

Loeries Africa Roadshow ends off in Ghana

The Loeries Africa Roadshow reached its final destination in Accra, Ghana last week after stopping in Harare, Dar es Salaam, Lagos and Nairobi along the way.



West Africa - Nigeria and Ghana in particular - holds an important key to sub-Saharan Africa's riches and will soon be the biggest region in terms of both population and market growth. "West Africa comprises 1.1 million square kilometres and 380 million people," says Colin Charles, Executive Creative Director at Publicis West Africa and a regional judge at this year's Loeries. "This is more land than the US or the EU. Across the region there are variations, but generally TV, radio and outdoor media are more important."

He says that digital is growing and as with many sub-Saharan nations, digital has leapfrogged computers and is all about mobile. He also says that outdoor media is one of the most dominant forms of brand communication in Ghana. "Billboards are everywhere, all over the place, some tiny, in poor repair, some huge, lit or digital. Point of sale at corner shops and kiosks are chaotic, with SAV stickers, posters, dangle bunting all overlaying and overlapping each other jockeying for attention."

Most widely accessible, used source of news

Yaw Asamoah, CEO Of Creative Trends and the Ghanaian representative on the Loeries Africa Advisory Committee says that radio is also an important medium and has the farthest reach in the country. "The results from the AudienceScapes 2009 Survey in Ghana indicate that radio is the most widely accessible and the most widely used source of news and information for Ghanaians," he says.

In the survey, 96% of respondents said that they had listened to the radio and virtually all of those respondents also said they use the radio to get news and information on at least a weekly basis as opposed to just listening for entertainment. In fact, the radio industry is so big that there were a total of 286 radio stations in 2012.

Ghana's advertising and communications industry is just as large and diverse. According to ghanayello.com there are an estimated 1661 advertising agencies in the country. Mobile penetration is growing exponentially with people increasingly accessing the internet in this way rather than through a laptop or computer. In terms of quality, "4G is common in Lagos," says Charles, "and will be in Ghana within six months. Almost everyone has access to 3G and Edge technology so even street sellers and students can access WhatsApp and Facebook." Ookla, a global leader in broadband testing, recently said that Ghana has been ranked number one in Africa as the country with the highest internet speed.

Challenges

As with many other African nations, telecoms, banks and insurance companies dominate the market, with large, international agencies like MMRS Ogilvy, Lowe Accra and Origin8 Saatchi & Saatchi scooping up accolades like Ghana's Gong-Gong Awards. Ghana is also home to the very first school in West Africa providing professional training in Communication Design specialisations - Accra International School of Advertising & Design, which offers courses in advertising, graphic design, multimedia design, photography, animation, illustration copywriting and brand management. Although the academy is a shining light in the region, Charles says that Ghana still suffers from a lack of talent. "Experts and expatriates enjoy high remuneration and living standards while middle managers and workers suffer low remuneration and living standards," he says.

"If someone could develop a formula for recruiting and engaging the right team members, they would make millions," says Asamoah. "Without exception, every business executive concludes that one of their biggest challenges is finding the right staff, retaining them and ensuring they buy into the vision of the business."

Another challenge, says Clarence Nartley of Unilever Ghana, is that "whilst digital is a fast growing channel there are few agencies with proven expertise or solid capabilities in this area."

Most Ghanaian creatives predict that, as with the rest of the continent, there will be an increased focus on mobile marketing campaigns with a continuation of radio, print and outdoor media as well. Outdoor media specifically will become even more imaginative, says Asamoah. "There is a trend of painting houses or buildings or containers...these innovative forms of advertisement are likely to play a key role in advertising and pave a way for creative forms of the art in the near future."

The entry deadline is 30 May. Winners will be announced during Loeries Creative Week Cape Town 15-21 September.

Key dates

- Entry Deadline: 30 May
- Loeries Creative Week Cape Town: 15-21 September
- International Seminar of Creativity: 19 September
- The Loerie Awards Ceremonies: 20-21 September
- Ticket sales for Creative Week open 1 April

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