

Harmonising media research across Africa

By  Oresti Patricios

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Increasing the trade that takes place between African countries plays an important part in furthering Africa's economic growth. PAMRO (the Pan African Media Research Organisation) believes that it is able to contribute meaningfully to the stimulation of greater trade between African countries, by working towards the harmonisation of media research across Africa.



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Media research provides critical insight into local consumers, and how best to reach them. It reveals which market segments are watching TV, listening to radio, or accessing information through print or digital means. It enables a company to tailor their marketing strategies to reach target audiences in the most effective way, and is therefore important to the success of many business enterprises.

The whole purpose and importance of standardising media research across Africa is ultimately to develop confidence in the available research. Having research that is consistent, accurate and reliable, and that can be understood across borders, makes it easier and more attractive for brands to invest in the countries in question. It also enables a brand to compare how well it is doing across the countries in which it is active.

At present, there is little consistency from country to country in the way that, for example, PR is handled or media is measured. West Africa operates quite differently to East Africa or Southern Africa; and even within those regions countries have their own ways of doing things.

While a certain amount of regional variation might be necessary in response to each country's individual environment, there needs to be enough common ground to enable communication and action across borders; otherwise we end up with a social and economic Tower of Babel. This is an important challenge that we, as a continent, need to overcome.

Standardisation

As far as media research is concerned, there are a lot of players active across Africa, but the research produced is not harmonised – it varies in quality, reliability and methodology. An increasing number of companies are realising the need for standardisation, and are therefore looking to address this: media research firm Ornico, for example, utilises the same methodology in monitoring the media in each of the countries in Africa.

PAMRO is working very hard to further the goal of a harmonised media research; for example, we have methods that create an establishment survey that is consistent across all the regions, while allowing for a certain degree of local adaptation.

Key to this endeavour is the PAMRO conference. This provides a platform and meeting place for people and institutions concerned with media research, a chance to share ideas, to see what everybody is doing and find ways to make Africa a place where brands feel confident. It is an opportunity to network, but also to discover the definitive research methodologies being used not only in Africa, but internationally. Along with presentations from Africa, we also have speakers from France, the UK, Sweden and the rest of the globe, who come through to talk about new approaches and how these can be utilised.

That said, what works in Europe doesn't necessarily work in Africa; what works in South Africa doesn't necessarily work in Nigeria, and so on. So the challenge is to determine how we take what is available, and then benchmark it and adapt it for the environment that we're in.

Connected

The theme of this year's conference is, 'Media research in a globally connected world'. It is something of a cliché that Africa is leapfrogging the rest of the world in the use of mobile phones. In South Africa, for example, while people have traditionally consumed media via radio, television, and newspapers, things are changing rapidly, as more and more consumers choose to access information digitally. Similarly, in the rest of Africa, while radio is still big, digital sites and various social media platforms accessed via mobile phones have become the first port of call, particularly in the more urban regions.

This has huge implications for media research, and should therefore make for a fruitful conference, come August.

There are presently a number of hindrances to the growth of inter-African trade, from exchange controls that restrict the flow of money across the continent, to current visa regimes, which, though improving, can make it difficult to conduct business between African countries. While these issues lie beyond our control, the harmonisation of media research is one aspect that we can improve; and in doing so, contribute to a more prosperous future for the continent.

The 17th annual PAMRO meeting and conference takes place from 21st - 24th August 2016 at the Elephant Hills Resort in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. [Register](#) as a delegate at the conference.

ABOUT ORESTI PATRICIOS

Oresti Patricios, CEO of the OrnicoGroup (www.ornico.co.za), has long been on the cutting edge of the media, advertising and branding industries. He has an MBA at GIBS and did his thesis on social media when Twitter was barely a twit. He has always driven his vision of dominating African media & brand intelligence. Contact Oresti on tel +27 (0)11 884 5041 or email Oresti@ornicogroup.co.za and follow @orestaki on Twitter.

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