

Multimedia focus grows East Coast Radio's share of ad spend

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East Coast Radio is pioneering the drive into developing new business models based on content across different technology platforms, aimed at connecting niche communities of consumers with advertisers. In line with this strategy, there could be no better partnership than that of radio and the online space and East Coast Radio's foray into the field has certainly delivered results.

"In line with Kagiso Media's vision East Coast Radio has pioneered the move to become more keenly focused on the purposeful growth of the business to respond to changes in the way that people consume media brought on by technology innovations," explains Trish Taylor, CEO of East Coast Radio. "Our station offering to advertisers has become far more multimedia focused, delivering a far richer bouquet for media buyers where they can access traditional broadcasting products along with outdoor billboards, online promotions, blogging and so on. In essence, we have become far more digitally focused and taken traditional radio out of the realm of pure audio into a true multimedia platform.

And the large advertising brands are certainly sitting up and taking notice. Over the December 2007 holidays, Nivea embarked on a campaign for its "Nivea Sun" range which entailed an on-air promotion combined with an online campaign and blogging, outdoor billboards, product sampling on beaches and in shopping malls and DJ endorsement. Independent research by AC Nielsen showed that Nivea had the best brand recognition over the December period as a direct result.

"We have invested heavily in our online capabilities. Our website visitor stats continue to grow at an enormous rate and for the first time ever, the dynamics of radio have changed dramatically - we now have a platform for live audience interaction with thousands of listeners at any one time rather than just a handful who might make it through on a studio telephone line to air their views. Now jocks can put a concept out to listeners and via the programme blogs, get thousands of opinions and real time feedback. This has a huge impact on show content and programming which has become far more interactive and immediate in terms of content reflecting exact consumer sentiments," explains Trish.

"We know when we have touched on a hot spot simply by monitoring the web traffic via the various programme blogs. In fact it almost acts as a mini programming research tool as we can see the market response almost immediately. The focus on a multimedia approach has taken radio out of the realm of just being an entertainment medium to being a true interactive tool to activate niche communities within our listenership and even explore greater direct marketing opportunities - the value of this for advertisers is immense," adds Trish.

A radio station's primary asset is its relationship with its listener community, a relationship that is becoming increasingly interactive as listeners become more comfortable with generating content across other platforms. In March 2007 when the East Coast was battered by a mini-tsunami, listeners tapped into the station's website, submitting over 10 000 photographs which were viewed by over 50 000 people, causing the station's servers to crash. The lessons learned is that the century old wireless medium will endure in a complementary relationship with new technology platforms and retain its relevance.

East Coast Radio continues to be a star performer within Kagiso Media's stable of broadcast assets, reporting a revenue growth of 17% in the group's 2007 financial results, bucking the overall downturn in the industry. The station also remains one of the top three radio stations in the country based on its share of ad spend revenue.

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