

# The value of broadcast monitoring

 By [Jaco Pienaar](#)

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The instant nature of communication has seen the media cycle being driven by social networking with broadcast, online, and print building from there. But while mobile penetration has driven this growth, it cannot rival broadcast media in terms of reach.

In South Africa, there are numerous mainstream and community radio and television stations reaching millions of people. This makes broadcast still the prime media of choice to reach the mass market. Radio is also an important commuter medium. This is not to say that broadcast is more important than social. One should instead view it as a case of both having an influence in the local market, but for different reasons.

## Monitoring airwaves

Broadcast monitoring becomes a vital weapon in the armoury of the public relations agency looking to showcase to clients the impact that media campaigns have had. However, there are also degrees of monitoring and analysis that one needs to be cognisant of.

The most common is to monitor the airwaves in real-time, allowing companies to have their fingers on the pulse and trends or better yet to be responsive to emerging situations or potential crisis. Alternatively media monitoring firms can present a bird's eye view of an issue, or developing story looking for trends or patterns in the media by collecting chunks and analysing the conversation as a whole. Either way this allows clients, PR firms, and market analysts to be aware of what their audiences are receiving.

Tracking across the different media by itself is not a difficult thing to do. Voice recognition and pattern detection technology exist to aid anybody keen on tracking broadcast (or any other media for that matter). However, this does not ensure the quality of conversations are captured or that the necessary analysis has been done.

## Tracking efficiently

Broadcast is one of the most difficult mediums to track efficiently. Often, voice recognition technology does not account for the rich dialects and number of languages in South Africa. This sees many monitoring companies adopting a "bums on seats" approach where they employ people to listen, watch, and log.

Unfortunately, this is not ideal as there are plenty of ad hoc conversations happening on radio that monitors might miss if they skip past the songs being played. Segmenting editorial and news versus advertising and DJ banter makes this a very difficult proposition. Knowing what to highlight and what to summarise in order to give the agency (and client) the rich content they need becomes a challenging proposition that is not solved just by throwing more people at the problem.

So while monitoring might sound fairly straightforward, it seldom is when it comes to broadcast media. But the way for monitoring and analysis agencies to truly differentiate themselves is in the value they provide.

## Information in real-time

Monitoring and analysis must be as geographically diverse and comprehensive as possible and provide information in almost real-time. Quality of content (summaries), the accuracy of it, and the value in terms of its place in analysis (both qualitative and quantitative) are all important elements to consider.

Another component is the production and delivery of reports. These reports should include the clips, images, and transcripts, and provide them to the client in an easy-to-understand format. This also means that searching through the reports need to be simplified in order for intelligence to be extracted quickly and decisions be made as fast as possible.

Yes, we are living in the connected world where digital gets significant attention. Remember that an integrated monitoring and analysis solution covering print, broadcast, online, and social networks offer much better value than one that just does what is fashionable.

## ABOUT JACO PIENAAR

Jaco is an MA Information Science graduate who specialises in research, analytical framework development, and content analysis. His thesis was on Intellectual Capital measurement and he applies this to his framework developments as well as knowledge strategies. Professionally, Jaco has worked in the journalism field, academic environment, multi-national research environment, and media analysis environment. He is currently the Chief Knowledge Officer at Professional Evaluation and Research.

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