

JWM Opinion - No 1 July 2013

James and Wilkinson Media (JWM) are a UK based company that specialise in helping broadcasters to maximise their on-air marketing whether it be TV, Radio or Digital. Since its formation in April 2011 JWM have worked with broadcasters in twenty different countries; both west and east Europe through to Singapore and Malaysia in Asia, Australia and New Zealand in Oceania and South Africa. We have discovered that each market has its unique challenges and outlooks, however many similar issues exist in markets that cause non-optimal performance in their use of their highly valuable owned resource, whether that is on-air promotional GRPs or creative. We hope that we have been able to help those broadcasters that we have worked with to address some of these issues.

We thought that our findings in each market may be interesting reading to people who operate in the broadcast world, so this is hopefully the first of many monthly bulletins that will reflect our business schedule or hot topics in broadcast marketing at the time. We will do our utmost to keep our clients anonymous in the writing of our experiences. In this JWM Opinion piece we will reflect upon our experience of the South African market.

Although our projects with major UK broadcasters continue our schedule this month took us to the exciting, vibrant and rapidly changing South African market where we worked with one of its major broadcasters. The changes occurring in this market are probably in line with the political changes that have happened in the country during the last two decades; long on promise and short on delivery but at long last it appears that change is imminent on the broadcast front and there are also signs of economic improvement for millions of South Africans who despite political freedom following the end of apartheid have felt let-down as they have seen little to benefit their own economic development.

Analogue TV in South Africa is still the dominant broadcasting platform with over 65% of TV homes having access to just the 3 state owned yet commercial SABC channels and the privately owned e.tv. Currently in order to obtain additional channels you have to take up the Pay TV platforms of DSTV or its struggling Pay rival Top TV. Pay TV was once the domain of the more prosperous and white European population however the recent introduction of cheaper 'Compact' bundles have allowed for growth beyond these groups.

I shall return to the imminent changes in platform development a little later but I also wanted to highlight a phenomenon that took us by surprise and one that is both rewarding to see and does not follow the trend that we have viewed in various travels in other developing broadcast markets. It appears that wherever we go whether it is to the developed Western European, developing East Asia, Oceania or East Europe there has been a globalisation of content. Whether networks are public service or

commercially funded the same content appears to be dominant, successful and often scheduled in prime time. *Grey's Anatomy*, *Big Bang Theory*, *Breaking Bad*, *CSI* are omnipresent, whilst international formats (mostly British) are also fought over – *The Voice*, *MasterChef*, *XXXX's Got Talent* are just a few of many that constantly turn up in schedules.

The concept of local content for local viewers has been overlooked by many broadcasters. That can certainly not be said for South Africa where although the fore-mentioned programming does exist (mostly in Pay TV but some in analogue as well) the battleground is in the early evening where the viewers are fought over between e.tv and SABC1 to watch their Soap(ies) and News. Local five days a week Soapies from e.tv in *Rhythm City* at 6.30pm and *Scandal!* (not the US show of the same name) at 7.30pm with its prime News sandwiched in between is currently winning the ratings war pre 8pm. At this time the juggernaut that is SABC1's *Generations* takes over for the next thirty minutes – again scheduled Monday to Friday and going strong in its 20th year. All these shows appeal massively to the local population, the soapies are multi lingual and offer subtitles whenever required and reflect the real changes in South Africa where aspiration is high but expectation and delivery often low. Audiences are suspicious of characters that do not appear to be whom they are supposed to represent in either ethnicity or economic standing or have the wrong spoken dialect and rejection can be fatal for the show.

I mentioned aspiration and that is certainly a feature of the previously poorly treated black and coloured populations. Unlike many European audience segmentation classifications where job and income dictate which category one falls into, South Africa's main audience segmentation is based upon the owning of or access to consumer services and goods such as regular electricity or owning a washing machine. This Living Standard's Measure (LSM) one could argue is a lot more robust in audience segmentation than many where such levels of poverty and illiteracy do not exist. There is an ever increasing challenge though to the research bureaus and indeed the broadcasters and advertisers, as social mobility is rapidly increasing and the previously dismissed lower LSM groups are now stepping into South Africa's 'middle classes' at such a rate that the research panels cannot keep up with this change. Clever advertisers are recognising this and benefitting accordingly by buying audiences that are not officially measured but who they know exist within the schedule.

All the points I have raised above are perhaps best captured in my return to the subject of change occurring in TV distribution in the country. Whilst certain consumer developments have skipped a generation in South Africa such as PC/laptop take up which is low whilst having high web access via Smart Phone, TV digitalisation has been slow.

JWM first visited the country in late 2011 where at a conference that we were speaking at it was announced that Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) would eventually be launched in 2012 – this coming after several years of false dawns. DTT has still failed to launch in the country with the industry largely blaming the perceived government influenced SABC as dragging their heels in this matter. SABC's main rival e.tv have become so frustrated with this situation that their holding company has this week publicly announced their own launch of free to air dish platform to be called 'OpenView'. Access to OpenView through the one off purchase of a dish and set-top box is due to launch in October of this year and will feature a host of new channels

from e.tv. An invitation has been extended from e.tv to SABC to add their current and additional channels to the platform and this is assumed to be happening. Following my earlier theme on the importance of localness in this market it is of no surprise to note that these new channels will not be +1s or consist of US and European content but will be teeming with South African and wider African content as broadcasters try to address demand from viewers who really do make up the 'Rainbow Nation' of great ethnicity and eleven official languages first spoken of in 1994 by Archbishop Desmond Tutu following the country's first modern democratic elections. The development of TV in South Africa has still a way to go to match that of many countries but is hoped that it can remain a beacon of light in forging its own way and not to step down the path of homogenised TV seen in so many countries.

Please feel free to give feedback on the above Opinion piece. Should you be interested in finding out how JWM could possible help your broadcast organisation then please do get in touch at:

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In next month's JWM Opinion – The concept of 'Drive to Live' and 'Sticky Breaks'

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