

The 'mobile' threat to traditional media

 [Bylssa Sikiti da Silva](#)

26 Oct 2006

For media and telecommunications firms to maximise their profits and stay relevant, they should put consumers' interests first, be constantly creative, be technologically-conscious, develop new products and strategies and offer their products consistently and at reasonable prices - or traditional media platforms could be made redundant by the convergence of technological new media options, it was revealed at the 2006 Africa Media Broadcasting Congress, taking place this week at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg.

Russell Southwood, CEO of Balancing Act (UK), said in his opening remarks yesterday, 25 October 2006, that places such as Africa had thousands of stories to tell, but they are not being told effectively. Perhaps, to paraphrase Hamza Farooqui of WorldSpace (SA), it is because of a huge demand for telecommunications and media products, but unfortunately the infrastructures are not there. That is where the opportunities lie.

Despite the research showing that few people in Africa really care about technological advances, at least 80% of Africans are now connected to a cellphone. This, Farooqui said, demonstrates that an important but noiseless digital revolution is underway in Africa.

As convergence technology still lacks in many parts of the Third World, Africa's media, telecommunications and technology areas are significantly dominated by monopolies, resulting in these prices to increase their prices now and then as they please. Telkom and DStv are fine examples of this in South Africa. While many South Africans often complain about Telkom's products and services being way over the top compared to other countries, satellite/cable TV is so expensive to such an extent that not many people can afford it (most Africans prefer to meet the basic needs such as food and clothing!).

Digital revolution

But it has since been established that consumers want diverse media and telecoms products with reasonable prices. The more various competitors enter the market, the more prices could come down and the more you give to consumers, the more they will adapt, delegates were told.

"Customers should be at the centre of the digital revolution," Farooqui insisted. Simon Guild, CEO of MTV Networks Europe, agreed likewise. "Audiences should be part of an integrated part of any media plans or programmes," Guild told delegates.

And, as the talk of digital revolution gets momentum day in and day out, sending cold shivers down the spine of media

owners and executives, companies should do whatever they can to update their technological capacities if they are to stay relevant in the environment they operate. They should also use latest media technologies that are much more consistent, time-saving and cost-effective. This is the view of Eric Charles, Apple business development manager for Central Europe, Middle East and Africa.

Media firms should also stretch their products, like offering them online or even mobile space if they can, Guild of MTV Europe advised, citing MTV's amazing and ongoing new initiatives which target different races, social groups and ages and which are consumers' choices-based.

"Media should move away from their original motto, 'We are intelligent people and you the audience are stupid'", Guild said. "Instead they should speak to their audiences and engage them with their social issues and build an active relationship with them."

So, for the media and telecommunications firms to maximise their profits and stay relevant, they should put consumers' interests first, be constantly creative if they want to win in today's complex and fast-changing economic environment, be technologically-conscious, develop new products and strategies, and offer their products consistently and at reasonable prices.

Mobile 'threat'

Furthermore, delegates also heard that the future of broadcasting television is in jeopardy with the development of the mobile space. "Mobile TV in South Africa is still in its infancy, but in a year or so, it will have a significant impact on people," Piet Marais, founder of Mediaworld Film & TV Production House, said.

"While bearing in mind that content is king, we must develop a new media approach in order to look for new revenue streams in the broadcasting and film industry," Marais told delegates. He also said that there is a huge amount of money waiting to be made in the area of mobile TV.

"Traditional TV broadcasting is dead," Manny Teixeira, MD of Spectrum Visual Networks, said. "Perhaps, the only thing people will tune in to is the time when they want to see an ad."

Omar Essack, Kagiso Media's executive director (broadcasting) said that even pay-per-view stations' subscription models seem to have some problems. "Some of them are now taking adverts to make up for their losses and boost their incomes, thus moving away from their fundamental objectives of depending on subscriptions only," Essack said.

New 'life' for TV?

However, some delegates, including M-Mobile CEO Linda Vermaas and Saatchi & Saatchi (SA) CEO Gail Curtis, had some reservations about traditional TV being under threat. They believe that perhaps it is too soon to write it off as it still has a critical role to play. Vermaas said: "Our research has shown that traditional TV still plays an important role in the sense that it can be used to build the platform of this new mobile TV strategy."

In her inspiring presentation titled 'The Future of Television Advertising in South Africa', Curtis said: "Who said television does not have a future? TV remains the most powerful way to connect with consumers; nothing else comes close."

Curtis believes that TV has not died and remains an integral part of people's lives, but just needs to be re-invented so that what she calls *Sisomo* (Sights, Sounds and Motions) could bring new life into TV.

"*Sisomo* accelerates Lovemarks, makes emotional connections fast and brings technology, marketing and creativity together. This intersection is where we will find the future of advertising," Curtis added.

For more information, visit www.terrapinn.com/2006/mediaza.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

- Angola tense as journalists, protesting youth targeted by government - 1 Nov 2011
- Managing promotional resources: are TV broadcasters getting it right? - 1 Nov 2011
- Mbalula vs the media: privacy, dignity vs public interest - 31 Oct 2011
- Multimillion-rand Motorola Razr marketing campaign - 28 Oct 2011
- [Tech4Africa] Power failures, low bandwidth? Try cloud computing - 28 Oct 2011

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>