

Question no 3: Which opportunities do you have to express yourself in media? How would you like to express yourself if you had unlimited possibilities, what would you write/read/talk about?



Zambia Youth Council

As for Zambia, we have less opportunities where we have to express our personal views in media. The current existing media houses are more of adult centred and controlled. We have what they call youth programs but are heavily guided and controlled broadcasts where youths are just used to paint a picture which is not real.

In our case, we have been trying to seek for a platform where youths could be free to decide, plan, develop and air programmes but this always receives a very cold shoulder from the authorities.

In the private media station the demand large sums of money we can not afford. This is very negative in our our understanding.

If we had unlimited possibilities, which we are fighting for now to open the first children and youth television and radio station in Zambia depending on the support we may get from various stakeholders is to consistently, persistently talk about 99% of serious issues that concern the child and the youth as far as education, health, shelter, food, youth unemployment, among other issues.

In our Zambia case that 75% of the country's population are people below the age of 35 years and of the that percentage 80% are children below the age of 15. This means that Zambia is a youthful nation and most issues has to deal with this population.



South Africa Youth Council

Each member of SAYC took this question out to a group of young people to see what their burning issues were. The responses were quiet different, hence we have included all responses without necessarily offering a monolithic answer that might favour our opinion more that of the participants who offered their opinions...

MPUMI:

The sample followed young shoppers at an urban mall (Northgate). I was not specific (spelled 'scared') about asking their exact ages, but I approached teen-, late teen- and early twenties-looking people. But I also chose a very off-hand and casual approach, so as to keep it less 'information gathery' and more conversational. And I opted for groups rather than individuals. And colour (race) doesn't exist! in a skate park!!!

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Boys want computers. They want to own them, make them, change them, speak to them, about them and through them. They want games that mirror reality but not too closely – they would make games that set up real situations where they control outcomes. When asked if they do not want to replace the life experience and live vicariously through this unreal world – they were SURE that a virtual world where they were faced with all possible life scenarios where the various choices that they can make have realistic outcomes, would place them at a better footing for real life lessons. One said that they

don't need to have their hearts broken because if they dated via computers, and the girls at the other side were doing the same, there would be no risks of heart break, no teen pregnancies, and he's sure he'll only go out ONLY with the girl who gets to the same game levels as him, which would rule out a significant percentage of the population. See, good outcome.

Boys also love sport, but more for being shown on a super-powered and flashy TV. Otherwise they'd rather hang out with friends and play it. They're not interested in saying anything in the media. They have opinions but they share them with friends.

Both girls and boys were not particularly interested in writing, talking about and hearing the news. They are happy with them being there in the general background and as something meant for adults. They strongly feel that when they grow older there will be a point to the news.

Girls love information. Many would like to grow up to be TV personalities, a few were specific that they want to be actresses or in the entertainment sector, the rest didn't care what it was for, just as long as they were on TV. To the girls, the first and general definition for 'media' is TV. Then all other things are '...oh, that...' and interest fizzles out. They're optimistic about the world becoming smaller with increased use of internet and broadband and bandwidth, but they don't want to know how it comes about, just how it gets on their phones and what it does once there. They are sure that in the new world order, girls will rule the world by taking on serious occupations like being lawyers, doctors and economists, while boys focus on their games – but they still like them nonetheless. Boys, not games. Girls also voiced that they only keep up with sports to impress boys. OK, that's it!

MLIBOKAZI:

The sample comprised of 22-26 year old males from Sasolburg - a periurban areas outside of Pretoria. Which opportunities do you have to express yourself in the media?

Over the years there have been various topics that various media platforms intentionally 'turned a blind eye' to for either cultural/political reasons or 'social harmony'. As a result of this avoidance/denial, diversity was obliterated from the media's reflection of reality as is. Conversely viewers became recipients of biased information which those who control the media so wrongfully phrase; 'issues of public interest'. Objectivity in the media is but a theoretical notion because in practice, there are powers which exercise dictatorship over gatekeepers that are in charge of media content.

Some of the powers that be might argue otherwise but the undeniable truth is because of its funding model and conformist nature (i.e. slave to rules-set) the media is more often than not, one-sided. What this means is that it is not as diverse as it should be in theory.

Because of its funding model and conformist nature, the South African media industry is not an ideal space of expression for audacious and explorative souls.

How would you like to express yourself if you had unlimited possibilities, what would you write/read/talk about??

Unlimited possibilities would be expression without restriction.

80% of South African mindsets are shaped by what they see on TV, read in the newspapers and hear on the radio; as a result if the media still perceives certain topics taboo then minds will forever be trapped in that prison of ignorance that the media has engineered via insufficient/subjective information. I'm of the belief that if the media was as objective as it should be (i.e. no taboo topics) then there would be less public pain because the only thing that hurts people is not knowing. Broadcasters and programme-makers play a huge role in shaping society perceptions hence they should always strive to produce programmes that are real, informative, educational and wholly-representative of South Africa's diversity; NO TABOOS!!

If I had unlimited possibilities, I'd erect a media-platform that would be an inquiry into topics either ignored or taken for granted by other inquiries; an untainted reflection of society.

MBALI/TSHIDISO:

In researching what young people would speak/write/if they had unlimited access to media, the following findings surfaced.

- Creating more localised content that is in local languages. There was a consensus around the need for more local programming on all media as a tool to preserve African culture, African storytelling and local languages which are largely dominated by the English language. Some of the methods that came up as a way to address this were through producing animation telling everyday South African stories and African folklore – preserving African storytelling and fantasy.
- Creating more community radio stations that deal with immediate issues affecting smaller communities. Using these platforms for community activism, advertising local events, local businesses and cultivating a more communal culture and interconnectedness. There was a keen interest in involving the elderly in these initiatives not only to share their wisdom and experience but to also bridge the generational gap. This would ensure that the youth have a better understanding of older people within their communities vice versa. (Radio Dramas came up as a way to share stories, make social commentary and create debate within communities around pertinent topics around community life.
- In television, documentary came up as a format that is highly important but not fully utilised in local television. There were discussions about the importance of showing the stories of real people to create a more accepting and open-minded society. This came in light of references to an emergent classist society in South Africa. There were also references made to the xenophobic attacks (early 2009).
- Writing more accessible (in both language and availability) books challenging the Western notion of civilisation and showcasing African indigenous knowledge systems and their contribution to 'civilisation' as we know it.
- Gathering young people in communities and recording music with motivational content uplifting young people and imparting positive values. This would be using genres that are contemporary.
- Youth development (business skills, career knowledge, self-actualisation workshops) and creating awareness on HIV and healthcare in a way that is relevant to youth people and through using their peers. Radio came up as a favorite medium in which this could be exploited, television could do more to support this agenda.
- Lessening international music and television shows for locally produced content, and opting for content from smaller developing countries to challenge the status quo and lessen the destructive effects of globalization on smaller cultures.

The sample comprised of 10 people aged 23 -27 years old, 3-female and 7 male. Most candidates were based in peri-urban areas but had access to city centres.



Kuala Lumpur Youth Council

The world of blogging has introduced the youth of Kuala Lumpur to endless possibilities to express themselves to the world beyond Malaysia! Mostly, they blog about anything from their personal lives to food and technology. This has been seen as a positive thing in Malaysia due to the strict media policies the Government has on other traditional media forms, i.e censorship etc. Establishments such as www.malaysiakini.tv have also given the youth a voice to talk about issues they wouldn't be able to get across traditional media tools and I think as long as the Government policies do not change on media then the youth will always look to the world wide web to speak up.

Limkokwing university has just been approved a license to run a campus radio station called Wings Radio (which abides by Gov't policies) and it is still at its infancy stage and just broadcasts lives around campus and building on internet radio in the near future.



India Youth Council

Opportunities provided to us are highly limited. We do not find a place of any significance in serious mainstream media as our position(children) is on the lower rung of the established power hierarchy of the society. There are adults who are ready to give a space for articles on children and youth but nobody wishes to carve a niche for a media by us.

If given an opportunity to express ourselves in the media, we would like to express our views regarding various serious issues like child marriage , illiteracy, child labour and many others which severely affect us and have never been addressed from the viewpoints of children who are the victims. Though entertainment is part of our lives , we wish to see a shift from a world of impossibly exaggerated miseries to one which addresses miseries with a more realistic, sensitive and humane attitude.



Slovakia Youth Council

Opportunities of expressing ourselves: internet forums, school magazines, regional TV, regional radio, regional newspapers, local TV and local newspapers.

How we would like to express ourselves if we´ve had unlimited possibilities:

to have a chance to tell our opinion through a discussion program, to comment, to moderate a discussion program, to present ourselves in the entertainment program.

It could be realized through some freer forms where we could have a chance to express something special,distinctive for young people, or also what would be more appropriate for us.