical ramifications of independence.

6 Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democracy Front (EPRDF).

the May 2010 general election and instigate havoc⁷.

On the other extreme side, a number of opposition figures are suspicious of our independence. A leading opposition figure once told me that they [the opposition or his colleagues] “cannot be so sure of where the newspaper is aligned”, mentioning our critical stance of his camp. At times things are simply ridiculous: one opposition party alleged that our newspaper was a supporter of its opponent, another opposition party.

The very concept of ‘independent enterprise’ is alien in the political sphere of Ethiopia. People tend to believe that there must be someone behind you if you begin to take a position on any issue. The mere fact of exercising one’s right is never appreciated. What a discouraging journey for able-minded, visionary journalists!

This misconception, on the one hand, has pushed journalists to the edge of the isle, and on the other hand, the journalists themselves have played a role in creating such an impression. Some, not all, have dangerously confused the role of journalism with that of a party leader. I personally don’t see any problem for a political writer or newspaper for that matter to support one or the other party or any other agenda openly. However, the limit of this right must be guarded vigilantly to protect the apparent sense of “independence” of journalists and newspapers.

The legal front, by definition the direct extension of politics in Ethiopia, is the other front which a journalist cannot avoid. There is a high probability of being taken into police custody anytime and anywhere if you appear to be challenging a government official or its institutions. A journalist can be “hijacked” – literally abducted by the “police force” or personal guards of a regional official and taken to another region to appear in court against all laws of the land.

Ethiopian law clearly states that it is only the federal courts which can preside over press-related matters as long as the media firm in question is registered with the federal office. Not only are journalists “hijacked”, they are beaten up and harassed to leave their job or stop reporting on a subject the political overlords find “inappropriate.”⁸

The legal challenge for Ethiopian journalists is rooted in the absence of an institutional system which entrenches media freedom. The courts are also not well equipped to protect freedom of speech. Most of the judges, if not all, are traditionalists in their view and have no training on press freedom or freedom of speech issues. They appear to have difficulty in internalizing the place of these freedoms in a democratic society. If there are judges who have sympathy for media freedom and freedom of speech issues, it is only out of their personal conviction, not a reflection of a systemic view.

7 PM Meles interview on December 11, 2009 – 10 days after I left Ethiopia and the newspaper was officially closed. He was asked about the closure and he accused us of working with “external agents”.

8 Fekedu Moreda, Amare Aregawi, Teshome Niku and others are good examples of journalists “abducted” to be charged in different regions against the law. Reporters such as Abrham Begizew of *Addis Neger* were recently attacked by unidentified individuals for reporting on the internal power struggles within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Though the incident was reported to the police, no investigation was initiated as far as I know. None of these incidents are investigated as a matter of course. [Please visit CPJ’s website for a detailed summary of such cases].

When it comes to freedom of speech, the legal apparatus is basically an appendage of the executive.

The lengthy process of Ethiopian courts per se is also becoming one tool to harass journalists with. Individuals or companies simply charge newspaper editors so that the latter spend a long time in the court without knowing what would be the outcome of their cases. Police investigators and prosecutors have no meaningful training on how to handle press freedom. They accept virtually any complaint coming in and they file official charges that may take a minimum of one year to process.

Harassments emanating from the security apparatus are almost daily routines for most journalists. Not only that. Individuals who assume a sense of power only because they belong to the “correct” party or ethnic group, depending on the offensive subject covered by the reporter, will flex their muscles on journalists.

The Dilemma of Involvement

A journalist who is burdened by economic, social, political and legal pressures can hardly be professional. The constraints are extensions of his economic, political and social environment. Professionalism is yet to be at the centre of journalism in Ethiopia. The paradox of opening up as many journalism departments as possible in the newly established “universities”⁹, on the one hand, and the stifling of the space for freedom of speech, on the other, vividly depicts the intentional confusion being fomented by the Ethiopian government.

These days, it is becoming mandatory to be a member of the ruling party, or at least be seen as “neutral”, to be able to join post-graduate studies, including journalism.

The rough road Ethiopia has set forth to democratization has brought an unavoidable dilemma for journalists. The dilemma is basically on the role journalists should play in the democratization process. Should journalists act as disinterested observers or interested reporters? I have never come across any serious discussion or debate on the subject in Ethiopia. Yet the government propagates only one end of the two positions, which promotes “absolute neutrality” of journalists.

There are many others in the country who promote and demand journalists to follow this stance. Despite the fact that the Ethiopian government is the wrong party to call for any kind of media independence because it has been abusing all public institutions, including media houses, the issue of “neutrality” or independence is a rare species in Ethiopia. This is what journalists at Addis Neger have been seeking to establish and toiled for in the past two years.

The other position considers journalists not as disinterested reporters of events but interested parties with a level of independence. Mainly due to the lack of an

9 Most journalism students from these universities cannot write a well constructed news story, let alone grasp the fundamentals and ideals behind the profession. Yet the government is celebrating for merely increasing the number of graduating students. Unfortunately, these are the same universities and journalism departments which are put before donors as a showcase of the government’s commitment to media freedom and freedom of speech.

informed discussion on the matter, this position finds its moderate voice only in a few newspapers.

Ethiopian journalists, particularly those working in the independent press, are by default considered as activists of democracy, freedom of speech and human rights. I don't think it is a matter of choice for journalists to be taken as activists in Ethiopia where they play, by design or convenience, the role of teaching, monitoring, exposing and defending those basic elements of democracy.

In societies where freedom of speech, human rights and democracy in general have very few informed constituencies, anyone with any interest in them will be taken as activist. That holds true to Ethiopian journalists.

Nevertheless, that is not good news for repressive regimes. Journalists cannot avoid their "unfortunate" role of activism in their writings and reporting. Partly due to this inescapable role, journalists writing on basic rights and freedoms are by definition enemies of authoritarian rulers. Therefore, any journalist who is interested to report/write about basic political issues is bound to be considered an enemy by the government and an activist by most of his audiences.

This is where Ethiopian journalists face Shakespeare's classic question in terms of their perspective and role in the democratization process of their country: "To Be or Not To Be".

I hope my fellow Ethiopian journalists will take the role of journalists in the process of democratization more seriously in the near future. My invitation to fellow African journalists is to have a genuine debate on our distinct role. We cannot copy whatever works in the West or what some alien textbooks prescribe for us. Journalism is a practical field and profession and calls for practical solutions to the practical dilemmas of people we report on every day.

So, Welcome to Addis Ababa where:

- History and cultures cherish diversity and mutual existence;
- Africans envisioned their ultimate freedom but this is far from being a reality;
- Journalists tremble for exercising their rights; and
- Democracy and freedom of the press will eventually triumph over totalitarianism and oppression.

09

User generated content

Friend or foe?

User-generated content is a very impersonal name for a very personal type of thing. It is also called consumer-generated media or user-created content. Wikipedia, one of the most well known examples of user-generated content, defines it as referring to 'various kinds of media content, publicly available, that are produced by end-users'.



Diane Macpherson

User-generated content (UGC) is a very impersonal name for a very personal type of thing. It is also called consumer-generated media or user-created content. Wikipedia, one of the most well known examples of UGC, defines it as referring to ‘various kinds of media content, publicly available, that are produced by end-users’.

Other popular examples are Facebook, MySpace, eBay, WordPress, Flickr and YouTube. It is content created by the people for the people. It allows anyone to become a publisher and to engage in a two-way conversation with the world.



Web 2.0 tools have given us the ability to become active participants – as opposed to being passive observers – and there’s no way now that ordinary people are going to go and lie down quietly.

UGC is generally free; the term went mainstream in around 2005, and it is unique content and the value of this cannot be underestimated.

In practical terms, it is the comments posted on stories; the agony aunt-type questions and answers posed online; the gossip on the blogs; the discussion boards and the self-help medical information dispensed by non-medical people; the podcasts uploaded by users and the

videos posted to YouTube; the tweets on Twitter, the posts on Facebook; it is the Wikis and the mobile phone photos uploaded to the photo-sharing sites.

My 16-year-old nephew told me about a schoolyard fight his friend in the UK had been involved in. Within ten minutes, footage of the fight had been loaded onto YouTube. Another alert, pointing to the YouTube link, was placed on Facebook.

With the younger generation in particular, nothing is sacred anymore. Your exploits are extremely likely to end up on the internet, where they can be used as evidence by an internet-savvy teacher, or parent, to land you in detention!

American market research company eMarketer predicts that by 2013 nearly 155 million US internet users will consume some form of UGC, up from almost 116 million in 2008.

What technology is driving this phenomenon?

Internet-based ‘web feeds’ such as Really Simple Syndication (RSS), as well as ‘sharing’ tools which broaden your audience by making it really easy to share across various platforms, are helping to drive UGC. Broadband has also made creating UGC more possible for more people.

And for Africa, the main thing has been the mobile phone, which has evolved so that you can now take photos and videos and share them easily; as well as smart phone applications that make accessing UGC platforms such as Facebook and YouTube much easier.

The radio station I work for, East Coast Radio, is the second largest independent regional radio station in South Africa with just short of 1.8 million listeners. We are based in KwaZulu-Natal province. In early 2007, when we started toying with the idea of starting blogs for some of the station's key shows or features, our breakfast jock, Daryl Ilbury, launched his blog, boldly introducing our listeners to the concept of the blog and punting it as an online, interactive extension of the radio brand.

At first, there was resistance. Ironically, not to the blog itself, but to the name. As one South African comedian pointed out to me, 'blog' sounds like something that the dog has left behind on your carpet!

As news editor, I wanted to launch a news blog, but felt that timing was key. We wanted to wait until the right set of circumstances came along. Little did we know it would be the perfect storm – literally.

There was a massive storm one evening in March 2007 in the Durban area – where the majority of our listeners are based. In the aftermath, as reports of damage came into the newsroom, we realised it was not your usual storm.

We put out a call to listeners for photos of the event. We did this via our news anchors, tagging the mention on to the stories we were running. We also put our web team on standby to activate our blog – a WordPress-based site.

We envisaged featuring the stories with the pictures that we would receive. Little did we know how many that would be. We were flooded with photos. Hundreds of them poured in over the next day, clogging our email server.

But Mother Nature wasn't done yet. A few days later, we experienced very high tides along the coastline of KwaZulu-Natal. To some, it felt as if a tsunami had hit us – in fact, that's what most people were calling it. The damage was severe and the effects dramatic.



Through a combination of field reporting and on-air calls for photos, we were once again in the unique position of suddenly becoming the main source of information and dramatic evidence of the damage.

And the people swarmed to our brand new site. At the same



of its total monthly traffic in a single morning. With the tidal damage photos, our site actually crashed for a few hours due to the traffic, but our ingenious web team changed the entire parent website to separate the blog hosting from the main website, and that sorted out the issue.

By the end of that first month, during which time the blog had been live for about 10 days, we'd had about 170 000 unique visitors to the site.



key was to move fast. The newspapers and online publishers in the region must have hated us. Here we were playing in their space and moving beyond words over a radio and into the real world of pictures and movies – all breaking stuff. We loved it!

And beyond the photos and movies that were submitted to us, and added to our platforms, we also encouraged UGC through the comments areas on our blogs. We would get the ball rolling with a story about something, and then the audience would

time, they were also our Citizen Journalists out in the field. On the launch morning, the Newswatch blog received more than 10 000 unique visitors; while over 1 000 photos were sent in.

By the end of the second day – a public holiday – 35 000 unique visitors had gone to the site. In technical terms this amounted to some 25 gigabytes of data being served out. The website experienced about 35 percent

Over the years I've learnt that the magic stories that generate both content and eyeballs are storms – or anything weather-related for that matter, as well as traffic incidents. Not just the run-of-the-mill accidents, but the ones with a bit more drama to them.

We would see an instant traffic spike of our own whenever we loaded images, especially, tagged to a story on one of the above. The

comment, turning our posts into UGC havens – and we also turned much of the personal information expressed in the comments into fresh stories.

We would regularly attract over 100 comments per story, and you could often tell the hot button items by the number of comments. When there were over 300, we would get quite excited. Among those leaving a comment would be people whose homes had been flooded in the rains; loved ones of victims of crime or of some sort of tragic accident; whistleblowers; eye-witnesses to newsworthy events.

We would quickly look up their e-mail address, something not visible if you were not an administrator, and mail them to see if they were willing to talk to us on radio about what they had seen, experienced or were feeling. In other words, to become our citizen journalists. Over the years this has really helped up with story leads.

So, why would anyone bother to mail us their pictures? Believe it or not, not one contributor has ever asked for anything in return. For some it will be because they want to get the information out there. Others will be secretly proud to have their content on a mainstream site; while others will do it for the online mention.

If you have got the trust of your audience, they will give and we always made sure we gave them that mention in return.

As I have alluded to, it is very important to build trust with your audience if you want them to come to you and offer up their content and their time. I found that being active on the site, commenting back in an official capacity when they said something about us, or when they offered us important depth to a story we were running also helped create more of a two-way bond.

I also ensured that everyone who e-mailed us content was thanked and that we mailed them back to get the story behind the pictures and the photographer's name for an on site mention. A final e-mail once the content was up, with the link included, sealed the deal, and ensured instant traffic to the page.

This spirit of engagement helped to build our community of bloggers and once they felt they were a part of the community, we never had to beg them to mail us content. We still issue direct appeals for specific photos or footage, but otherwise they are well trained by now and mail us all sorts of interesting things.

A downside of your success of course is the cost of 'saving' all the gigabytes of photos and videos. You can literally crash your site, so you need to stress-test the system and have your technical team on standby for those perfect storm moments.

A major problem for us with the blogs was the bigotry or inappropriateness of user comments. Our audience, we discovered, could be rude, racist, insulting, scare-mongering, plagiarising or just plain irrelevant in their comments.

The news blog was not moderated in the sense that you could post your comment and it would go live immediately, but we had an abuse e-mail that web users could use to report anything dubious.

Two of the other blogs did have a moderation step for comments because we had problems with people trying to defame others and were threatened on various occasions with legal action.

You need to decide how you want to do things. Content can be submitted but will not go live until after it has been moderated. This ensures high quality comments, but can be frustrating for the user if there is a significant time lag.

The second option is for the content to be loaded and then, once live, there is a moderation step. The only problem is that you may not catch the duds quickly enough.

The third way is to let users submit content which automatically goes live but provide peer review mechanisms such as an 'abuse' e-mail or a thumbs down icon, which triggers an alert e-mail to the webmaster when clicked on.

You could also have a 'rate this story' feature, which gives your audience an indication of whether the story is a worthwhile read or not.

Often though, by the time someone would e-mail us about a problem, things would have gotten totally out of hand on the post concerned, and then you'd literally have to drop everything and delete comments where appropriate or scold the users or threaten them with being banned.

Traditional media versus UGC

Many journalists do not consider UGC or Citizen Journalism to be 'real journalism'. Often this is for self-preservation reasons, or it may be because they feel that the quality of content is not always up to scratch, is not legally sound, or balanced or entirely objective or factual – qualities that have been drummed into any journalist's head in their training.

"It's ruining the profession," some have said.

I think this kind of attitude is more a reflection on the journalist than on the UGC creators. It shows some are threatened or feeling like their roles may be usurped. And that is not a bad thing – it wakes us up from our complacency.

The use of UGC by traditional media houses is nothing new. For years now, TV channels like the BBC or Sky News have been integrating eyewitness accounts and images or videos from members of the public into their bulletins.

Successful merging of traditional and USG was evident with appeals via Sky News, for example, for videos, SMSs and photos in the wake of the Asian tsunami on 26 December 2004. The London bombings in July 2005 were another example where the BBC posted footage captured on viewers' mobile phones before their reporters could get to the scene.

The pros and cons of UGC

Pros:

The pros include:

- The creation of independent content
- Diversity of voices
- Correction by the group.
- One of the most important benefits is that the content is often far more authentic. After all, it is first hand.

- Peer review or criticism also instills a desire for accuracy in many content creators.
- The content is often free of advertising considerations.

Cons:

- There will always be a small group of troublemakers who appear very loud and who can lower the tone of your site with their comments.
- Other cons include sloppy grammar; unverified information; a lack of quality control; the users themselves may not find the information that credible; a possibility of bias; a blurry line over whose intellectual property the content is.
- Some advertisers are also not too keen to link their brand to potentially unpredictable content.

You need to find a middle ground where site publisher and advertiser feel comfortable to meet. This could mean a shift for both sides. The publishers need to create a space that feels comfortable for advertisers, while the advertisers need to take more risks. Until then, UGC sites will remain hotspots that attract eyeballs but can't be monetised.

Getting started: some practical ideas

Some suggest that you 'seed' a new site to get it off the ground. You do this by putting in content to get the ball rolling or even, once content is in, going in occasionally as an ordinary user and posting comments to get things moving.

Sign up on Facebook and Twitter if you haven't already, and use these platforms to push people to your site or your photo galleries or your latest podcast.

Africa's mobile internet access is increasing monthly. If your company does not have a mobi-site, you should change that – fast! Currently there is very little local content that is being produced for mobi so there is a gap in this arena.

A forum is an example of a UGC site – and it is a great way to drive traffic. Start one!

Your UGC site should be easy to use. Simplicity on the front end is key, otherwise that will be an immediate barrier to entry. Wikipedia has found this. East Coast Radio also had personal experience with this.

In mid-2009 we underwent a major overhaul of our site. Our six or so blogs were absorbed into the main site so that there was no fragmentation and we changed the look and feel of things, supposedly to simplify and improve.

This was done on a group level, and our next-door-web company was replaced by a national company in the interests of economies of scale. It was a major learning curve.

For the first few months, we lost a great deal of traffic. It slowly started to pick up again, but by late 2009 comments on our blog posts and news items remained quite low, ironically because of the fact they were no longer stand-alone sites, and also because of our decision to only allow registered users to comment.

The main advice I can offer from our experience is to make sure that any changes you make are tried and tested before you go live with them. Ensure you are very clear

about how the various changes will impact on your users. And make sure that you do not mess with a good thing. As they say, if it ain't broke, don't try to fix it!

Million dollar question: can you make money out of it?

If you look at the status quo with the big boys, YouTube – owned by Google and bought for \$1.65 billion in 2006 – was apparently still not profitable by the end of 2009. Towards the end of 2009, Google management said it was close to making money, thanks to all the ads on the site. That had taken about four years.

Another giant is Twitter, with an estimated value of around \$1 billion, but it was not making money by late 2009.

Amazon though is a success story. User generated reviews help to sell its books.

In South Africa, there are advertising budgets to attract as corporates allocate more and more to online, and if your site has the brand power and the traffic, you can aim for a larger slice of the available marketing budgets.

According to World Wide Worx, South Africa online spend for 2009 was expected to reach R419 million.

If you do not have a radio station powering your online offerings, how do you get info about them out there? That's the challenge. Creativity is key. A few suggestions are viral marketing using Twitter, Facebook, etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, to deny the value of UGC is ridiculous. The challenge is finding the way to make it work for you. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach, sadly. You build it for them to come and play on. You find the new business models and explore the concept of tribalism: creating niche content for audiences; building a home they feel comfortable showing up at.

Do not be overly controlling or users will feel the environment you have created is too restrictive. Rules and user-etiquette are needed, but ones that users buy into.

Some say that people have more trust in the traditional and that you will never get them to trust UGC sites, but that does not factor in that people are being exposed to the internet every minute and that there are, in fact, new audiences being created who have no allegiances.

On the other hand, there will always be a place for the tried and trusted or established portal.

User-generated content is not the solution. It is one of many solutions. Ultimately, there is nothing wrong with the concept of co-creating content. In my view, user-generated content is definitely a friend and not a foe.

Photographs courtesy East Coast Radio

10

NGOs tapping into digital media:

The case study of Betegna

New media offer packages of opportunities for every sector – individuals, business, government and non-governments – speeding up communication and creating access to wealth of information.



Kibnesh Chala

Background

New media offer packages of opportunities for every sector – individuals, business, government and non-governments – speeding up communication and creating access to wealth of information.

In 2006, I made a study of Ethiopian newspapers' use of the internet as a medium of disseminating information for my master's thesis. The study set out to identify to what extent the Ethiopian newspapers tapped into the potential of the internet on their online publications. The finding showed that Ethiopian newspapers did not utilize the potential of the internet at the time. The quality of Ethiopian online newspapers was compromised by inadequate resources and the editorial policies of the media houses. In addition, they experienced challenges caused by Ethiopia's telecommunications infrastructure and a limited number of internet users in the country.

I have noted more radio stations launching websites recently. However, I have not seen much improvement on the newspapers' websites quality in the last couple of years. They continue to present the copy of their newspaper with few interactive features.

Is it just the media houses that are reluctant to use utilize new media at most?

There are over 2 305 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Ethiopia trying to address the multifaceted socio economic problem of the country (Ethiopian Ministry of Justice, 2007); I could not help asking how NGOs are doing to tap into the new media.

NGOs are presented with equal opportunity by the new media to achieve their objectives. This text looks at the extent to which the new media, particularly the World Wide Web, contributes to the achievement of the NGOs' objectives taking place at Betegna, a project of Ethiopian AIDS Resource Centre, as a case. Betegna converges radio and web to address issues related with HIV.

Betegna Diary

Betegna is a radio show, which features the story of authentic ordinary Ethiopians living with HIV from different parts of the country. People living with HIV and AIDS honestly and emotionally tell their childhood stories and candidly present their current diaries. This radio diary aims at addressing the issues of stigmatization and marginalization that people living with HIV have to endure in their everyday lives. The programme also targets issues such as risky behaviour and positive living.

The radio show is a project of the Ethiopian AIDS Resource Centre, an organization established in 2002 to back the Ethiopian government's HIV and AIDS programmes with support from the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, and with technical assistance from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/ Centre for Communication Programs.

The National AIDS Resource Centre started to run Betegna in October 2006. The project's specific objectives include:

- To empower people living with HIV;
- To reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV;
- To reduce stigma against seeking HIV related services;
- To increase awareness of people on their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.

Initially, Betegna targeted people living with HIV in lower middle class. Gradually, the show started to attract and address vast audiences aged between 15 and 65. It was noted that 15-29 age groups are regular listeners of the programme.

Betega is broadcast on four FM, two national and one regional radio stations in three local languages of Amharic, Oromifa and Tigrigna. It is aired weekly for 20 minutes except on one FM station, which gives Betegna 30 minutes air time. Betegna started in Addis Ababa and South FM stations later and expanded to Amhara, Tigray and Oromia regions of Ethiopia.

So far 14 people present their stories in hundreds of episodes. Currently five diarists' stories are running. One diarist may take from 25-30 episodes on average to tell his or her story. Each station features localized programmes (i.e. the diary of a person living with HIV in that region/town and told in the local language).

The radio show is often followed by focus group discussions by listeners' groups. There are over 80 listeners' groups located in different parts of the country where the programme is aired. The discussion is believed to reinforce the message transferred through the stories of the diarists.

The programme conducted an assessment in 2007 and the result was positive. The feedback from the target audience also indicates that the radio show is bringing about the desired result. In 2009, Betegna received the first AfriComNet for excellence in HIV and AIDS strategic communication in Africa.

Amel Belay, Radio Diary Coordinator, says Betegna opens up the forum for people living with HIV to speak up their stories themselves rather than an NGO speaking on their behalf. According to her, this first-hand narrative is the reason behind the success of the programme.

Betegna Online

Betegna was part of the AIDS Resource Centre website (www.etharc.org) until it launched its own page (<http://betengna.etharc.org/index.php>) in July 2009. The project needed an independent page that reflects the personality of the radio show, which is personal and intimate. Most importantly the project wanted to expand its reach, targeting people in upper economic class and the Ethiopian Diaspora by going online.

The website has been up and running for the past six months and the response has been very encouraging.

Here is a closer look at the website, giving descriptive analysis in terms of its content, multimedia usage and interactivity which show how Betegna is utilizing the web technology.



Content

The website presents the aim, objectives and a brief introduction on the project. Listeners have an option to download their favourite episodes. In addition, news and articles are available. It looks like the website's main purpose is to present the diaries of people who live with HIV. The website has a potential to post links and articles that contribute to the project's objectives but no additional information other than the episodes is available on the website.

- *Immediacy*: Betegna is scheduled to be updated every week. The diaries are also uploaded every week, right after they are aired. Even if the diary is not broadcast for various reasons, it will still be uploaded on the site. There is no big time gap between the broadcast time and the period it is uploaded.
- *Multimedia*: the website has graphics, photographs and audio. The option of high and low quality audio is available. The quality of audio is compromised when the media player is selected for quick downloads. There are no videos on the site at the moment, but there are plans to add this facility later as the project expands.
- *Interactivity*: the website looks simple and user friendly with interactive elements such as opinion polls, emailing and searching options. It also has a Blog which is serving as a Bulletin Board where people post their comments on certain issues. These elements of interactivities enhance the target's participation, encouraging them to interact with producers and other people.

The producer responds to email requests and queries, which is a positive indicator of the actual responsiveness of the site. There is a possibility of the project to bring the discussion groups online by opening chat rooms.

- *Archives*: there is an archive of episodes starting from the first diary broadcast three years ago. Every episode categorized by station can be found here and downloaded for free.
- *Social networking sites*: Betegna is now on Facebook with 77 fans. It is at the initial stage, but the project coordinator sees a huge potential there. A link to the Facebook account is tagged on the site.

Online Achievements and challenges

It looks like the website became successful from the start. The number of downloads shot up from an average of 6 000 a month to 40 000 when it launched a user friendly independent website. The number of downloads reached a peak in September 2009 when over 62 000 people downloaded episodes from 44 countries, including Ethiopia. An estimated 300 000 people on average visit the website every month. This is a significant reach for a project which seeks to be at the heart of Ethiopia's society and to bring about change.

Achievement of NGOs in particular should be measured against their objectives, and one of the main objectives of the Betegna website is to reach out to the Ethiopian Diaspora. The feedback is positive in terms of increasing the awareness of the targets' vulnerability to HIV. According to the project's coordinator, there are some browsers/

listeners of Betegna who are beginning to form listeners' group in the US.

The website complements the radio programme by enhancing its global reach and giving local listeners the opportunity of catching up on the episode that they might have missed and be able to listen to the diary at their own time.

The website did not incur additional cost to the organization. It is developed by the AIDS Resource Centre's IT team and is managed by the Radio Diary Coordinator. Hence it is proving to be a cheapest means of disseminating information globally.

On the other hand, Betegna faces its own online hurdles. The number one obstacle is the poor Internet infrastructure in Ethiopia. The slow connection keeps its local online reach low; Betegna attempts to tackle this problem by providing low quality but quick-to-download audio formats. The slow internet connection also makes updating the site a time-consuming and frustrating process.

The lack of resources is another factor militating against the website's growth. There is no one else but the project coordinator to maintain the website, over and above her other work.

The issue of language is another challenge because there aren't enough staff to maintain the website in local languages. People can tune into the episodes that are available in the local languages on line, but the website itself is in English.

Betegna plans to present the website at least in Amharic, the dominant national language of Ethiopia, and to increase its interactivity despite the limitations imposed by the fledgling internet infrastructure.

According to the project coordinator, Betegna achieved a lot by going online. She says the key to their success has been to look out for what people want, to give serious consideration to the context of this information and to tailor their programmes to the people they want to reach.

Conclusion

Betegna understands the potential of the web and has made an important decision of using the tool to achieve its objectives. It is true that it has a lot more to do to maximise the capabilities of the web. But its start is exemplary to many NGOs in developing countries, particularly in Ethiopia where most NGOs use the web only for an exchange of emails and the browsing of information. At times the websites of some of the NGOs are rarely updated and then only contain basic information on their vision and mission statements.

Like the newspapers highlighted at the beginning of this essay, many NGOs seem to be discouraged by the poor internet infrastructure and limited connectivity. I believe that Betegna shows us a way forward. There are still 0.4% of Ethiopians who are browsing the net (ITU, 2009) and they could be among the groups that NGOs target. We need to remember that, when people find a website interesting and useful, they will be patient to wait even if it takes ages to download a page.

NGOs do not need to wait until the internet speed reaches the proper broadband-levels of the developed world. It is a wise strategic decision to tap into the available

resource and invest in it. Unfortunately, Ethiopian NGOs and the media are not effectively utilising what is already available.

The issue of using the new media comes down to attitudes and perceptions of decision-makers towards the medium. It is time for NGOs in Ethiopia, especially those targeting the youth, to intelligently utilize the web to address their equally worthy causes.

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11

The making of The Media

Innovation, strong brand
the keys to success

Early in 2002 I decided to bring to life a risky publishing idea that I had been debating in my mind for some years. I sat down to capture my thoughts. What follows is the document that I prepared at the time. It is dated January 2002. I will explain how the business evolved and what I learned along the way... and am continuing to learn as factors outside of my control change the media landscape.



Sandra Gordon

Early in 2002 I decided to bring to life a risky publishing idea that I had been debating in my mind for some years. I sat down to capture my thoughts. What follows is the document that I prepared at the time. It is dated January 2002. I will explain how the business evolved and what I learned along the way... and am continuing to learn as factors outside of my control change the media landscape.

A background document

“The media sector was established on the Johannesburg Securities Exchange (JSE) in 1996 under pressure from the investor market and listed entities already involved in the ownership of media assets. In addition, the new government had signaled its intention of revising the Broadcasting Control Act and selling off selected state-owned media assets, in particular radio.

The new Act also promised an opening up of television and radio licenses, heralding opportunities to build serious portfolios of media assets within listed entities. These steps kick-started a frenzy of activity within the media market and a proliferation of new media channels.

Many old and start-up businesses were snapped up by hungry corporate buyers and bundled together in an attempt to create sustainable growth for shareholders. Examples of this include Primedia, Sasani, AME, UAM and Billboard. The formation of this sector within the JSE meant that focused attention could be paid to the listed companies by analysts, journalists and potential investors.

The media sector thus came of age in South Africa and now commands the attention of the public and private sectors.

By and large, it is a people-driven business, where content is revered and exploited wherever possible. Most listed entities hold content and distribution assets within their groups in an attempt to vertically control the market.

There are primarily two government ministries that involve themselves in differing aspects of this market – the departments of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (content) and Communication (regulatory and distribution issues).

It is apparent that although media is, by its very nature, a factor in virtually every person’s life, there is a vast amount of ignorance and mystique attached to it, creating resistance among business people to take it seriously.

While mainstream financial journals and television and radio programmes do carry stories on the media, there is simply insufficient time and space to do the job correctly. By this, we mean well-researched and presented news and in-depth stories which carry weight and are acted upon.

From an advertising support point of view, a shrinking above the line advertising market, plus a plethora of media types – both above and below the line – mean that sales people touting their media types to buyers are currently under enormous pressure to perform at previous turnover and profit levels.

This then sets the stage for the launch of a niched magazine, targeted at decision makers and influencers within government and business. *The Media* magazine will initially stand alone, but within six months, online, radio and television products will be

added to create a house of media types covering the subject.

- Look and feel: Format A4/ American
- Frequency: 11 times a year
- Full colour, glossy, saddle stitched
- 48 pages plus covers
- Circulation 4 000/5 000 copies
- Distribution: Free to selected target groups: advertising agency and media placement businesses, media directors, buyers, strategists, planners, managers, and creative directors, MDs, CEOs, marketing directors, managers, brand managers at client companies. Use List Perfect plus develop own.
- Media analysts
- Government and relevant NGOs
- Journalists covering the media sector in South Africa and abroad.

Brand building

- Media public relations campaign begins 31 July
- Negotiate lifting rights with relevant international publication
- Establish editorial advisory board
- Advertising campaign above and below the line begins 31 July

Editorial positioning

- Investigative
- Independent
- Enlightening
- Precise

The writers should be guided to present facts and commentary in an easy reading style. The tone should be serious and informative, based on the broad reader base, extending from top private and public sector individuals.

Annual in-depth surveys of particular media types would need to be carefully researched and backed by industry bodies.

Awards can be developed, but once again measured on facts and/or by peers. TV and radio to be approached to introduce a *The Media* segment to complement print.”

More background

What was not captured in this document is the amount of reading and research that had gone into the venture. Consider the following facts: South Africa had a population of 46 million people and over 1 000 magazines were published with varying frequency. The idea seemed risky, so the business model had to be interrogated. The business model selected was based on free distribution with paid advertising to cover all costs. In other words, no retail sales or subscriptions, only advertising and sponsorship funding.

Based on this scenario – one that I knew well – there were further questions to

consider. Firstly, what barriers to entry were there? Typically, the higher the barriers, the better the chances of success.

In magazine publishing, barriers appeared to be very low. In the past, anyone with an idea and passion could get a publication up and running quickly, even a poor quality one.

At this time, I had coined the phrase “magazine publishing may be easy to get into, but can you sustain it?” Further thought led me to decide that skills and an in-depth knowledge of the media sector would play a big role in our success. A second issue is the one of risk. Who would invest hard-earned money into such a venture?

The economy had not yet entered the boom times experienced during the period from 2004 to 2007 so anyone willing to risk their own capital would want to make sure the venture succeeded. I would have to go it alone and rely on knowledge, a solid reputation and my relationships to build the company and its brands.

Secondly, I was warned that magazine publishers are often at the mercy of their suppliers such as paper merchants, printers and distributors. Any deals would have to be carefully negotiated and offer long-term relationships. Favourable payment terms were a must.

Was media in a growth cycle? I thought so, as you can see from the 2002 document. However, it was a mature sector, not growing in leaps and bounds and the internet was snapping at the heels of traditional media. Which brought me to the issue of competition.

The print media sector in South Africa was over-traded. In addition, every media type competes for a share of the same advertising income pie, so your competition is far fiercer than you think. Would we find a willing advertiser base and would they like our brand?

There was no comparable title in the media market, so we would have to convince our readers and advertisers of the efficacy of the product and the need for a title that concentrates on a very niched segment of the market – media owners, the media agents who plan and book advertising and the advertisers. That was the chain of command which would form our core reader base. Of course, with niched business titles there is the subtlety of your readers also being your advertisers. A bonus.

It was also clear that we would have to build the brand quickly and strongly in order to be able to launch brand extensions from its base.

We named the company Wag the Dog Publishers and went with the obvious title, *The Media*.

We positioned it as a vehicle representing the Fourth Estate, highlighting the importance of media across the social, economic and political spheres of the country. That was in July 2002.

Fast forward to 2010

Our first issue saw the light of day in October 2002. The business did not make a profit for the first eight months (bear in mind there was no salary being paid to the publisher either), then turned the corner in 2003. At first we simply built the brand through the

choice of quality content that acknowledged the reader as interested and thoughtful; used an array of good writers; packaged the look and feel to be reader friendly and classy; and, importantly, distanced *The Media* from any perceived competition.

Yes, the media sector did grow in stature as the bigger media owners played on the stock market. There were many new launches from 2003 on, not all successful, but carried by the start of an economic boom that carried through to 2007.

Over that period we launched our wildly successful Women in The Media award that recognises outstanding women across the media sector. This attracted a sponsor and allowed us to further entrench our brand in terms of its importance and serious approach to issues.

We aligned ourselves with many good initiatives such as the KAS/Sol Plaatjie media in Africa series of conferences, Advertising Media Forum, Gender Links, Freedom of Expression Institute and the South African National Editors' Forum.

We also networked and grew new relationships across the sector, plus sent copies of *The Media* to relevant politicians and students of the media at universities.

We launched a series of in-depth supplements called *The Media Collection* series, each focusing on a specific media type such as magazine, on-line, etc. This helped us to increase income off the same overhead base.

Our radio and television plans did not materialise, due to time factors and the need to find a financial model that would realise a profit for both partners.

We also launched an e-zine called *eMedia* which was sent to 8 000 readers and contained breaking media industry news. This product carried advertising and made a profit from day one. *eMedia* was set to become our fully fledged on-line publication which we launched in January 2007, named *TheMediaOnline.co.za*.

TheMediaOnline.co.za proved to be a major challenge, one that I suggest is facing media owners across the globe – not merely print, but radio and television too. Only outdoor looks to gain from the massive changes in technology that have forced us to attempt to predict how people will communicate, acquire news and information and disseminate their views.

The penetration of the internet is weak across Africa and has been slow to gain momentum in South Africa. Consider that we have been using the technology for 20 years and that we still suffer here from high costs of bandwidth, with access denied to many citizens. However, the biggest challenge is one of a workable media business model.

Media owners who, a century or more ago, readily grasped the concept of free or partly free content which was covered by advertising, have realised the folly of our forefathers. We are now faced with the daunting concept of advertising moving to platforms that are not charged for, content that is ubiquitous and money models that are under severe strain. Because we are used to the single model of advertising and sponsorship to cover all the costs of content and distribution, the risks are slightly lower for niched business titles.

Print titles that once circulated among readers within industries such as IT and travel have been replaced with on-line publications. We are surviving with both on-line

and print supported by events and sponsorship. Google is, at this point, the content controller and manipulator and barriers to entry in that sphere seem to be high enough to prevent serious opposition from breaking the search giant's stranglehold.

In the meantime, it seems that only small time niched publications on-line are able to capitalise. Time will tell . . . No-one can accurately predict the outcome of the impact of technology on the media and we are now faced with one of the most dynamic media markets in over 50 years.

Last year we launched a credible award that recognises the skills and attitudes of media marketing and sales teams in the country. It was successful and once again allowed us to leverage our brands, both print and on-line. Plans are to extend it this year.

Overall, innovation is key and a strong brand the answer in this challenging market.

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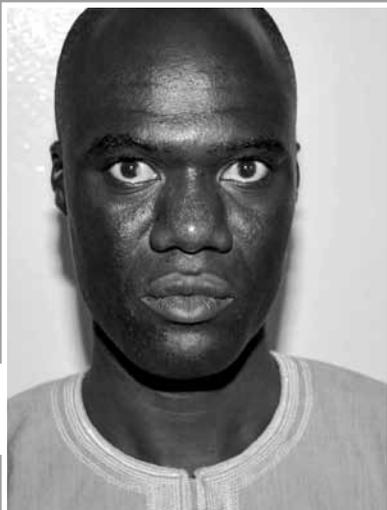
HARNESSING AFRICA'S

Monetising digital audiences

Senegal's small steps

DIGITAL FUTURE

The internet and mobile phones are changing the way we communicate. As a consequence, there is a general tendency for journalism to go digital because the internet and mobile phones are also changing the way people – mainly the youth – are receiving information.



Assane Diagne

Introduction

The internet and mobile phones are changing the way we communicate. As a consequence, there is a general tendency for journalism to go digital because the internet and mobile phones are also changing the way people – mainly the youth – are receiving information.

In Africa in 1996, only six countries had access to the internet. Today, the whole continent is connected, even though there are some disparities in terms of accessibility.

With the growing spread of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) such as the internet throughout the world, and increasingly in developing countries, the demand for accurate data and statistics on ICT access and use has also grown.

Thus, digital media measurement has become vital to formulating and revising policies and strategies for media managers. Likewise, the issue of how to monetise audiences consuming media through digital platforms has become a major concern to them.

What is audience measurement?

Since digital media measurement is a subset of total audience measurement, potential buyers struggle to understand exactly what it is, let alone how to gain value from it.

Experts do not give a common understanding of audience measurement.

- Julie Coulton, Senior Vice President and Director of Digital media for Mullen, says: “Simply stated, audience measurement is the process of monitoring consumer behaviour across all touch points, throughout their daily routines, across the web.”
- Andrew Goldman, Vice President and Group Planning Director/Solutions Lead for Rapp, comments: “Audience measurement, to me, encompasses not only your media measurement, but also the attitudinal social behaviour, psychographic, transactional history, and all the other factors relative to the consumer’s brand experience. Digital media measurement can be a significant portion of that assessment, but is channel-focused, whereas audience measurement is consumer-centric.”
- Ian Thomas, a director of product management at Microsoft, states: “To me, audience measurement is the practice of understanding who your audience is, and how they’re behaving, how they’re responding to online marketing campaigns, and how they’re behaving once they actually visit your site. It’s a broader and more effective way of looking at the effectiveness of online marketing because it provides a consumer-oriented view rather than a media-oriented view.”

For this article, I have used the statistics available at Alexa.com and cross-checked their figures by interviewing the managers of the websites under this study. By audience, I mean the number of views for one story in one day, or the number of views for the whole website in one day.

There is no clear indication of the sex or the age of the internet users in Senegal. The only thing we know is that about 62 percent of internet users in Senegal are under 25 years old and 50 percent of these young people are made up of students and pupils. Senegal has about one million internet users out of a population of about 12 million, according to the 2008 figures of the International Telecommunications Union.

An overall view of the most visited news websites

Seneweb.com, the number one website created by Senegalese people, is one of the most visited websites in Francophone Africa, with more 100 000 views every day. It is also one of the top 10 000 websites in the world, according to Alexa.com, a digital audience measuring website.

Seneweb.com users come from the following countries and in percentages that are indicated below:

- 46.3% Senegal
- 12.6% France
- 8.2% United States
- 6.3% Canada
- 4.2% Italy

Ferloo.com ranks 90th and has between 4 000 and 7 000 visits on working days and between 2 000 and 3 500 visits on weekends. The number of visits peaks at 8 000 when there is a special event. Its users come from the following countries and in the percentages that are indicated below:

- 69.5% Senegal
- 14.1% France
- 2.6% Belgium
- 2.2% Switzerland
- 2.1% United States

Nettali.net makes 20 000 visits every day and ranks 27th in Senegal. The users come from the following countries and in the indicated percentages below:

- 78.0% Senegal
- 9.7% France
- 4.9% Canada
- 4.1% United States
- 0.8% Spain

Nettali.net began as a “copy and paste” website but it now has its own staff of eight journalists and covers news as traditional dailies do.

The APS, for which I work, accounts for about 8 000 visitors per day and ranks 104th in Senegal. Aps.sn users come from the following countries and in percentages that are indicated below:

53.0% Senegal
 13.9% France
 10.6% United States
 6.9% Japan
 6.5% Canada

Walf.sn ranks 41st and has between 10 000 and 20 000 daily visits. Its users come from the following countries and in percentages that are indicated below:

57.0% Senegal
 11.5% France
 7.7% Canada
 4.2% Lebanon
 2.7% United States

Sudonline.sn ranks 52nd and picks between 19 000 and 20 000 visits. They come from the following countries and in percentages that are indicated below:

51.8% Senegal
 15.9% France
 5.7% Canada
 3.9% United States
 2.9% Cote d'Ivoire

The monetizing challenge

Today, in addition to low internet penetration in Africa, the main challenge is how to monetise the digital media. By monetizing, I mean how to make money out of audiences who consume news on new media platforms. There are two main ways of doing this – advertising and subscriptions.

When it comes to monetising, there are two main groups of media firms. The first group is that of online versions of print edition of dailies such as those of *Sudonline*, *Walf*, *Le Quotidien*, etc., which have no visible monetising strategy so far. They are supported by their print edition; the online version is just for the media company's visibility in the market.

The second is made up exclusively of online publications such as Seneweb, Ferloo, Rewmi and Nettali and the APS. They live exclusively on subsidies and advertising.

"To launch a digital daily, you must be prepared to invest money for one or two years to make your product known by advertisers," says Alassane Diallo, the manager of Ferloo, noting that his daily only managed to get some advertising late during its first year of publication.

If the main source of income for traditional media is made up of sales and advertising, the internet does increase advertising revenues of Senegalese online newspapers, although many still don't have any advertising on their online editions. The latter include the websites of *Le Quotidien*, *Sudonline*, and *L'Observateur*, to name just a few.

Seneweb is an exception, and its success inspired the creation of exclusive information websites such as Rewmi, Nettali and Ferloo.

If, for instance, we look at the APS – one of the first free news services online in Senegal – it is competing for advertising with free online websites which publish news stories of local newspapers and copy and paste stories from other websites. Most of these new free websites do not have staff to write their own news stories.

Nevertheless, advertising and subscriptions support 23 percent of the annual budget of the APS. The bulk of the budget comes from government subsidies.

The other online information websites (Seneweb, Rewmi, Ferloo and Nettali) rely exclusively on advertisements as their source of revenue. Access to their content is free.

Overall, it is difficult for an exclusively internet-based commercial information service to be viable in Senegal. To me, growth will come from interactive services offered jointly with offline businesses or traditional media, or through the diversification of the services. One successful example is Seneweb.com, which combines video and text while offering chat rooms and forums to the readers. Today, it is fully supported by advertisements.

Suggestions

My observations above and below are not solutions but mere ideas which I suggest should be discussed, deepened and adapted to the African context.

- Service diversification: In Mexico, Group Reforma – a newspaper that has attracted some 107,000 online subscribers – is an important exception in a global landscape where newspapers fail to make money online. It provides subscribers not just with news but exclusive job advertisements. Along with a weekly human interest magazine distributed only to subscribers of its printed version in Mexico City, this helps to make the title cultivate an air of exclusivity.
- One path for publishers is to bring readers to accept the idea of paying for mobile news, as they pay for text messages.
- Another option is to charge for some of the content offered. The APS, for example, has started charging for the use of its archives. The idea behind this is that a person who tracks down an out-of-date article probably cares enough to pay for it.
- Charging readers for individual articles as it is done in music, but the problem is that news stories are much more perishable than songs.
- Another possibility is to find ways to make copy-and-paste websites, which do not generate content but make money online, share their advertising revenues with those whose content they use. This is where regulatory agencies can come in to ensure that those who originate content are compensated for their work even in the free-sharing environment that digital media has spawned.

Conclusion

As we can see, there is still a long way for the media, especially in Africa, to go before making profit out of digital platforms. But there may be hope because of the rapid technological changes that are flooding the media landscape.

Africa's low internet usage contributes to low advertising revenues, holding back vital growth. Free news delivery has also a negative impact on the commercial development of digital media. The internet offers many opportunities to the media but the media must come up with innovative and diverse content which could lead to profitability.

There is some hope for a better future for West Africa, described by the International Telecommunications Union, as one of the world's "widest telecommunication markets". The media just needs to come up with new and interesting ways of tapping into this vast, unexplored market.

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**Mobile and online media
uptake in Lesotho**

DIGITAL FUTURE

New media is already considered old media by people in our industry as we have been dealing with it for years, but to most consumers it is still a fairly new way to enjoy content. To this extent, it is imperative that a new platform spends the marketing dollars necessary to push not just the platform brand, but the benefits as well.



Teboho Senthebane

Introduction

New media is already considered old media by people in our industry as we have been dealing with it for years, but to most consumers it is still a fairly new way to enjoy content.

To this extent, it is imperative that a new platform spends the marketing dollars necessary to push not just the platform brand, but the benefits as well. User interface is another key factor in consumer take-up.

The promising development of new technologies has introduced new forms measured by the need for a new language with new terms. Historically, creators of new inventions named these objects or processes. The language of the country that imported them adopted these names or labels. Before the internet era, the distribution of new products (or even the information about them) was a much slower process that to a great extent included their “physical” presentation to markets in different geographical locations.

Every platform, every device – everybody seems to have the same media everywhere. Recent research on the media industries has been centrally concerned with the blurring of boundaries between production and reception in an era of digitalization and convergence.

Studies have shown that with each click or page change that a consumer needs to go through to get to what they want, an organisation loses a certain percentage of their users. User interfaces have to be created in a way that are easy-to-use, and give consumers exactly what they want with the least amount of effort. Finally, it may seem self-serving to list focus on content as a key success factor, but the simple fact is that consumers gravitate towards new platforms based on the platform’s ability to offer what they want in a way that is better and more convenient than existing platforms. So content is still a determining factor that needs to be emphasized when marketing a new platform.

Telecoms

Today telecom companies, which have traditionally played in the voice connectivity and voice services arenas, are moving into data services and content distribution. As profits from voice and data connectivity shrink, telecoms are looking at digital media services as a way of increasing average revenue per user.

Armed with great devices, consumers are doing more with their phones than ever. The enabling factors include handset capabilities, driven in no small way by Apple and Google, battery life, 3G network speed and coverage, blended Wi-Fi/3G devices and, lest we forget, the availability of more long-form content for mobile.

Some Lesotho media managers have rather startling confessions regarding the place of mobile in the marketing mix. “It’s mainly for PR (public relations) purposes, we certainly don’t make any money from it,” Ronald Musoo mused about the mobile division that he heads.

“It’s about being in that space, so we can come to talk knowledgeably about mobile advertising, so we maintain our position as cutting edge. Our clients like it as a bit of a

value-add, but it does not really bring in much revenue,” he said.

Asked what form these mobile solutions take, he said it tends toward rich mobile content that audiences would be willing to pay for, brought to them for free, courtesy of the brand looking to promote itself.

Technological determinism

Technological advancement has taken the world by storm, redefining workspaces, living spaces and everything else that goes with it, bringing the world closer together in the process. New media is dynamic in nature and to top it up has the propensity for impartiality and manipulation which translates to strong multiplication qualities when influenced by software. Computers play a more central role in the distribution and exhibition of various types of content through the internet, and other accessories such as DVDs, CD-ROMs and mobile devices also contribute in this regard. The information age not only brought along superlative multimedia capabilities but a much greater potential for unlimited networking potential which now drives endless possibilities as determined by the users themselves.

This digitalized culture feeds the quest for open information platforms in a whole new way, thus shifting the parameters with which information dissemination is carried out. People are able to freely access and share content in a boundary-busting manner, which simply goes beyond the contribution made by traditional media outlets (newspapers, radio and television). Books have made their mark and still continue but lack the dynamism, interactivity and open distribution qualities of new media.

Technology, to a large extent, is more responsive to user needs and evolutionary trends in a timely mode, and this versatility in turn creates a fertile ground for the procreation of new forms of media. Algorithms, on the other hand, play a crucial role in modern computing by assisting in the delivery of relevant information to the consumer, thus enhancing the integrity of the new media arena.

The growth of information dissemination and consumption is being fuelled by people’s desire to articulate their views and knowledge throughout the online landscape via online journals, weblogs, photo blogs and websites.

This phenomenon also nurtures previously unfounded levels of consumer or citizen power in that ordinary individuals are in a position to expose irregularities pertaining to inferior products, customer service or cover-ups relating to public officials. This responsibility is no longer left to the whims of traditional media organisations that in some cases are biased or left to concentrate on much bigger issues.

On a social networking level, new media allows people to engage each other for a variety of reasons; some find the online environment as a suitable sphere in which to seek love or friendship while others use it to brainstorm, gossip or share their artistic talent. In the end, new media is always a hive of activity.

Website Content Management Systems (CMS) are now affordable to any sized business, and more can be done with them. News organisations can now easily and quickly produce, optimise and publish their own website multimedia content. Quality content production has become an important online business objective. Cheaper, faster,

user-friendly data reporting has facilitated better and more frequent updating of stories.

Newspaper companies in Europe, Japan and the U.S. were leveraging the power of the mobile to connect with audiences. They used Quick Response codes to lead readers from print to extended or new content on mobile phones, both in news and advertising (QR codes are two dimensional matrix codes that camera phones with specific software can read and automatically direct the user to content on mobile browsers). A report in a newspaper, for example, could be printed with the QR code, and readers could scan it with mobile phones to access extended coverage.

Lesotho's media-scape

Lesotho's media landscape is largely analogue and has not explored the digital route and convergence. A study of the use of ICTs in Lesotho newsrooms found that access to new technologies in Lesotho is very limited as a result of poor internet penetration and communication network infrastructure, the lack of professional training in using ICT and the high cost of using ICT. It also found most newsrooms were connected through a dial-up connection (Berger 2005:73-77).

Lesotho has both state and privately-owned media. There are 16 newspapers owned by the state, churches, political parties and individuals. The 1990s saw a new surge of privately-owned newspapers in Lesotho, all of them based in Maseru, the capital. The second half of the 1990s saw a shift from state monopolisation to the opening up of the airwaves, which resulted in the establishment of one local television station, the Multi-Choice pay-channels and seven privately-owned radio stations. In Lesotho the draft policy that regulates the media is silent on issues of convergence and cross-ownership (see MISA 2006; Lejakane 1997).

Publiceye

Asked why they migrated online, *Publiceye* notes that there was need to go online because more people now have access to the internet; it is convenient and easy to get news online; moreover Basotho living abroad can access news online and going online would address declining readership.

Publiceye publishes content on print and online. The online edition is updated daily. Some stories from online are repurposed to print. Others are followed up and updated. Journalists write for both, although there are plans to have special reporters for each medium. The newspaper generates money online through online advertising. Currently *Publiceye* does not distribute content on mobile. However, readers who have internet connections on their phones can access news from www.publiceyenews.co.ls. The newspaper appreciates user-generated content, especially comments on stories and letters to the editor.

Lesotho Times

Lesotho Times publishes content on both print and online platforms. The content from the print edition is repurposed, just as is the online content. The newspaper is planning to engage special reporters who will deal with the online version and that of print.

Asked why it has an online version, *Lesotho Times* said it wanted to follow the global trend of newspapers with online versions. Currently, the newspaper does not generate money out of the online version, which is distributed freely. It is planning to work with local network providers to send headlines through SMS. *Lesotho Times* encourages its readers to comment on stories.

Race into cyberspace

More media companies are investing in innovation and new technologies. Every platform, every device, everybody seems to have the same ‘media everywhere’ strategy. While it certainly beggars belief that, especially in this economic climate any company would have a division devoted to something that does not bring in much revenue, just for PR purposes, there is a certain amount of peer pressure to have a presence in the ‘new media’ space.

Ultimately, success is determined by the quality of the product first, then the medium.

News managers are constantly improving and developing their core content so that it is fast, accurate, interactive and unbiased information on any platform.

West (2008:2) spells out that “Our content, whether it’s graphics, text or audio, is across multiple platforms – from the television to the internet to the mobile phone. We also create specific video clips for mobile use. Another example is our text news headlines, which are accessible on our website, our mobile WAP site, and also on mobile widgets, large-outdoor digital signage across the city. Our goal is to reach our influential audience anywhere at any time. As our audience is highly affluent and desirable, we look to offer our content across different platforms to service their needs.”

A European media manager, when asked which of the newer platforms were proving more successful, said: “WAP is increasing in popularity, especially with the rise of smartphones and the increase in access speeds. This popularity will increase even more when access costs go down.

“On the internet, video usage is starting to really pick up, thanks to increasing broadband speeds and adoption.”

This allows for faster uptake and use of ‘new media’ products and services such as mobile browsing and video streaming. China and India are two countries with a huge growth potential in mobile browsing uptake. Even in markets where internet or broadband penetration is low such as India and Indonesia, the penetration of mobile is relatively high.

The key is to stay current on the latest technology and infrastructure developments and to be open-minded when working with new media platforms.

The rise and rise of social media

On the one hand, the growing power of social networking is evident from the time spent by audiences on sites such as Facebook. In Australia, for instance, three million people spend, on an average, 22 minutes a day on Facebook, says Professor Stephen Quinn of Deakin University in Australia.

The time spent on social networking sites is growing three times faster than that spent on the internet and represents a strong channel to connect with audiences.

Previously, the question before newspapers was “How do we pay for journalism?” and the answer lay in finding an appropriate model suited to the particular publication. In some cases, newspapers preferred to develop their own social networking tools.

Highlighting the initiative of the A-Pressen group in Norway, its executive vice-president Are Stokstad said it had created Origo, a tool that helped audiences connect with the newspaper, and in turn strengthened both relevance and content in print and online publications.

Origo, which connects users of Twitter and Facebook as well, “now strengthens print and online,” Stokstad said, adding that “the most successful newspapers are those that are relevant to their audiences”.

As an illustration, he said 3,000 pages of the newspaper’s publications this year came from content generated through social networking, and that volume was expected to be 30,000 next year. The decision to build a custom application for social networking that was fully within the control of the publishing house was taken to avoid “Facebook becoming the new Google,” Stokstad said.

The use of the mobile phone as an information channel is viable even when many new users may be illiterate. Using the mobile platform to expand audiences and connect with readers using social media such as Twitter, Facebook and even custom-built tools are important methods for newspapers to grow, said speakers at a recent annual Digital Media Round Table of WAN-IFRA, the global organisation of newspapers and news publishers. The Round Table was held in connection with the 62nd World Newspaper Congress and the 16th World Editors’ Forum.

Data from developed markets show that the compounded annual growth rate for advertising on mobile phones is projected to be sharply higher than the rate for the internet between 2008-12 in the United States and Japan. Surveys also show that areas such as mobile TV and gaming will experience robust growth, Martha Stone, director of the ‘Shaping the future of the newspaper project-USA,’ said.

Stone said the opportunity to exploit the mobile platform was before the newspaper industry, which should not “blow it”. Already, a failure to be aggressive in the early days of the internet had handed over the advantage to non-newspaper companies, she said.

There is a shift away from the question of ‘should we?’ to one of ‘how should we?’ Even news organisations that are not ready to actively participate in social media are realising that the market research or ‘listening insight’ potential of the medium is too valuable to ignore. Some cyberspace initiatives have included attracting user-generated news, and successful Facebook tie-ins.

As the importance of the internet steadily increases, so is the investment in human resources. There is now a strong business case for news organisations to consider bringing on additional staff into newly created roles to support the Online Editor.

Other digital initiatives to encourage fan opinion and participation include online voting contest Champion of Champions, which has attracted 4.6 million votes, and 300

users to its Facebook group.

Additionally, in researching user-generated and social net solutions for mobile, they have developed LiveFromYou, a personal media widget for Facebook and MySpace that has significant advertising and product revenue potential.

There is a lot people like about Facebook and from a technology standpoint the open API that lets third party developers come up with apps is a strong point. I know organizations can and are leveraging Facebook to reach out to communities of interest and we have seen first-hand the utility of Facebook groups in promoting activities within a certain online demographic.

I started using the site sometime back when I asked my students to identify journalists who Tweet. That, in keeping with a long-held belief that anyone who works in media relations needs to try any avenue to better “get inside a journalist’s head” to understand more completely what their coverage interest is, what makes them tick, what irks them, what kinds of newsroom and deadline pressures they face. We found out that the demographic for Twitter-journalists is varied and what we found varies with each kind of journalist:

- Younger tech journalists, particularly Silicon Valley-based, tend to be snarkier, upper-geeky and dismissive of those who are not, which is what one would expect from the techno-ghetto crowd generally;
- Older journalists are slower on the uptake, but those who bother to Tweet take it seriously as a platform that a) they need to learn about and use; and b) is at the very least a useful tool for broadcasting their coverage.
- Mainstream news organisations obviously encourage their reporters and editors to use it as an internet broadcast tool;
- Some individual journalists obviously use it to help build their reputation — always a prime concern of a large percentage of journalists I have ever known and to help build their personal rankings on Google.

What I have also learnt is that Twitter is not necessarily a great way to establish direct contact with journalists, not yet anyway. Not that there ever has been a single, fire-proof way for PR people to establish contact with journalists ... so why think that Twitter would be any different!

Generally speaking, I am getting the impression that Twitter, as point-multipoint broadcast tool, is uppermost in the minds of most journo-users and that the self-erected barriers to journalists’ direct interaction with the public are not going to be subverted anytime soon by this platform – the opinions of social media evangelists notwithstanding.

On the other hand, mobile has long since surpassed the internet in terms of number of users. Once almost the exclusive domain of rich countries, the mobile revolution has swept through the developing world. There are an estimated 3.8 billion mobile phones in the world right now and most of the growth is taking place in the global South.

Global ubiquity is only a matter of time. This has deep implications for media, but

change has been so fast that most in the industry are still struggling to digest its impact.

There are now more than 10 times as many mobile subscriptions as fixed lines in Africa, and more than 20 times as many in Sub-Saharan Africa. But most African nations are failing to keep up with global trends in the use of broadband internet, which is critical for meeting many economic and social development objectives (UNCTAD 2009).

According to *The Promise of Umbiguity*, mobile holds unprecedented opportunity for media in developing countries like Lesotho to engage their core audiences more deeply, reach new audiences on the edge of their current footprint, and provide interactive and customised information services that are both profitable and life-improving.

But the opportunity is also a threat to traditional media, just as the internet has been and on a larger scale in developing countries. If media players do not address mobile as a viable information platform within a short space of time, media players will have lost a large measure of their market share, mind share and standing in society at large.

As the mobile phone evolves into a more full-fledged digital media platform, and services offered on that platform become a key commercial battleground, it becomes harder to tell what a media company is.

If media companies do not step onto the platform created by the explosion of mobile phones, other companies will. The explosion of mobile phone adoption, and what it represents in developing countries, will be more far-reaching in its implications for traditional media than the internet has been.

The drain of advertising revenues from print editions and even TV across industrial countries has led media houses to take online seriously, forcing them to integrate the internet into their core business models. Internet advertising has eaten away less at traditional media in developing countries because of its low penetration.

Broadcasters should be making more use of new technology and new media platforms to both collect and deliver news content. There have been many instances where user-generated content has provided broadcasters with breaking news video coverage that has not been available from their own reporters or agencies. One broadcaster said that new media platforms would not take over from traditional broadcasting or news gathering practices for a long time, but they would gradually eat into audience shares.

The only way broadcasters can combat that is to be on these new media platforms as well. And that means they should be users as well as followers in order to fully understand the potential of the new media.

Community radio stations in Africa have also used the phone effectively as an outside broadcast unit, famously in the case of general elections in Ghana. Several stations placed reporters at voting centres who broadcast live as voting boxes were about to be opened, a key moment in which election fraud can happen.

Multiplatform publishing

There is always a most appropriate media platform for communicating to a specific community. Of course, long before I figured that one out, Marshall McLuhan said it so succinctly with the phrase “The medium is the message,” meaning of course that the medium used invariably influences how the message is perceived.

News can be seen online, on TV, mobile, magazines, books and other media – the aim is to create a 360-degree multi-platform interactive experience which audiences had not experienced before. The platforms are all very different and take into account their readership.

Asked about lessons learnt from experimenting in the ‘new media’ space, a Lesotho editor said some of the key factors to success included marketing commitment, user interface and focus on content.

Some valuable lessons we have learned when it comes to new media business development are that media companies have to involve other players in the entire ecosystem – that is device makers, content aggregators and consumers. Once all players are involved they are in a better position to create content that best fits the market’s needs, to shorten the launch time to market and to generate user feedback early.

Social media and Web 2.0 are the latest technology-spawned media platform to come along. The new digital platform will not destroy the newspaper business or all print publications, nor will it destroy television and radio. All these platforms will continue to co-exist and will feed off each other.

Like so many others, we are seeing what may be a pendulum swing occurring, toward the re-valuing of premium content. And, it is not just the recent Rupert Murdoch rejoinders in that regard, nor the Associated Press indication that non-paying online search access to stories will soon be delayed (effectively turning paying subscribers into recipients of ‘premium’ content).

Jonathan expresses the wish that the free-versus-premium content debate can be sorted out quickly. And it is true, over the past many years: the natural constituencies/communities of such valued institutions such as newspapers are becoming increasingly atomized throughout the ‘long tail’ of free content and entertainment available over digital media platforms.

As an aside, the one thing that never ceases to amaze me in all the discussion over free vs. premium content is the way in which a collective amnesia has evolved over the past years, allowing the phrase “information wants to be free” to have been completely hijacked by the evangelists and successful marketing efforts of the “free content” movement.

Conclusion

The trends in multi-media publishing require newsrooms to prepare for change. In the final analysis, the goal before media organisations is to use the various media – mobile, online, broadcast and print to communicate with audiences. Options for newspapers to

change their workflow to meet the evolving requirements will be solved by a concept that creates audience-targeted newsrooms.

Moreover, as no other medium before, new media has transfigured the conservative core of a deep and historical culture, shifting its geo-ideological identity. The electronic environment has played the role of mediator between historical, geographical, religious, cultural, and linguistic affinities.

New technology has opened up a whole new world for small media owners and managers. The marketing communications possibilities that present themselves are seemingly infinite as social media sites continue to become increasingly more mainstreamed.

Along with opportunity, however, are also challenges. Undoubtedly, new media formats are here to stay, but small business has to remain nimble, innovative and flexible to be competitive in this quickly changing environment.

Everyday Public Relations within an online context does not require an intermediary PR agency; a basic understanding of keyword discovery techniques and search engine dynamics enables any organisation to release its own costless, targeted and measurable online communications. The businesses community is just starting to get this.

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HARNESSING AFRICA'S

Ghana's media fails to cater to the young

DIGITAL FUTURE

I approached this task with some predetermined ideas about Ghanaian digital natives. My preconception: internet use by Ghana's digital natives is, to a great extent, tilted towards social networking. They generally use the internet for some 'vain' activities and are very preoccupied with the hip-hop culture. But what I found out was a little different...



John Yarney

Introduction

I approached this task with some predetermined ideas about Ghanaian digital natives.

My preconception: internet use by Ghana's digital natives is, to a great extent, tilted towards social networking. They generally use the internet for some 'vain' activities and are very preoccupied with the hip-hop culture.

But what I found out was a little different.

Revelation: Ghanaian digital native's habits and uses of the internet are significantly different from other digital natives elsewhere. They use it extensively for research and school projects. They also consume a wide variety of musical genre and news is part of their digital diet.

Ghana's media has an educational function to fulfil towards its digital natives, but it cannot fulfil this role if it does not up its standards to the quality its digital natives have been exposed to elsewhere.

I chose two schools (which I have not named) to generally observe their students' use of the internet in and outside school. The first group of students was from a middle class school, with a good mix of local and international students, who had unfettered internet access both at school and at home. They were between the ages of 12 and 14 and were in Grades Three and Four.

The second group I observed was from a public school where most of the students live in one of the deprived areas – one of the slums – in Ghana's capital Accra. They were between the ages of 13 and 17 and were mainly in Grade Six. A good number used the internet considerably and accessed it from public internet cafes in their neighbourhoods.

So what are the habits of Ghana's digital natives?

The response of a 13-year-old from the middle class school I observed encapsulates how teenagers in that cohort use the internet. "To check my mail and to chat with people, to research, to watch videos and to edit photos and to download music," she said of her digital routine.

She said social networking was an essential part of her daily routine and of most in her school. Most of the students in the middle class school listed Facebook, Youtube and Twitter as the social networking sites they interact with the most.

They again used the internet extensively for research. "I usually don't play games. I research online," said a 15-year-old in Grade Four about how he uses the internet.

A good portion of students listed sites such as Google and Wikipedia in their digital diaries. Others such as www.royalcommonwealth.com and Global Voices Online also came up.

When it came to the kinds of music they listened to, the students were not confined to one particular genre. They listed a large range – "Ghanaian music, R&B, funky music, techno, Christian rap, soft rock, metal (not heavy), (infrequently) pop, rock, hip hop, pop music and gospel."

They are reliant on the internet for their news and sites such as the BBC, BBC Sport, and BBC Technology, engadget and gizmodo came up.

Although the internet was almost a daily experience, the response of a 14-year-

old boy gave points to traditional media, especially newspapers. “[I read newspapers] usually when I have nothing to do,” he said of his interaction with traditional media. Another student said they read newspapers when they receive newspapers from Canada.

Parents also influenced their interaction with traditional media. One of the respondents said he watched and listened to BBC or CBC when his father tuned in.

Students from the middle class school listed news about music, funny stories, information on what is going on around the world, and international sport as what they looked out for in newspapers.

Unlike their counterparts in the middle class school, those in the public school I observed used the internet mainly to chat and to follow football. They also used it to watch European League soccer matches they had missed, to follow their football icons on broadcast social network Youtube and to study football skills which they tried to replicate on the field.

In a nutshell, the bulk of students I observed mostly used the internet for pleasure. But they also used it extensively for academic work and research and were interested in and looked out for news. They were also open and diverse in the type of music they listened to.

How can Ghanaian media educate its digital natives?

It is clear that Ghanaian media has to raise its game to fulfil its educational function to these youngsters.

In my observation, the students had some appetite for news, and even read traditional media such as newspapers. But they would rather look out for foreign newspapers with in-depth reporting and persuasive writing and ignore the Ghana newspapers.

The Ghanaian media is presently fixated with politics. The bulk of news in newspapers, radio and television stations tends to dwell on the political arena. Much of the news stories that the news media, especially newspapers, churn out are not thoroughly researched; the stories are often sensational and not focused on real issues of interest to audiences. Instead, the news appears to be aimed at catching the eye of radio and television reviewers of morning newspapers.

Analytical stories are hardly available. Journalists usually report verbatim on what basically the principal actors just said without questioning the issues. Writing in these outlets is neither compelling nor tasteful.

Good pictures, graphics and design are not the priority of most of Ghana's print media. Layout in most of the print media is clumsy and the pictures often used are not engaging.

If the Ghanaian media should play its edifying role for the digital natives, it has to up its standards to the quality of reporting that some of the digital natives have been exposed to elsewhere.

Ghana's digital natives have been exposed to digital initiatives of some significant standards, but those of the traditional media generally lag behind. Instead of harnessing the strengths and possibilities that new media presents, the websites of Ghanaian

newspapers, for instance, are replicas of their printed formats.

Conclusion

With the exception of a couple of news websites, the sites are rarely used as a channel for breaking news or to update stories regularly. The multimedia possibilities of the web are often left untapped. Again, there is no attempt to leverage on social networks such as Youtube and Facebook.

Apart from one attempt by the Graphic Corporation to reach younger readers with its title Junior Graphic, young readers are generally ignored in public discourse.

For the media to play its educational function towards Ghana's digital natives, it has to do more balanced and in-depth reporting, with tasteful writing comparable to the quality reporting that exists elsewhere. It must be creative and include young people in the national dialogue.

Ray Hartley

Ray Hartley, editor of South Africa's *Sunday Times*, completed a postgraduate degree in Journalism and Political Studies at Rhodes University.

He worked as the Minutes Secretary of Working Group 2 at the CODESA constitutional negotiations which drafted the Bill of Rights in South Africa's first democratic Parliament.

He started his journalism career as a boxing writer for the *Weekly Mail*, which later became the *Mail&Guardian*. He worked briefly at *Business Day* before joining the *Sunday Times* as Political Reporter in 1993.

He covered the Nelson Mandela presidency as the newspaper's political correspondent based in the new democratic Parliament. He travelled extensively with Mandela, reporting on state visits to London, France and New Zealand and covered Mandela's negotiation of the end of the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko in the Congo.

He was the newspaper's Cape Town bureau chief, Political Editor, Managing Editor and Deputy Editor before becoming the launch Editor of *The Times*, the *Sunday Times's* daily newspaper in 2007.

He was appointed Editor of the *Sunday Times* in April 2010.

Subash Gobine

Subash Gobine is the Senior Editor of the Defi Media Group, a leading media house in Mauritius. He is multimedia journalist working for the Group's two French language weeklies, Le Défi Plus and L'Hebdo and Radio Plus which is the most popular radio of the island. Gobine is also the administrator of the group's website, www.defimedia.info

Gobine holds a degree in the social sciences and a master's in telecommunications regulation and policy. He has been trained in journalism in the United States and Britain. Gobine was involved in the liberalization of broadcasting and telecommunications in Mauritius.

"Netvibes? Digital natives? User Generated Content (UGC)? Well, why not go back to school to learn the latest in Africa media?"

"The Africa Media Leadership Conference held in October 2009 in Ghana provided the opportunity to stakeholders and professionals to assess what is being done on the media scene in Africa and how the landscape would look in the future. The impact of telecommunications in shaping the future of the African media and the potential for tapping the youth market were other issues debated at the Ghana conference organised."

David Duarte

Dave Duarte believes that better collaboration provides competitive advantage in business today.

He is an internet and mobile marketing consultant, entrepreneur and educator who holds several senior positions in the academic, commercial, and non-profit sectors.

Dave runs HuddleMind Labs, a company which provides corporations with social software to help facilitate and embed organizational learning.

He is founder and programme director of two executive education courses: Nomadic Marketing and Mobile Marketing at the Graduate School of Business (GSB) at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The courses are being run by the UCT GSB's Executive Education unit, which has a global top ten rating from the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Dave co-owns Muti.co.za, Africa's most popular social-bookmarking site, which has grown on virtually no budget to serving over one million pages a month to over 50,000 users, and has remained an ad-free service.

This is what he had to say about the 2008 Africa Media Leadership Conference in Kampala: "It was a transformational event for me. The organizers of the event created an atmosphere of openness and collaboration, which enhanced the value we got for our time spent engaging with the formal presentations.

"I found that the questions that were raised in response to the presentations also gave a glimpse into the issues we are facing in the media industry today.

"Issues such as the role of journalists, converging newsrooms, monetization of digital media, and the implications for traditional media were particularly poignant at this conference.

"I had never been to Uganda before. The opportunity to travel there with such a group of top media people from around Africa made it an exceptional learning experience.

"Some of the group had been to Kampala before, and could contextualize the city for me – helping me explore it, and understand where it had grown from.

"Many of these people had been journalists or still were journalists, and they certainly knew how to communicate and share their experiences. Their insights and stories fascinated me.

"Having a common context and background of media, it was a superb opportunity to have conversations about all the issues that the media is currently facing, and get the inside edge on some of the issues that the leaders and managers in the industry are facing in their respective institutions.

"I was the newbie media guy in the group. I got involved in the media not as a professional journalist, but as an amateur one – a blogger. Nonetheless, the group was as keen to learn and share with me as I was from them.

"I realized the significance of the New Media world that I'm involved in now, and what it means from the perspective of more traditional media people.

"Before the conference I hadn't really understood how the internet was used in African countries outside of South Africa. As a result of the Kampala conference, I think that all the delegates learned that the internet is an extremely viable and important emerging channel throughout the African continent."

Linus Gitah

Linus Gitahi has been the Nation Media Group's chief executive officer since November 2006. He joined Nation Media after a long career as a senior executive with pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline in East and West Africa, the Middle East and Europe. He has been managing director of GlaxoSmithKline for West Africa since 2003, based in Lagos; and served the company previously in Nairobi as general manager for Consumer Healthcare for East Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands. He was also head of African Consumer Marketing and has held other marketing posts in the company, which he joined in 1989.

Gitahi graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Nairobi and earned a diploma in management from the Kenya Institute of Management. He also holds an MBA from the United States International University. Gitahi is a nonexecutive director of Equity Bank Limited and has been active in community affairs, including at Huhoini Secondary School, the Tumaini Clinics and the Africa Leadership Initiative. He is also a board member of Federation of Kenya Employers.

Dawit Bekele

Dawit Bekele is the Manager of the African regional Bureau of the Internet Society since September 2006. The Internet Society (www.isoc.org) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to ensuring the open development, evolution and use of the Internet for the benefit of people throughout the world.

Prior to working for the Internet Society, Dr. Bekele worked at Addis Ababa University doing teaching and research in computer science for more than 12 years. He was also active in many associations that promote Information and Communication technologies in his country, Ethiopia. In particular, he was one of the founding members and first president of the Ethiopian Computer Standards Association, the president of the Ethiopian Information Technology Professional Association and the coordinator of the Ethiopian Free and Open Source Network.

He also established and managed a private company that provides Internet related services in Ethiopia and worked as a consultant for major international organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Bank.

How did he experience the 2009 Africa Media Leadership Conference in Accra?

"The theme of this year's conference – Learning from the Future: Africa's Media Map in 2029 – was really appropriate. Africa should no more look back but towards the future. This is true for all sectors of the society, but especially for the media.

"Thanks to the major telecommunications infrastructure breakthroughs in the last couple of years, Africa is breaking its isolation from the rest of the world. This creates many opportunities for the media, but also obliges it to run as fast, if not faster, from the rest of the world. KAS and SPI should be congratulated for organizing this timely and critical conference."

Herman Heunis

Herman Heunis was born and grew up in Namibia and graduated from Stellenbosch University with a B.Com degree, later studying Datametrics at the University of South Africa. He started his career as a software engineer in 1980 and in 1990 set up his own ICT consultancy firm. Since 1994 he has specialized mainly in the telecommunications industry and in 1998 he started Swist Group Technologies, primarily developing software for mobile operators. As CEO of Swist Group Technologies, Herman invested heavily in R&D and the predecessor of MXit was born during 2002/2003. After numerous evolutions, MXit was finally launched in May 2005.

Moagisi Letlhaku

Moagisi Letlhaku, the co-editor of this book, holds a BA in Journalism and Politics from Rhodes University and an honours degree-level Postgraduate Diploma in Media Management from the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership, also at Rhodes University.

She currently works for Highway Africa (HA), a programme of Rhodes University's School of Journalism as Training Manager. Moagisi also heads up Highway Africa's Future Journalists Programme, an exciting national project targeting journalism students at South African institutions of higher learning. The programme serves as a training, mentorship, networking and experiential learning platform where the students also grapple with ICTs and their integration into journalism.

Moagisi, who managed the 2009 Africa Media Leadership Conference's organisation, had this to say about the conference: "I was honoured to have been asked to be the organiser for the eighth Africa Media Leadership Conference (AMLC) 2009, and the opportunity to work with both the SPI and KAS on this important and great initiative.

"One of the great achievements of the 2009 conference was that the aim of becoming a truly pan-African gathering was reached, with the welcome participation of delegates and speakers from the Arab speaking region of the continent, specifically Egypt.

"The programme included speakers from all regions of Africa, young and old, new school and old school media professionals. We also had delegates and speakers from related industries such as the software development industry (MXit), media development agencies (Samdef) and scenario planning (Mind of a Fox).

"I learnt a lot from my experience as organiser and speaker and remain grateful for the opportunity afforded to me. I am certain that that the AMLC will continue to grow, and remain relevant as the pan-African discussion platform where Africa's media bosses map out the future of African media."

Mesfin Negash

Mesfin Negash, who was born and grew up in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, is the former Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor of the most influential current affairs Amharic newspaper *Addis Neger*. He was a co-founder and CEO of the company publishing Addis Neger newspaper until the company closed late in 2009.

He shares the credit with his colleagues in *Addis Neger* for introducing a new journalism there, particularly analytical reporting for the Ethiopian print media. Mesfin was the leading force behind the vision and endeavour of the company towards establishing a viable media institution though the dream couldn't be realized due to external constraints. Once more, when the exiled founders of the newspaper launched the online version of the newspaper, addisnegeronline.com, in May 2010, Mesfin emerged the key leader of this vision.

Mesfin is a political science and international relations student by training. When he left Ethiopia in December 2009 after continuous pressure from the government, he was on the eve of completing his graduate study at the Addis Ababa University in international relations. His specific area of study is social transformation, media, and the dynamics between politics and religion in post-revolutionary Ethiopia.

Mesfin joined the Ethiopian independent media in 2000 as a senior reporter for the weekly paper *The Reporter*. He served on this newspaper for four years, holding positions of Senior Editor and the first News Editor of the paper. He played an instrumental role in the paper's continuous expose of corruption and maladministration within the Addis Ababa municipality and two government-owned companies – the Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation and Ethiopian Airlines. Apart from his news editorship, Mesfin was a regular political commentator of the newspaper. His commentaries on political and social issues earned him widespread recognition and respect within Ethiopia and abroad.

In 2006, he joined the NGO sector. In his stay within this sector he worked as Behavioral Change Communication officer for a local NGO, and then as Program officer for a US based (USAID-affiliated) international NGO, the Health Communication Partnership (HCP/AED). While working in the NGO sector, however, Mesfin continued his contribution as a regular political commentator and media consultant.

During Ethiopia's historic general elections in 2005, he garnered a chunk of readership due to his provocative commentaries and analysis on political and social issues on one of the newspapers closed by the government in the aftermath of the election crisis. The newspaper was known as *Meznagna*.

Currently in exile, Mesfin has embarked on his own personal projects of research and writing on media, politics and social transformation issues, apart from his regular blog on addisnegeronline.com.

Diane Macpherson

Diane Macpherson is the News Editor of East Coast Radio, a regional radio station based in Durban, South Africa, with some 1.8 million listeners. She has some 15 years experience in radio (Capital 604, SABC and ECR) – a medium she loves.

Diane has also worked as an online editor, blazing the trail in the digital arena and helping to merge traditional media with new media. She has, among other things, set up and almost single-handedly contributed to and run three of ECR's most successful blogs – one of which won a SA Blogger Award for Best New Blog of 2007 – while running a radio newsroom at the same time.

Diane believes that multi-tasking among media workers is the new order of the day in these times of multimedia and that unless media businesses embrace new ways of communication they will lose audiences and eventually become redundant.

Kibnesh Chala

Kibnesh Chala holds a masters degree in Journalism and Communication and a post-graduate diploma in computer science. She has studied the Ethiopian online media landscape, analyzing how it is using the new technology.

Kibnesh started her career in the non-profit sector, working in communications, fund raising and public relations with a range of international organizations such as SOS Children's Villages and MSF. She is currently researching the impact of new media platforms on the work of non-profit humanitarian organisations.

She found the 2009 AMLC to be "rich, informative and relevant".

"The participants had different outlooks towards the new media, but I am sure everyone took away lessons from the summit. It was also well organized, starting from airport pick-up until departure.

"I felt so welcomed and supported throughout. It created a very good networking opportunity for the media leaders. I recognize the inclusion of new countries from the north to the conference for the first time, but still it would have been good if more countries were represented."

Sandra Gordon

Sandra Gordon has extensive training and experience in the wider marketing, advertising, media and publishing industries. She has spent over 20 years in the magazine publishing business, launching 16 titles from scratch and consulting with numerous companies and associations on strategy, marketing, communication and publishing.

Gordon's formal training started during her time as advertising and public relations manager for Standard Bank. She completed two diplomas (IMM and PRISA). She then joined J

Walter Thompson and spent three years as client service and new business development director before taking up her first position in publishing – as editor and business manager of *Marketing Mix*, a title that covered the broader marketing, advertising and media fields.

Then after two years at advertising agency BBDO, she freelanced as editor of one of South Africa's first custom magazines *SUN*, the official magazine of the Southern Sun Group.

In 1986 she started her first business Platinum Publications which she turned into seven magazines which she then sold to Primedia Ltd and was appointed to their main board. After the sale of the business to Primedia, Gordon developed the company into the largest specialist publisher in Africa. At one point the combined readership of the magazines under her control exceeded one million per month.

She was head-hunted to join Sasani Ltd, the listed film and television group as CEO, a position she held for three years before once again launching her own business, Wag the Dog Publishers Pty Ltd. It currently publishes magazines *The Media* and has recently launched *Strategic Marketing* (a JV with IMM) and on-line site, *thediaonline.co.za*. She manages content and sales on *marketingweb.co.za*, a partnership with Moneyweb Holdings Ltd.

She was the first female to be elected as Vice President of the Institute of Marketing Management and served in this position from 1980 to 1982. She acted as a member of the organizing committee of advertising industry's Loerie Awards from 1980 to 1988 and spent seven years on the Advertising Benevolent Fund board.

She was appointed Chairman of the Specialist Press Association Awards Committee and then Chairman of the board, a position she held for four years. The current PICA Awards for magazine excellence were created during her tenure; as was the start of discussions leading to the establishment of the current Magazine Publishers Association of SA, a formidable body representing the interests of all magazine publishers in South Africa.

She has served as a judge of the Pica Awards and is a judge and co-convener of The Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards.

Gordon has experienced firsthand all elements of the marketing mix – from research and promotion to advertising and pricing. She has vast practical experience in every aspect of magazine publishing -- from advertising sales and editorial content to production and distribution. She has been acknowledged as a finalist in the Business Woman of the Year awards and is a recipient of the Ernst and Young Business Personality Award. Her interests include golf, reading, gardening, jazz music and travel.

Assane Diagn

Assane Diagne is currently the deputy editor of Agence de Presse Sénégalaise (APS), the state-run news agency of Senegal. Prior to that position, he worked with the private daily "Le Populaire" where he was editor from 1999 to 2002. He also collaborates with many international magazines.

Diagne holds a Master's Degree from the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (JOMEC) of Cardiff University (Wales, United Kingdom) as the Chevening Scholar from 2003 to

2004. He attained a BA in journalism from CESTI, the school of journalism of Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar. He also majored in English from Gaston Berger University of Saint-Louis.

Teboho Senthebane

Teboho Senthebane is Principal Lecturer in the Faculty of Communications and Media at Limkokwing University of Creative Technology in Lesotho.

She holds a postgraduate diploma in media management and a master of arts in journalism and media studies, both obtained from Rhodes University, South Africa. The research focus of her MA was on newsroom convergence and its implications on gatekeeping at one of Lesotho's media companies.

Her professional interest areas include tabloid journalism, media convergence and the political economy of news production.

She has worked at Lesotho Television as Programmes Manager and talk show host; at Radio Lesotho as a senior news reporter and anchor. She is a founding and active member of media and arts watch association MAWA, Lesotho, and has published extensively in trade and academic journals on HIV/ AIDS, gender violence and inequality, social justice and the media.

Her comments on the 2009 AMLC?

"If we as academics don't stay in contact with our peers in the industry, we will get out of touch. One informs the other. Anticipating that potential problem, we need to maintain relationships and contact with media leaders and practitioners. Another answer is networking which is easier in some locations than at others and the AMLC gave this important platform to meet and exchange very useful insights.

"Some of the best experiences came from interactions with these leaders and other attendees during the conference. The session speakers provided insight into the issues of new media challenges and benefits. They are usually sharing a first person experience that illuminates a new twist or trend in the world of ambiguity and unknown future.

"The most enjoyable part was the networking and free-flowing information exchange at this networking event. I met some of the most interesting people with the most fascinating experiences."

John Yarney

John Yarney is the Editor of *Business World*, a monthly business magazine that targets company managers based in Ghana. Yarney studied Media Management at the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership at Rhodes University's School of Journalism and Media Studies in South Africa.

He had these comments on the Africa Media Leadership Conference in Accra: "The theme of the conference was apt for the times that we live in.

"Again, I found almost all the presentations and discussions insightful; but two stood out

for me: the one on MXit which focused on Innovation, Youthful Fun and Connectedness - A Case Study from Southern Africa and was presented by Herman Heunis, the founder and CEO of MXit. It was very useful. I had been struggling for some time with the business model for using SMS as a platform and he helped me to see the light.

“The case study by Diane Macpherson, the News Editor of the East Coast Radio in South Africa was very practical and to the point. I learned a lot from her.”

Francis Mdlongwa

Francis Mdlongwa has been head of Rhodes University's Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership since 2004, taking charge of Africa's only university-level institute that specifically trains graduates and editors in media leadership and management.

Mdlongwa distinguished himself as an international desk editor, bureau chief and senior roving international correspondent of *Reuters*, the world's leading news agency, which employed him in several world capitals, including London, Nairobi, Johannesburg and Harare, in the 1980s and 1990s. He also worked for the news agency in the United States, based in Atlanta, Georgia.

He broke the story of the 1991 overthrow of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, covered Africa's civil wars and peace in diverse countries stretching from Sudan and Ethiopia in the North to Angola and Lesotho in the South, and reported on landmark elections in the 1990s which ushered in multi-party democracy in countries such as South Africa, Malawi and Kenya.

Mdlongwa has headed several African media organisations. He has been Group Editor-in-Chief of Associated Newspapers, publishers of Zimbabwe's *Daily News*, which was banned by the government in 2003; for nearly a decade he was Editor-in-Chief of the *Financial Gazette*, an authoritative financial and political newspaper based in Harare; and he was head of news and current affairs at *Channel Africa*, the external news service of the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

He is an international media consultant who runs journalism and media management training programmes in the former Eastern Bloc nations such as Serbia and Montenegro, and in several African countries such as Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe. His media consultancies have been funded by several international organisations, including the Reuters Foundation, the London-based training arm of *Reuters*; and the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), which is headquartered in Washington.

For more than four years since 2004, he taught practical journalism courses such as news writing; the writing of news features, news analysis and editorial and opinion pieces; and economics, business and financial reporting at the Graduate School of Journalism and Communication at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, working on behalf of Norway's Gimlekollen University College.

KAS and Sub-Sahara Africa Media Programme

For over 40 years now, the German Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) has been engaged with Africa. Named after Germany's first democratic chancellor after World War II, the foundation has worked at its many offices around Africa to strengthen democracy, build good political governance and buttress a free and independent news media. To reach these goals, KAS runs offices in over 100 countries around the world.

Since 2002 the foundation has added a regional media programme for sub-Saharan Africa, which is based in Johannesburg. The major task of this programme has been the building and strengthening of a free and independent media in the region. To achieve this goal, KAS offers a variety of courses, training workshops and conferences.

Since its launch, the programme has focused on Media Law, Investigative Journalism and Media Management. So it is not surprising that with the financial support of the foundation, the Africa Media Leadership Conference series was launched in conjunction with Rhodes University's Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership (SPI) in 2002 – an event that has become an annual fixture on the calendars of African media leaders.

Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership

Rhodes University's Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership (SPI) is a pioneering institute in Africa offering high-level editorial and business training programmes to both practising and aspirant media leaders.

Established in 2002, the SPI is the only university-level institute in Africa offering professional media management and leadership training programmes and the honours degree-level Post-Graduate Diploma in Media Management (PDMM).

Our training programmes uniquely combine cutting-edge theory and practice and are led by media industry experts and academics, who seek to provide course participants with knowledge and skills of how to lead sustainable media organisations in rapidly changing conditions typified by Africa's socio-economic and political landscape.

We do not claim that we will turn you into a media management expert overnight, but we give you a range of insights which empower you to make direct interventions at your work place.

We offer a range of short-term professional courses such as our popular Essentials of Newspaper Management and the Essentials of Broadcast Management, which are usually taken by practising mid-career media managers who want to sharpen and deepen their understanding of the media sector.

The PDMM, an equivalent of an honours degree, is the only training programme of its kind in Africa which specifically focuses on leadership and management of media institutions – print, broadcast, online and converged – as opposed to offering generalist management to course participants.

We design and stage customised courses for media companies from across Africa, the latest being an innovative leadership newsroom programme run by the SPI for senior editorial members of the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

We also conduct research into key issues, questions and trends that define today's media landscape.

*For more details, please visit our website at www.spiml.co.za or at www.spiml.com.
You can also contact us by fax at +27-(0)-46-622-9591 or phone at +27-(0)-46-603-8782.*



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