

Why media research across Africa needs to be harmonised

By Oresti Patricios

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In a globally connected world, media research provides critical insight into local consumers, and how best to reach them. It can guide a company in successfully reaching target audiences, and reveal strengths and weaknesses in various media platforms.



Image by 123RF

Social media research can go a step further, it can measure consumer sentiment and identify how a brand is perceived - where it is going wrong, and what it is doing right. Media research gives brand owners the insights into how to best serve communities and to create seamless continental brand messaging through regionally targeted marketing campaigns.

As such, harmonising media research across Africa could be a step towards the stimulation of greater intra- African trade.

The Pan African Media Research Organisation (PAMRO) is dedicated to furthering this project, believing that harmonising media research across Africa will build greater confidence in the research available. Having research that is consistent, accurate and reliable, and that can be understood across borders, makes it that bit easier - and therefore more attractive - for brands to invest in African countries.

A recent report by Ornico, one of PAMRO's founder members, provides some insight into the kind of information media research can provide – with a specific focus on research conducted across social media. Ornico's social media tools and analysis methodology monitored social media relating to the banking industry in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa in order to gain a high level view of the social media performance of the fastest growing banks in these countries, and to establish what drives their growth.

Service delivery

Using metrics such as response times, sentiment, reach and engagement, and covering a wide array of content addressed by the banks and their audience, the report provides a summary of useful industry data as a benchmark for banks in these African countries, and highlights some of the issues occupying consumers.

Across all three countries, service delivery and customer care comprised a key topic. Otherwise, the top issues concerning banks differed from country to country: in South Africa, high bank charges and incidences of card fraud took centre stage; while in Kenya, the main conversation drivers – apart from service delivery – circled around ATMs (whether they were out of service, or suggestions regarding the installation of new ATMs).

Key topics in Nigeria concerned enquiries around provisions for small business, followed by complaints about service-related issues. 'Accounts' also came up as a prevalent topic, with the number of conversations around this issue boosted by a series of mentions around the First Bank of Nigeria's bank account differences.

Based on positive sentiment, reach, volume, social profile followers (Facebook and Twitter only) and response time - with equal weighting given to each of these – the research found the following banks to be the top banks in their respective countries: FNB (South Africa), GT Bank (Nigeria) and Kenya Commercial Bank.

The top banks share several key trends. To begin with, they typically engage with communities across a wider spread of platforms, and – possibly as a result – have larger Facebook and Twitter communities, more community engagement, and more positive brand sentiment. Greater follower numbers and the frequency with which their communities share their content, mean greater reach.

The top banks typically demonstrate quicker response times on Twitter and Facebook in comparison to industry peers: Kenya Commercial Bank has the quickest response times among the banks studied and the highest positive sentiment as well.

The banks with some of the highest engagement interact with some of the top influencers in their communities. (This does not suggest that these brands are more selective about responding to followers and enquiries, but that they tend to have influencers with whom followers seem to have greater resonance than the average Twitter user.)

This very brief summary of Ornico's banking report provides some indication of the types of information, and therefore the kind of role that media research can play in establishing and growing a successful brand.

However, while there are a number of research bodies active across Africa, there is little consistency in the way that media is measured at present. This makes things difficult for those brands whose operations extend across several territories, or those looking to venture into new territory: 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. This is an important challenge that we, as a continent, need to overcome.

PAMRO conference

For this reason, PAMRO is working to further the goal of a harmonised media research. Key to this endeavour is the PAMRO conference, which provides a platform and meeting place for people and institutions concerned with media

research; a chance to share ideas, 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 in Africa and further afield. This year, the [17th PAMRO All Media Research Conference](#) takes place 21-24 August 2016 at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

The theme of this year's conference is 'Media research in a globally connected world' and there is a line-up of local and international speakers from across the media measurement landscape.

*Follow PAMRO on social media to get all the updates from the annual conference this month: [Click here](#) to like PAMRO on Facebook; or follow on Twitter [@pamro_org](#); the conference hashtag is [#PAMRO2016](#).

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