

Media24's loyal Afrikaans audience remains a priority

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In a fast-changing world that makes constant demands on audiences, it's important to give loyal Afrikaans audiences great content in their mother tongue. Media24 is the custodian of the strongest and most established Afrikaans media brands and has 100 years' experience in providing excellent content to the Afrikaans market. "We know who our audience is, and its members are loyal to brands that have served them well for the longest time," says Esmaré Weideman, CEO of Media24.



Esmaré Weideman

On the face of it, it seems rather simple: build innovative platforms and populate them with Afrikaans content and audiences will come. But as anyone who has ever tried this will know - it's not quite as easy as that.

"Let's not underestimate Afrikaans audiences - they read English too. If our Afrikaans products don't offer quality content that speaks to our market, we will lose them to competitors," says Weideman.

By drawing on the experiences of brands that have built up loyal audiences over the years, Media24 has been able to create exciting new offerings to not only keep those audiences but to also attract new ones.

"Media24's parent company, Naspers, was the pioneering Afrikaans news title owner. This year, we celebrate *Die Burger's* centenary. Today, we are the largest Afrikaans publisher across newspapers and magazines, with incredibly loyal and engaged audiences across all platforms.

"They want to consume media in their own language, but what's more, we offer them the best products in the market. Language alone does not attract audiences; excellent content does. And where there is a market, especially one with purchasing power, there you'll find your marketers."

The media and other organisations with an interest in Afrikaans, such as Pendoring, should join forces to convince marketers of the value of mother-tongue advertising because there is still growth in the sector, Weideman believes.

Media24 has launched several products in recent years that show just how dynamic the market is - and how intense the hunger is among audiences wanting content in Afrikaans.

"Last year we launched Netwerk24, a digital platform offering quality content from our four main Afrikaans titles, *Volksblad*, *Die Burger*, *Beeld* and *Rapport*, and we are delighted with the uptake," Weideman says. "*Kuier's* success is a publishing phenomenon, and the magazine just keeps on growing. Many of our Afrikaans editors, commentators and journalists are superstars who publish books and are sought after on television and radio."

Of course, as the needs and lifestyles of the audience change, so media companies have to adapt their offerings. Media24 has focused on being an all-in-one solution for brand owners, advertisers and marketers with massive reach across various audience segments, Weideman says.

"We are an innovative and dynamic company, and we offer tailor-made solutions across our platforms. We are the pioneers of digital media in South Africa. Netwerk24 is already the biggest paid-for news site in South Africa and produces video content every day."

Video has added another dimension to storytelling that gives advertisers another opportunity to connect with the

communities that have stemmed from Media24's brands, she adds. "We believe that video offers us an added value proposition to bring broadcast (and print) advertisers into the digital environment, offering them a targeted and engaged audience."

The digital sphere has also allowed those communities to interact with the brands they love, which makes the space increasingly dynamic. And brands have to keep up with how, where and when the audiences want to consume their media - and deliver with high standards.

Media24 embraced digital a long time ago, Weideman says. "We have made enormous strides as far as a 24-hour digital-first news operation across all our publishing units is concerned."

No doubt, there are challenges. "Our heads are in the right place, but the execution is not yet fast enough."

But if content producers - both editorial and advertising - maintain the same standards as other platforms, they're already on the right track, she believes. "The requirements for advertising on digital platforms are the same as on any other platform: it must be outstanding, touch consumers' hearts and compel them to act."

Those who are getting it right can already see the results. As Weideman points out, "Digital sales have shown excellent growth across the board. As smartphone penetration increases and once broadband becomes more affordable, we believe the digital subscriptions of our titles, and digital consumption across all our platforms, will accelerate."

The potential for marketers is immense because of the level of interaction and immediacy of results, Weideman says. "Fortunately, the digital world, which offers a diverse marketing space, is more measurable. The challenge is how to link advertising campaigns and marketing on the different platforms so that they still make sense. It begs creative excellence.

"The Pendorring Advertising Awards will remain relevant if they continue to keep the competition for marketers exciting, innovative and attractive. Pendorring became the yardstick for outstanding ads in Afrikaans and now also in the other indigenous languages, and we are proud to support it."

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