

Media and Digital Platforms Market Inquiry to kick off month-long public hearings

On Monday, 4 March 2024, the Media and Digital Platforms Market Inquiry (MDPMI) will commence its month-long series of public hearings, with over 40 stakeholders actively participating. These hearings are expected to continue until 25 March 2024, at the DTIC campus in Pretoria.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Organisations

Invitations were extended to over 50 potential stakeholders based on their written and oral submissions. Just over 40 stakeholders, including mainstream and community media, broadcasters, associations, think tanks, social media platforms, ad brokers, and others, will participate in the sessions.

Stakeholders who have confirmed participation in the public hearings include organisations and associations such as the South African National Editors Forum, the Association of Independent Publishers, the National Community Radio Forum, SOS Support Public Broadcasting, and others.

Mainstream media stakeholders include Arena Holdings, Caxton, Media24, as well as broadcasting giants such as the SABC, eMedia, Primedia and Kagiso Media Radio. Participation will also include community news, vernacular publications and digital natives such as *Isolezwe*, *the Daily Maverick*, *Izwe Lomphakathi* and *Maroela Media*.

Amongst the digital platforms, major players in the digital space that have confirmed participation include Google Search and News, YouTube, Google AdTech, Microsoft Bing (incl. Copilot), Microsoft Start and Meta (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp). Ad brokers and Advertising Technology (AdTech) service providers will also be appearing including GroupM, Dentsu and others.



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The Inquiry is yet to confirm attendance from X Corp and TikTok, important platforms in the social media space, but provisions have been made for them in the public hearing schedule.

The Competition Commission initiated the MDPMI in terms of section 43B(1)(a) of the Competition Act No. 89 of 1998 (as amended). The Inquiry focuses on examining the distribution of media content on South Africa's digital platforms and the AdTech markets that connect buyers and sellers of digital advertising inventory.

Hybrid event

Chaired by chief economist James Hodge and assisted by panel member Paul Fray, a veteran in the media industry, the hearings will be conducted as a hybrid event, allowing both in-person and virtual attendance. The proceedings will be broadcast on the [Competition Commission SA YouTube channel](#) and live streamed on Facebook.

The primary objective of the public hearings is to provide a platform for direct engagement between the Inquiry panel and stakeholders. To date, the MDPMI has gathered extensive information from a wide range of industry stakeholders through submissions made to the Statement of Issues, Further Statement of Issues, and Requests for Information. The public hearings will present another opportunity for stakeholders to not only provide their perspective on some of the issues raised in the SOI, FSOI, and aspects of the RFIs but also to provide their views on non-confidential submissions made by other stakeholders in response to the Inquiry. Stakeholders will also be provided with the opportunity to highlight any issues not currently known to the Inquiry if these concerns fall within the defined scope.

Furthermore, the hearings will enable the Inquiry panel and technical team to engage directly with stakeholders in respect of their submissions, including the digitalisation of news media, how the news media engages with the digital platforms, how the digital platform markets operate and their relationship with the news media, and the issues identified by the Inquiry to date.

The schedule for week one of the public hearings is attached hereto and can also be accessed [here](#). The times indicated in the schedule are indicative only and may be adjusted according to the demands of the day. The schedule for the remainder of the public hearings will be issued next week.

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