

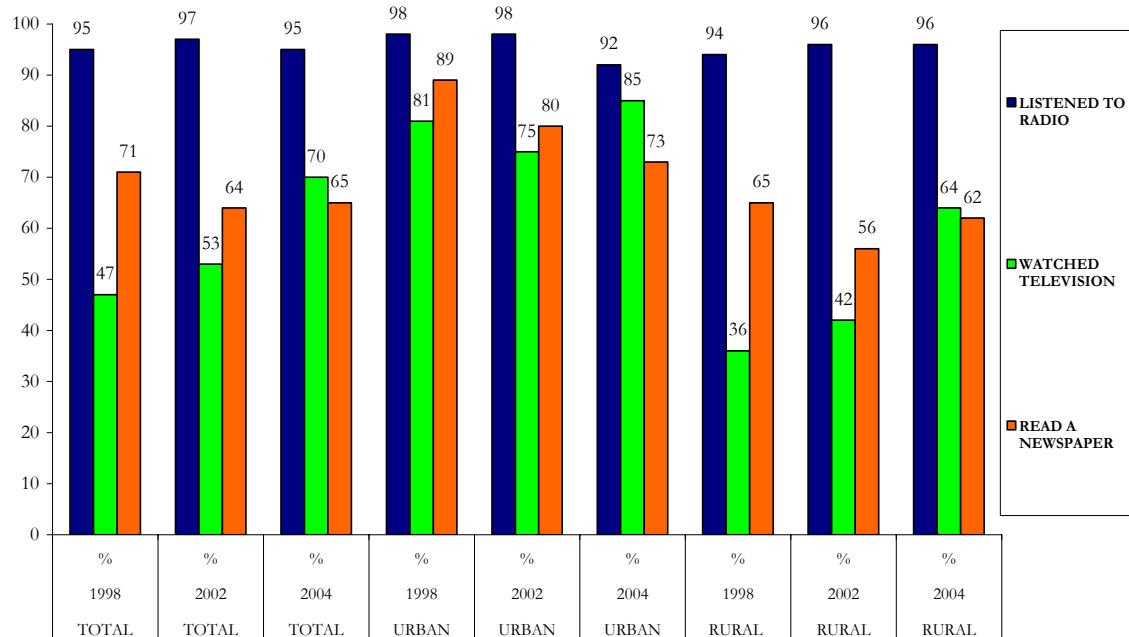
Case Study – Makutano Junction TV Drama Series – Kenya

Introduction

Makutano Junction is a Kenyan television drama series produced in Nairobi by Mediae. It followed the model of Mediae's popular and effective radio soap opera, broadcast on KBC National Service (Tembea na Majira), which worked from the premise that if you meet audiences' information needs and deliver information in an appealing way, you will build big audiences and attract both donors and commercial sponsorship with which to pay for production and transmission costs. This model worked well with Tembea na Majira; the show ran for over ten years and attracted around 5.5 million rural Kenyans, at its peak.

Around 2004 the radio scene in Kenya fragmented. The airways were liberalised and a plethora of small, local vernacular FM stations sprang up. It was no longer possible to attract and retain huge, Ki-Swahili speaking audiences, as people preferred to tune into their local fm station. With this shift, there also came a phenomenal rise in tv ownership and access and – as the chart below shows – the real growth areas was amongst the rural areas of Kenya (Source: Steadman Research Services).

MEDIA ACTIVITIES - PAST 7 DAYS



In 2005 Mediae developed a similar model to that developed with Tembea na Majira, but this time on television. Makutano Junction is a Kenyan produced show which currently attracts around 7.5 million viewers in Kenya and an estimated 3 million in Uganda and 2 million in Tanzania.

Capacity Building

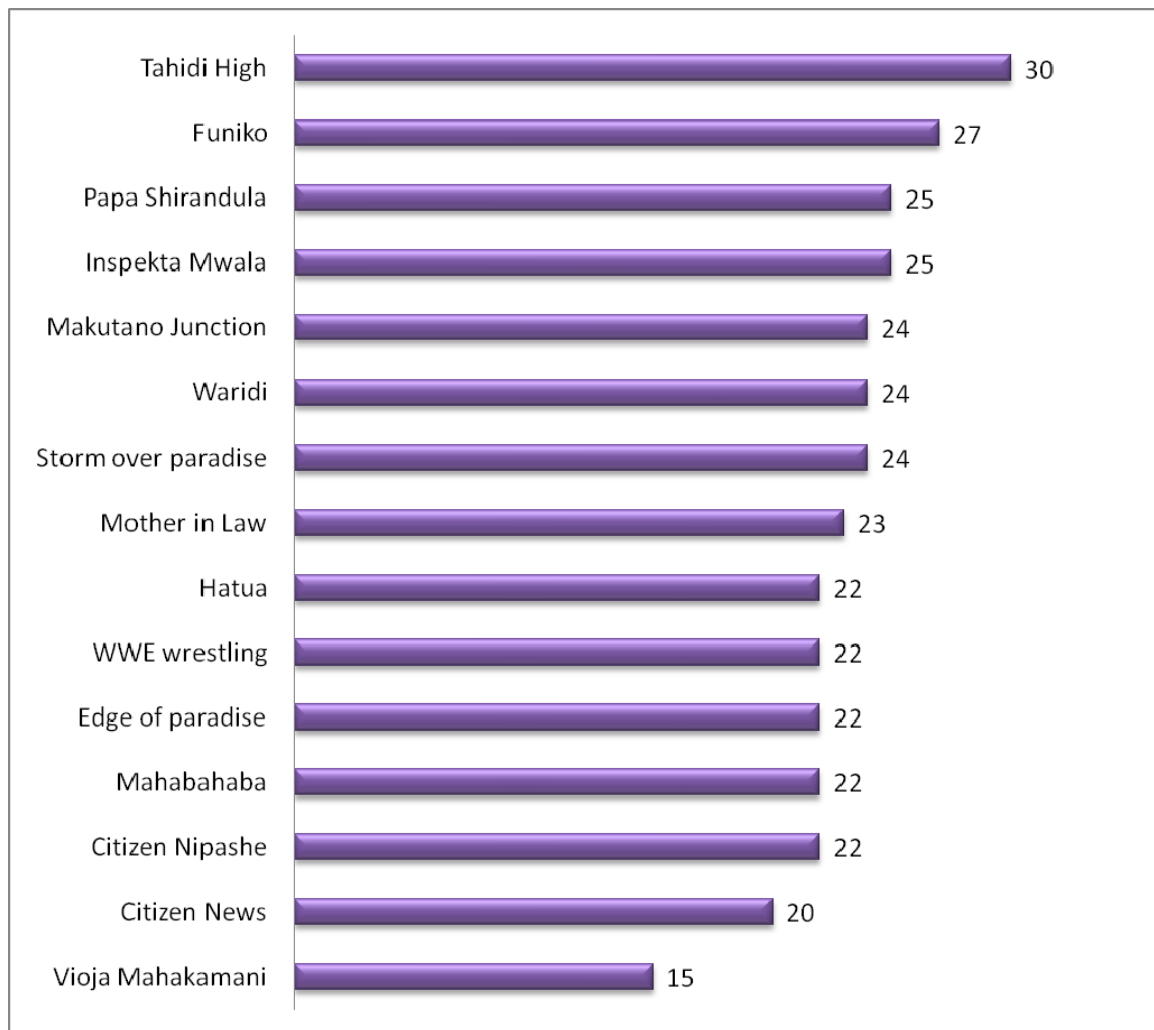


One of the key successes to Makutano Junction has been the local capacity that has been built in producing this kind of television programming at a local level. Skills have been built in tv drama writing, direction, production, camera and sound work, editing and post production skills. Many of the crew and actors have moved on to develop their own productions for Kenyan tv, some so successfully that they pose healthy competition for Makutano Junction!

The show was broadcast originally on KBC, but moved to the increasingly popular Citizen in 2008 whose share has grown significantly over the last two years due to its aggressive campaign to show local programming, rather than imported material. Makutano Junction paved the way for the production of quality local drama which has now been shown to be the most popular of all programming.

A number of myths have been shattered by Makutano Junction and its spin-off, local dramas, (Mother in Law, Papa Shirandulo, Higher Learning etc). It has for a long time been accepted by the marketing departments of the big commercial companies and the media buyers of the ad agencies and media sellers of the TV stations that imported TV programming pulls in the big audiences and that the News is the biggest single draw on an evening. This is no longer true. It's now the local dramas that win through easily. The top eight programmes are local soaps, Number 9 "Storm over Paradise " is a Mexican dubbed into Swahili soap and this is followed by Wrestling before the Citizen news gets a mention!

The Show Stoppers in 2009



Multi Media

Another key feature which has added to the popularity of Makutano is the adjoining SMS facility. At the end of each programme viewers are invited to SMS either with a comment about the show or with a request for a leaflet, which will give more detailed information on a specific issue which has been included in the programme. Mediae has received over 60,000 texts and about 45,000 requests for leaflets.



Saturdays
at 7.30pm
on Citizen TV



ONE DAY IN MAKUTANO...

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

RED MARCHED STRAIGHT TO SEE FIDELIS AT THE CYBERCAFE

MAY I TALK TO YOU? I'M CONCERNED ABOUT THE FACT THAT YOU ARE CHOPPING DOWN TREES FROM MAMA MBOGA'S LAND. THEY'RE INDIGENOUS TREE WHICH HAVE TAKEN MANY YEARS TO GROW, THEY HOLD THE SOIL, THEY GIVE SHADE, IT'S A SERIOUS ISSUE TO BE CUTTING THEM DOWN.

YOU'RE TELLING ME WHAT TO DO ON MY OWN SHAMBA...

I DON'T WANT TO INTERFERE, BUT IT'S NOT JUST YOUR PROBLEM, THIS WILL AFFECT THE WHOLE COMMUNITY. PEOPLE ARE CONCERNED THAT YOU'RE POLLUTING THE AIR WITH HORRIBLE BLACK SMOKE WHEN YOU BURN DOWN THE TREES INTO CHARCOAL.

I'M NOT THE FIRST, NOR WILL I BE THE LAST TO DO SO.

WELL THEN EVERYBODY FOR THEMSELVES.

I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS!

THINK ABOUT THE FARMERS IN THE AREA. ALREADY RAINFALL ISN'T COMING AT THE TRADITIONAL RAIN SEASON. THE MORE TREES THAT ARE CHOPPED DOWN, THE LESS RAINFALL THAT WILL COME TO MAKUTANO.

LATER THAT DAY RED SPOKE TO PP ABOUT HER CONCERNS

SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE, THAT WOMAN JUST DOESN'T CARE. HASN'T SHE HEARD OF CLIMATE CHANGE!

WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

THE RAINS DON'T BEHAVE LIKE THEY USED TO, THE WEATHER IS CHANGING, GETTING DRYER, WETTER OR JUST DIFFERENT. THIS IS CALLED CLIMATE CHANGE.

SOME PEOPLE JUST THINK ABOUT THE PRESENT, THEY DON'T SEE HOW THEIR HARMFUL ACTIONS WILL AFFECT THEIR FUTURE. WHAT IF YOU REPORTED HER TO THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT OFFICERS? THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE THERE FOR.

WHY IS CLIMATE CHANGE HAPPENING?

CLIMATE CHANGE IS CAUSED BY OUR BEHAVIOUR, WHEN WE CUT DOWN TREES, BURN CHARCOAL, HAVE BAD FUMES COMING OUT OF OUR CARS, WE ARE CAUSING CLIMATE CHANGE.

I WILL BUT I WANT TO TAKE MY OWN ACTION... I MAY HAVE AN IDEA...

Role of Intermediary

Mediae have included both other DFID funded research consortia findings within programmes , as well as findings from other research organisations and information providers. They have developed and fine tuned a process for taking what is quite often complicated information and turning it into compelling storylines which will be of interest to the viewer.

The Script Development Process		
Stage	Description	Involvement of technical content advisers
Pre-Storylining	Once the development content has been confirmed, the content manager at Mediae, meets with sponsors and produces background information for the writing team.	The sponsors will stipulate the development topics they would like included. The content manager works with technical experts (either from the sponsor organisation, their nominated representatives or other experts in the field) to develop briefing documents.
Storylining	The writers and the script editor review the background information and develop storylines for the series. A story document is produced – a blueprint of the storylines in each episode. The story document is signed off by the executive producer.	At the end of storylining, the script editor produced a summary document covering each technical topic, outlining the proposed storyline. Advisers are given the appropriate summary and approached for feedback.
Scene by Scenes	Each writer will take the story document and create a more detailed outlined for the specific episode. This is signed off by the script editor.	Depending on the storyline, for example if the structure is very technical, the script editor might decide to contact the relevant adviser and request a review.

Script Drafting Process	<p>The writer will then produce up to 5 drafts of a script. After each draft, this will be reviewed by the editorial team and notes given (on technical content, story development, characterisation, filming considerations etc.).</p>	<p>To ensure factual accuracy, we take an early draft of the script and extract the relevant scenes. These are then sent to the appropriate adviser for feedback. They are asked to review the structure of the episodic storyline together with dialogue. These notes are then passed on to the writer to be addressed in subsequent drafts.</p>
Shooting Scripts Finalised	<p>The scripts are reviewed by the executive producer, the producer and the director and signed off. Filming commences.</p>	<p>Once the script editor and writer have finalised the script, it is reviewed by the senior editorial team prior to shooting. The final script may be sent to the appropriate adviser for review – either when the notes at the script drafting stage were ambiguous or where the producer/senior producer deem further clarification necessary.</p>

A PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE: APHRC (African Population and Health Research Center)

Since 2006, the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) has collaborated with MEDIAE to communicate evidence-based sexual and reproductive health and rights messages through MEDIAE's development education television drama series, Makutano Junction. This has included messages about sexuality, intimate partner violence, obstetric fistula and contraceptives. APHRC, a partner in the Realising Rights RPC, provides evidence from its own research and the wider literature, contributes to message development and comments on storylines, scripts and print resources for the show. Most recently, APHRC and MEDIAE developed episodes that communicated information on risks of unsafe abortion, abortion's legal status and the fact that post-abortion care is legal in Kenya and available in government and private health facilities. They also developed a comic with more detailed information on the same issues. After an episode on abortion was aired, MEDIAE received 1476 texts from viewers all over Kenya, including comments on the show, questions about various aspects of abortion and requests for the comic, which was distributed to 1093 viewers. Messages were developed through discussions between APHRC and MEDIAE over a period of months. The process involved thrashing out ideas,

objectives, potential impacts and risks of various script ideas. The end result was a finely balanced combination of informative and entertaining TV drama with evidence-based messages. The RPC and MEDIAE are continuing to work on abortion-related messages in subsequent series of Makutano Junction, developing the story further through examining the risks of attempting to self-abort, culminating in a debate among characters about abortion law.

The abortion storylines on the show communicate information for improving health outcomes and help to dispel myths and misinformation about abortion and encourage reflection and debate about abortion in countries where abortion is highly prohibited, anti-abortion lobbies are extremely influential and there are high rates of morbidity and mortality caused by unsafe abortion. A survey carried out by Steadman Group found that Kenyan viewers of the show reported Makutano Junction to be an important source of information on abortion. 60% of viewers said that the show has helped them to advise others who have unwanted pregnancies.

One of the communications objectives for Realising Rights is to create a progressive climate for change on sexual and reproductive health and rights issues. This project is an innovative combination of APHRC's research communication expertise, evidence-based messages and entertaining and compelling TV drama. Drama has considerable potential for challenging stigma and prejudice by promoting empathy and demonstrating the humanity behind stereotypes. However, one challenge is how to effectively and accurately communicate messages on complex and controversial issues in a concise and entertaining format. MEDIAE's SMS initiative enables viewers to ask questions and request further information about the issues.

This research communication activity was successful for the following reasons:

- We focused on communicating about issues where there are knowledge gaps among the public
- We dealt with a controversial issue in a balanced and informative way, in a context where media coverage is often sensationalised or ill-informed
- APHRC and MEDIAE effectively combined research evidence, rights-based messages, and compelling drama to produce an entertaining and informative TV show

The role of intermediary suggests being in the middle of two groups: As well as focusing on the identification and treatment of material going into programmes, Mediae also focuses on understanding its audience; how they consume media and in particular tv, what they enjoy watching and why and what their information needs are. Mediae conducts and commissions both qualitative and quantitative surveys, in order to get a better understanding of what people want to hear about and where Makutano is making a difference to people's lives.

Lessons Learned

The Makutano Junction project has shown the massive appeal for this kind of TV programming; locally written and produced, with sound content research, good quality production, educative as well as entertaining draws in the crowds.

It is equally popular in different countries – being the most popular programme in Uganda. Generic issues are of interest as well as “how the neighbours live” are an attraction.

Makutano Junction can best be used to explain to rural and peri-urban audiences their rights and in particular the services they have a right to access. The soap can unpick these issues and can show how to access and benefit from what is rightfully theirs. Also, where possible, show individual and community approaches towards bettering their lives.

During the ad breaks of Makutano Junction only 49% of the audience watch the adverts. Using short, public announcement adverts to reach large audiences on social issues has limited reach and no time to get to grips with many issues facing Africans today.

It has not been easy to secure commercial sponsorship for the programme. This is partly because TV stations are preoccupied with securing sponsorship for their own productions and it is also because some donors both make programmes and pay for airtime. It was relatively easy to secure sponsorship for radio airtime, but has proven far harder for TV. Mediae has, however, had some success with both product placement and also with advertising and has ploughed any such revenue back into the marketing and publicity of the programme.

Linked to the point above, Mediae’s expertise lies in programme production and research, not in advertising and marketing. They have found these sectors to be quite hard to access and do business with.

It has also shown the impact that programmes have on viewers’ knowledge, attitude and – to some extent – practice. The research methodologies developed and used by Mediae over the course of the project do not actually *prove* change in behaviour; rather they show reported change in behaviour. Mediae would like to conduct more in-depth, follow up research to show conclusively how MJ is affecting viewers’ practice.

The project has also shown how different media can work together and support each other. The SMS facility has been well used, though the MJ website less so. Fewer people have access to internet, whereas mobile phones have 77% penetration currently in Kenya (source: World Bank’s Kenya Economic Update, December 2009).

Further links:

www.youtube.com

www.mediae.org

www.makutanojunction.org.uk