

Research shows radio is king in Kenya

The latest media research from Kenya reveals that radio is still the preferred media. According to latest statistics from media research company, Synovate conducted under the Kenya Audience Research Foundation (KARF), radio leads in overall media consumption followed by the mobile phone, television, newspapers, and the internet respectively.

By [Carole Kimutai: @CaroleKimutai](#) 12 Dec 2011

The study carried out on a population sample of 8 504 showed that 93% of the sample had listened to radio in the last seven days. Further, more people in Kenya are now listening to more than one radio station - about 54% and the average time spent listening per day is 6 hours.

This multi-channel trend can be attributed to the growth of FM radio stations in the country offering a variety of programming that includes music and talk shows. Nairobi City, Kenya's capital with a population of over two million people has 46 stations.

Swahili and vernacular radio stations

An interesting highlight of the findings is the top ratings for Swahili and vernacular radio stations. Kenya has two national languages - English and Swahili, and over 42 tribes which when subdivided triples the number of spoken dialects in Kenya. 70% of people sampled listened to Swahili stations for more than 10 hours a week compared to 68% and 52% for vernacular and English broadcasting stations respectively. The other languages were at 30%. A big player in the vernacular radio segment is Royal Media Services that has eight vernacular stations, two Swahili stations and one English station.

According to the report, top radio broadcasting languages by time spent listening are Luo (28%), Swahili (26%), Kikuyu (25%), Kalenjin (24.8%), and Kamba (22%) - stations that receive more than three hours a day of core listeners.

The internet

Coming in at number two, the internet has grown tremendously in Kenya in the last 12 months. This has fuelled an increase in smartphone sales as a result of increased demand by mobile phone users seeking more from their handsets. Huawei, the manufacturer of the IDEOS smart phone have reported sales of 130 000 units in Kenya since launching in September 2010. According to the KARF findings, 63% of respondents accessed the internet through their mobile phone, 42% from a cyber cafe, 20% from home, and 17% from their workplace. 33% of all the respondents were online daily and 25% a few times a week.

These statistics are likely to go up in 2012 as the bandwidth prices go down. In the last 12 months they have fallen by 50-60% and the East African Community governments are already investing over US\$400million in their respective national backbone infrastructure. Already the laid down cables cover more than 20 600km. However, Kenya faces challenges like high costs of access (no or little access to roads or no electricity) and a low demand (low population).

Television

Television consumption in Kenya is placed third. According to findings, the number of viewers who tuned in to one to three stations has increased significantly compared to statistics from quarter one of 2011. Secondly, the time allocated to entertainment has also gone up. Programmes that have continued to attract huge viewership include: movies (144.50% in quarter one to 153.25% in quarter three), drama (from 58.7% to 67%), magazine (39.7% to 43.5%), and soaps (75% to 82%).

A look at the time spent viewing per genre from 6pm to 10pm shows that 38% of the time is spent watching news, 33% drama, and 9% drama programmes. With 2012 being an election year, more time will be spent watching news as views follow the political happenings closely. According to the figures, there is potential for soaps and this potential is likely to go up as broadcasters invest in local content. All Kenyan television stations have a local soap opera that air weekday evenings.

The research also found various barriers to watching television. Among the top three reasons highlighted include: lack of a television signal or a poor signal, broadcasters not airing preferred programmes, and power outages. Respondents also said another barrier is programmes which they cannot watch by the whole family together. The respondents said they did not watch a station like Citizen TV because it had too many advertising breaks. The national broadcaster was also a least favourite because it does not air interesting programmes. K24 station was highlighted as one of the stations that news is presented in a hard-to-understand grammar.

Print media

Statistics from the report show that a majority of readers like local and international news content in the five leading Kenyan newspapers - *Daily Nation*, *Standard*, *The Star*, *People Daily*, and *Taifa Leo* (a Swahili paper). Also rated highly is sports and business/finance news. The research highlights potential in content about jobs, lifestyle and relationships.

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