

TREND: Programmatic media buying

Programmatic Media Buying is the local trend that will dominate in 2015, although revitalising their businesses for growth is also what most media owners will be focusing on this year.

Media owners are mostly in agreement that 2014 was a shocking year as brands cut spend due to the economic downturn, rising costs due to rising fuel prices, a slowdown in consumer spend and national events like the miner's strike which hit satellite towns hard.

We've heard of big media contracts being cancelled and profits down at media agencies. Of all the interviews we did, the media owners were the most cautious about the operating conditions in 2015 and those that seemed to be in need of a holiday the most over the festive season! They hope for a better trading conditions in 2015, but are not sure they will get it.

Media owners like [Jacques du Preez](#), MD of Provantage Media Group, don't pull their punches when talking about 2014 as one of the toughest years in the business, when brands cancelled contracts and pulled back on spend during the Platinum Miner's strike, etc, and the recession.



alphaspirit via [123RF](#)

His major trend for 2015 is the fact that the investment by the international agency networks in media and agencies in South Africa, is creating an international playing field overnight and tight competition.

It is programmatic media buying that will continue to evolve and we see more private ad exchanges playing a role in the market, says [John Bowles](#), co-MD, NAB.

[Paula Raubenheimer](#), MD, SouthernX, explains further: "Programmatic buying has been a learning curve for South Africa in 2014. While there are no meaningful statistics available on the quantity of revenue flowing through real time bidding (RTB) platforms in SA, based on discussion with buyers in the industry, there has already been huge growth in programmatic buying in 2014, but that is off a very low base in 2012 and 2013. With the global trend, as always, dictating South Africa's way forward, the market is poised to see a growth of spend in this area at a steeper curve in 2015."

While brands are still allocating small budgets to this, many major media buyers are adding programmatic buying to the marketing mix and including it in their strategies, she says.

The Media Shop had a list for marketers on what not to do with programmatic media buying, by digital strategist, Dylan Roberts: "Though programmatic buying has exploded with expected growth numbers in the billions, too many marketers are at risk of falling short when it comes to implementing and using these tools. There's no denying the power of programmatic - but it isn't a magic formula that will instantly solve all your issues."

This is his advice:

- 1. Have a documented strategy:** Be sure your strategy is in line with the company's overall goals and with the tactics and activities you're going to be using. Programmatic media buying tools are a means to execute the strategy - not the strategy itself.
- 2. It is not a glorified email marketing tool:** Email marketing can be incredibly effective, but programmatic media buying tools like Cadreon, for example, also do SEO, lead scoring, landing page tracking and metrics and reporting.
- 3. Include other teams:** Setting up an effective lead nurture campaign can't be done in a silo. You must talk to your counterparts in sales, content marketing and even customer relations. Getting better insight into your audience, leads and customers is essential for crafting campaigns that will ultimately convert visitors into customers.
- 4. Selling instead of nurturing:** Stop selling, and start nurturing... Lead nurturing is one of the most powerful aspects of any programmatic tool and is designed to help move people along the sales journey to purchase. An effective programmatic tool will allow you to identify who needs to be nurtured versus those that may be ready for a more direct approach.
- 5. Not producing enough targeted content (creative):** Getting demand generation teams and content teams to work together is a key element of programmatic success. Too often, content teams live in isolation, without much interaction with their demand generation counterparts.
- 6. Tracking the wrong metrics:** It's easy to get stuck in analysis paralysis. At each stage of the funnel, identify the key metrics that matter. Initially, it might be email opens and click-through rates, but as people move deeper into your sales funnel, customer conversion is all that matters.
- 7. Running on autopilot:** Despite the name, programmatic doesn't mean you can go on autopilot. A good demand-generation strategy will focus on continually optimising everything from email marketing workflows to lead scoring and even landing page layouts. A good demand-generation marketer will also dig deeper into the database and uncover leads that need to be re-engaged or leads that should be passed along to the sales team.

**Trends curated by [Louise Marsland](#), specialist editor of Biz Trends 2015.*