

On Wednesday, 2 September, at Joburg Theatre, the Advertising Media Association of South Africa (AMASA) hosted the #AMASAForum debate on “Tackling Africa: The Challenges vs. Opportunities”.



(<http://dash.mediaupdate.co.za/story/image/80413/80413.jpg>)

As with any topic that relates to undertaking business in Africa and best practise, there were varying opinions from the panellists, which provided an interesting debate.

Thebe Ikalafeng from Brand Africa, the facilitator for the discussion, opened the panel by introducing the respected guests which included: Matt Angus-Hammond from GeoPoll, Fahmeeda Cassim-Surtee from DStv Media Sales, Alisdar Muller from Continental Media Outdoor and Lyn Jones, AMASA Board Member and PAMRO Workgroup member.

Ikalafeng posed the question, “What are the key challenges that media face on the continent and what does it take for South Africa to truly interact with Africa?”

Jones responded that Africa is leapfrogging the world when it comes to mobility and that brands that are attuned with this are more in touch with the consumer. Angus-Hammond agreed, stating that half the continents population (75%), has access to a phone and reaching out via

this channel is crucial to success of any brand. “We all get caught up in mobile because it lives in our pockets, it is our personal item that is always there when we need it.”

Cassim-Surtee also added that reality based content that drives users to smart phones gets good responses from consumers.

Ikalafeng then raised the question, “Then is Out of Home (OOH) media still valid in Africa?”

While Muller agreed implicitly that while mobile is of course a powerful tool to reach the mass African consumer, OOH is still viable, especially if one considers the amount of time that consumers spend commuting each day.

Jones stressed that delivering the correct and relevant message to the right audience, regardless of the channel, was key to the success for any brand in Africa. Brands need to invest time and money into understanding a countries culture, as what works in one region may not work in another. Further to that, PAMRO has just released their updated Harmonised Questionnaire, as well as PAMRO SES’ that will, if adopted by all researchers in Africa, provide a standardised and consistent platform for marketers to use as a reliable base to begin their media strategies.

From a TV perspective, Cassim-Surtee reiterated the importance of targeted programming, where segmentation according to the market is key to truly succeed. “What is well received in West Africa, may not reap the same success in East Africa. This is when customising territory becomes vital to success” explained Cassim-Surtee.

The other panellists were all in agreement with the sentiment that on-the-ground local support and offices are the key to successfully entering into African markets. Where campaigns have failed in the past, often it was due to the fact that businesses failed to understand their target audience, where if they had on the ground support, they would have been less likely to offend or confuse that target audience.

The audience then questioned the panellists on the elephant in the room; dealing with bribery. This was rapidly addressed by the panellists, who were all in agreement that fraud must stop with the media owner and it takes two to be corrupt. Alasdair stated quite simply that it is not about who is going to take you for lunch, but more about where the best media platform would be for a client's brand.

In closing, Ikalafeng asked the panellists the one thing that the audience should take home about working in Africa - Angus-Hammond said: "Take nothing for granted." Cassim-Surtee said "Be Brave," Muller said "Africa is a long term investment" and Jones finished with "Listen, understand and emphasize."

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