

Research conference highlights mobile, Africa's marvel

 By [Oresti Patricios](#)

4 Oct 2010

Social media, the opportunities in mobile networks and mobile internet were the dominant themes at the 2010 PAMRO Conference held in Botswana recently. As the economic recession continues, with talk of a double-dip for the US, emerging economies are finding renewed favour from both investors and brands looking for growth, and Africa is no exception.



The potential of Africa was an over-riding sentiment that studded all the presentations at the 2010 Pan African Media Research Organisation (PAMRO) and All Africa Media Research Conference held in Botswana that drew delegates from across the continent.

Speakers at the conference came from Angola, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa and included thought leaders from AGBNielsen, Yahoo Africa, InterMedia UK, TNS Media Research, Nepad, Synovate as well as telecommunications companies and leading regional research houses.

African mobile technology

Standard Bank's Janet Proudfoot, the senior manager of the group's media strategy, focused on pioneering mobile payment solutions that are showcasing African mobile technology solutions to the world. Mobile payment systems like M-PESA have had huge uptake, particularly in regions like Kenya where access to credit is limited.

Proudfoot noted that Africa is becoming a less risky region for investment after the global economic crisis, adding that the rate of return on foreign direct investment is higher in Africa than many other developing regions. One of the fastest growing regions in the world since 2008, Proudfoot says Africa is achieving an average growth of 5.6% per annum. Globally, she says growth is set at some 4%. Five countries account for 60% of Africa's GDP, according to Proudfoot and these are Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa.

Online habits of Nigerians

Josiah Kimanzi of Research & Marketing Services (RMS) Nigeria looked at the online habits of Nigerians. A strong player on the African market, RMS has offices in Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Kenya, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire as well as Congo and recently partnered with TNS Global, part of the Kantar Group.

Kimanzi highlighted the fragmentation of the media in Africa, saying that social networks and the rise of mobile had delivered more touch points than ever before, with the effect of decreasing client control as people gravitated to consumer-generated media.

The big issue for research and understanding consumer behaviour online was the need for tracking the complex and varied environment with multiple devices and touch points. Kimanzi says that the challenge going forward was to measure the brand experience in a more holistic and unified manner.

Nigeria, largest internet population

Focusing on Nigeria, Kimanzi says 43.9 million Nigerians have access to the internet, which is staggering given that the figure falls just four million short of the entire South African population. This makes Nigeria the country with the largest internet population in Africa, dwarfing the likes of South Africa, Egypt, Morocco and Kenya combined.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and agency of the United Nations states that 40% of all internet traffic from Africa originates from Nigeria, and that some 30% of the total population of that country enjoy access to the internet. Research has shown a direct link between telecommunications infrastructure and economic growth, and Nigeria's high access rate delivers big opportunities for brands, marketers, advertisers, media agencies and research companies.

Mobiles vs PCs

Kimanzi cited interesting face-to-face research done in the market with some 1000 respondents between 20 July and 7 August 2010. Questions asked of the survey respondents related to internet behaviour and usage over four weeks. The result was that Nigerians spent more time on mobile devices than on personal computers or laptops. The most popular places online for Nigerians, according to the survey, were social media sites. Of those 1000 people, 84% had posted a personal message on a social site per week, 82% had chatted on line, and 50% had uploaded a photo onto a social site.

James Edwards, commercial director for Yahoo Africa says that there are 100 million internet users in Africa, and that the continent had 11% percent penetration which had grown by 2400% in the last ten years. Edwards says the internet in Africa had grown six times faster than anywhere else in the world, despite the fact that there is only 25% electricity penetration in the continent. He added that about 400 million Africans use mobile phones which he says represents some 45% of the continent's population.

Growth in Africa

Edwards maintained that there was huge growth in the telecommunications and internet markets in Africa, and a demographic analysis showed some interesting results. Connectivity in Africa is predominantly masculine, and according to Yahoo Africa 70% of males are connected to the internet. 55% of these users are between the ages of 25 and 40 years, 24% have a credit card, and 90% connect to the internet at least once a week. According to Edwards this offered significant opportunity for advertisers, but also for online research studies so that brands could better understand consumer behaviour, have better insights and use the mobile internet more effectively in their marketing.

ABOUT ORESTI PATRICIOS

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