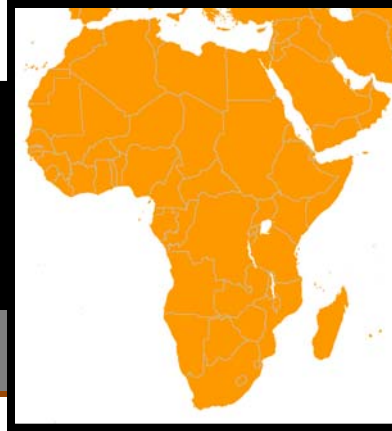


AudienceScapes

Africa Development Research Brief



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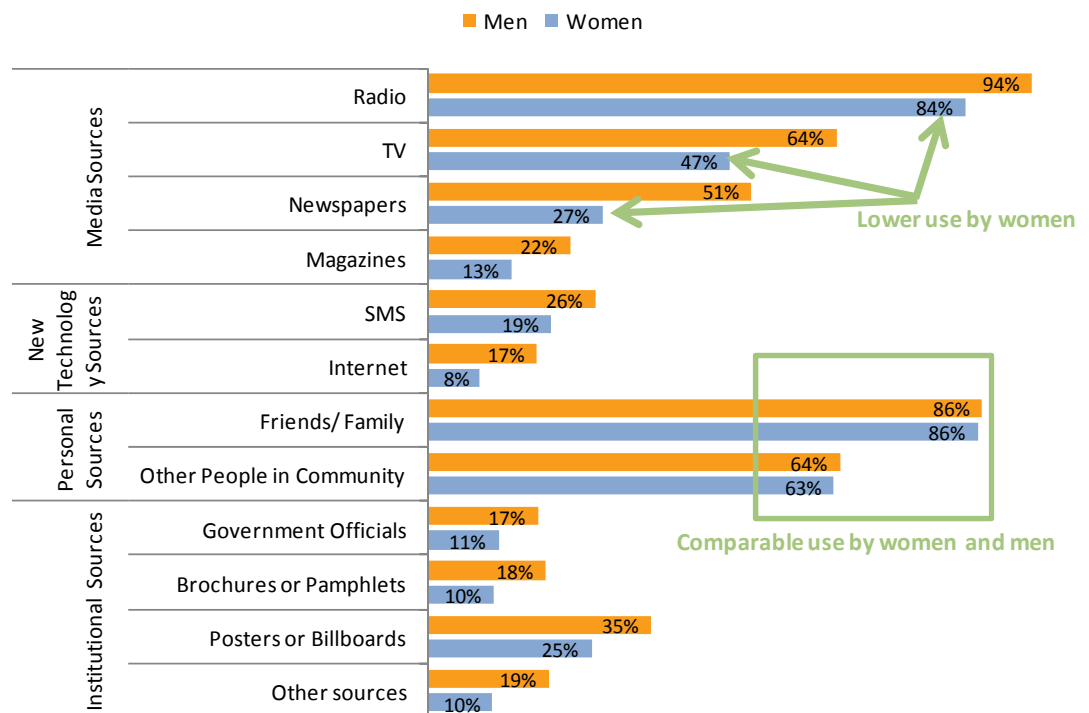
Are New Media Closing the Information Gender Gap?

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The 2009 AudienceScapes national surveys of Ghana and Kenya highlight an information-gathering gap between the genders— fewer women than men are regularly getting news and information from a range of available sources (see Chart 1 for results from Kenya). Men and women are only at rough parity in terms of staying informed through word-of-mouth sources.

Chart 1: Information Gender Gap, Kenya

% of respondents who used the source to get news and information in the last week



AudienceScapes National Survey of Kenya, July 2009. N=2000 adults (15+): 1094 Men, 906 Women

As part of the AudienceScapes project, in August, 2009 InterMedia carried out nationally-representative communication and media surveys in Kenya and Ghana.

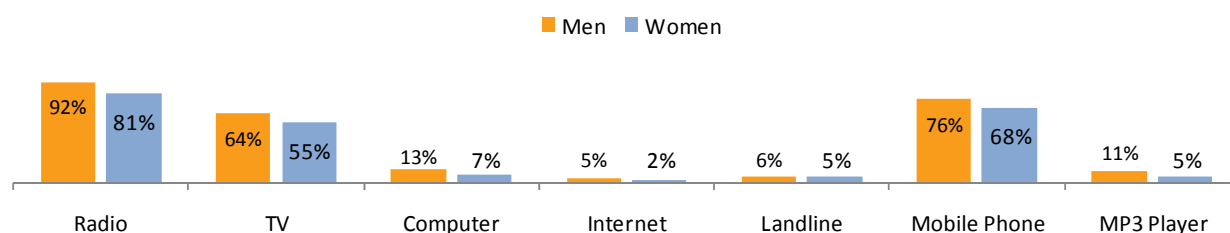
The data also suggest that the gender gap extends to information gathered via new media—cell phones and the internet—challenging the assumption that such technologies democratize the information environment by providing ready access to multiple sources for anyone. As Chart 1 shows that for Kenya, women in the survey were about half as likely as men to say that they used the internet in the past week to get news and information, while women also lagged men (albeit by a smaller margin) in the use of SMS services for the same purpose.

The Access Gap

Part of the explanation for the information-gathering gap is an access gap to these information sources. For example, Chart 2 shows a curious difference between the percentage of men and women who said they have various media and communication technologies available to them in their households. This should not have been the case, given the randomization of the survey at the individual level.

Chart 2: Information Gender Gap, Ghana

% of men/women who report having the item at home in working order



AudienceScapes National Survey of Ghana, July 2009. N=2051 adults (15+): 961 Men, 1090 Women.

However, these results raise the question of whether women have less access to media and information technologies in the home for cultural reasons, or due to lower education or literacy levels compared to men (which could have a notable impact on a person’s use of newspapers, SMS and the internet in particular). Indeed, the Ghana and Kenya surveys both indicate that women lag on both counts by significant margins.

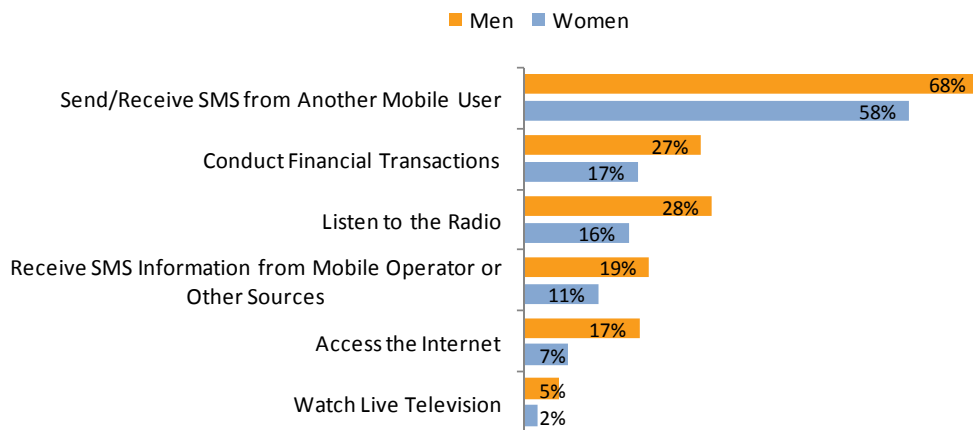
Cell Phone Disparities

The access issue comes into sharper focus with cell phones, both in terms of ownership and use patterns. In the Ghana survey, only 58 percent of women surveyed said they own a phone, well behind 72 percent of men. For Kenya, the gap was slightly narrower at 67 percent of men and 55 percent of women. Of course, ownership is not a prerequisite for cell phone use, since many people can and often do use borrowed or rented phones. However, the AudienceScapes research shows that use patterns between owners and nonowners are starkly different, with nonowners generally using each function far less than owners.

Comparing male and female mobile phone users, Chart 3 shows the gender gap persisting for every non-voice phone function mentioned in the survey, from sending and receiving SMS messages, to listening to the radio, to accessing the internet.

Chart 3: Gender Gap in Mobile Phone Use, Kenya

% of mobile phone users* who perform each activity at least weekly



AudienceScapes National Survey of Kenya, July 2009. N=1810 adult (15+) mobile phone users. *"Mobile Phone Users" are respondents who used a mobile phone for any purpose in the past year.

Unfortunately, the reasons for these gaps in use habits are not clear from the survey data. However, it may be the case that it reflects lower ownership rates among female phone users, as well as greater income or literacy/education limitations for them.

Lessons for Development

What are the lessons for those in the development community who want to make that women catch up in the new media world?

- **It is important to ensure that women have the same opportunity as men to own a mobile phone**, not merely have access to one.
- **To improve internet access and use for women, it is critical to raise their awareness of the internet** and develop their web skills. In Ghana, 44 percent of the women who had never used the internet said it was because they did not know what the internet is, compared to 36 percent of men (In Kenya it was 45 percent of female nonusers versus 36 percent of male nonusers). Even if awareness and access improve, however, women's lower literacy levels may remain an obstacle to web use.

Finally, the AudienceScapes data provide an important reminder that new media in Africa are just that – very new. In the two countries surveyed, mobile phones have indeed exploded onto the scene but not yet become a key source of news and information. The internet, meanwhile, is barely reaching audiences: fewer than 15 percent of adults in either country had been online in the past week for any purpose (not merely news and information), and those who had were heavily concentrated in urban areas (and were more likely to be male and well-educated).

The AudienceScapes data suggest that the impact of new media is only in its very early stages. With the media and communication scene changing rapidly, the development community has the opportunity to help shape the way specific

audiences get and share information. In order to close the information gender gap, it will be critical to understand the existing gaps, as well as the potential obstacles to women's use of new media.

The AudienceScapes project (www.audiencescapes.org) is aimed at bridging knowledge gaps about media preferences, personal communication habits and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Africa and in other developing regions. It is also a tool for identifying needs in media, communication technologies, development information and development policy.

The project's name refers to the benefits for development organizations of understanding the changing communication preferences and needs of their 'audiences'—the target populations and policymakers whom they are trying to support. Launched in April 2009 with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*, AudienceScapes comprises four main elements:

- **National quantitative surveys** looking at (1) the general population's access to and use of media, access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and word-of-mouth communication habits; and (2) how these factors affect people's acquisition of knowledge about key development topics. Pilot projects are taking place in Ghana, Kenya and Zambia.
- **In-Depth Interviews with policymakers** to find out how they gather, assess, share and disseminate critical information related to development topics, and find out how global development partners can play a constructive role in this process. The interviews were begun in the same three African countries.
- **The AudienceScapes website** which provides access to the program's analytical reports as well as the quantitative survey data. The website also has detailed "Country Communication Profiles" of several countries in multiple developing regions, plus other resources for development practitioners working in communication, media development, technology development and policy dialogue.
- **Custom Research and Analysis** for organizations and companies in need of reports catering to their specific research needs.

For more information, contact us at audiencescapes@intermedia.org.

InterMedia (www.intermedia.org) is a nonprofit research, evaluation and consulting company with expertise in media, communications and development. We creatively equip clients to understand audiences, design projects, target communications and gauge project impact in developing and transitional societies worldwide.

**The findings and conclusions of the AudienceScapes research project are those of InterMedia and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.*