

The state of digital in South Africa

 By [Richard Lord](#)

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New media! That is how many people still refer to digital...

But my question is how can something that has been around since the mid-90s (if not earlier) still be referred to as "new media"? What does digital have to do in order to become accepted by the main stream and seen as a fully-fledged media type in its own right, and secure its fair share of the media budget?

Let's begin by looking at a few stats and figures and determine where exactly digital actually stands in the minds of not only consumers, but also within the advertising and marketing industry.

We will start with the consumer...

According to stats gained from sources such as World Wide Worx, BMI and the networks' own figures, there are currently in excess of 20 million South Africans with access to the internet (some sources even quote as high as 24 million). Smartphone penetration in South Africa is estimated to be around 40%, according to Google. Facebook tells us that currently, 12.5 million monthly active users in SA (7 million who access daily). News24, according to Effective Measure, clocked up an impressive 5.7 million uniques in the month of April. The Opera Mini web browser reports 8 million SA users on a monthly basis, and even Mxit, with their revised stats, have in excess of 2 million South Africans logging in every month!

All of this screams that digital media in South Africa is no longer new! It is has in fact surpassed many of the established "mass" media vehicles.



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According to the latest AMPS...

- M-Net had 3,093 million viewers in the past 4 weeks
- 94.7 had 1,877 million listeners past weeks
- Metro FM had 7,178 million
- Ukhozi had 8,127
- The average issue readership of the *Sunday Times* is 3,489 million people
- *The Star* 598,000
- *Daily Sun* 5,256 million

- And *You*, *Huisgenoot* and *Drum* combined have 7,160 million readers

These are the mainstream media vehicles that pretty much any media planner or client in South Africa would have no hesitation putting on schedule. And yet Facebook has more active monthly users than any of these! It is a proven platform that provides proven results, but it is still called a "new media" and treated by advertisers and media agencies alike with hesitation and uncertainty. It is a much harder sell to most clients than M-Net, Metro or 94.7 are.

The other interesting thing to consider, besides how big the digital audience is, is how much time people spend with the medium each and every day vs. other media types. According to the Global Web Index, South African internet users in 2014 spent an average of 5 hours per day on the internet via a PC or tablet. They spent a further 3 hours per day on the web via a mobile phone, and they spent just over 3 hours per day on social media. No doubt there is duplication in these figures, but it is still clear to see that people spend a lot of time online. Facebook further backs this up by telling us that the average South African user checks their newsfeed no less than 13 times per day! We know from Google that there are more than 12 million internet searches made every day. These numbers are hard to ignore.

By comparison, the average South African spends around 3 hours per day listening to the radio and a further 3 hours watching TV.

So again, this "new media" type is competing right up there with the mainstream, mass media in terms of how much share of attention it holds with the consumer.

But, when we look at where the ad dollars are being spent, we see a VERY different picture.

For the period Jan - Dec 2014, according to Adex, we saw adspend as follows:

- TV - R19.0 billion (50% share)
- Radio - R5.9 billion (16% share)
- Print - R9.3 billion (25% share)
- OOH - R1.6 billion (4% share)
- Digital - R1.2 billion (3% share)

So now, if people in South Africa are spending as much time with digital media as they are with TV and radio, why do the adspend investments not reflect this? Should we not be spending more money on digital media?

Of course we know that Adex numbers are woefully lacking when it comes to digital spend measurement. They exclude search, social media and mobile spend. So let's say digital spend is double what Adex measures - hell, let's even triple it - that still means that digital advertising spend in SA in 2014 was only around R3.6 billion with a 9% share of all adspend. Digital does offer far more opportunity in the owned and earned space compared to press for example, and so if one were to look at "marketing" spend, digital probably does get a fairer share of the pie than the adspend figures suggest. But when you compare SA adspend to other markets and territories such as the US and Europe where digital commands as much as

40% to 50% of adspend, you can see that South Africa needs a serious change in mindset.

Digital is no longer new, or niched - it is mature, mainstream and here to stay. Consumers are flocking to it in droves. Surely advertisers should be as well?

ABOUT RICHARD LORD

Richard Lord is Media & Operations Director at Meta Media, South Africa's newest media agency, and part of the IPG global network and Nahana Communications Group of specialist agencies. At Meta Media we don't just look at the numbers, we dig deeper, we look for the story behind the story. We find the "so what" to give our clients the edge, to provide real solutions based on real insights. We are real, we are authentic. We are curious!

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