

Using niche vertical publishers in marketing mix



By [Attila Bernariusz](#)

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The South African online media landscape has grown into a vibrant and diverse space that stretches beyond the large publishing groups where most media buyers look for the bulk of their online advertising needs.

By focusing online spending on a handful of major publishers and portals, South African advertisers are missing opportunities to make niche vertical publishers work for their businesses.

Today, there are a number of publishers in a range of vertical markets, from entertainment to technology, from cars to cooking. This is easily confirmed by looking at how many sites are in each category of Nielsen Market Intelligence or Effective Measure, which do not cover every publisher in the market. However, many of these sites - despite attracting lucrative niche audiences - struggle to draw much advertising, at scale.

Effective Measure tracking top sites

Effective Measure, the traffic measurement partner of South Africa's Digital Media and Marketing Association (DMMA), tracks its 115 publishers, representing 633 sites in South Africa. The top 30 publishers, ranked by the number of sites they have listed, make up 81% of the sites listed. The remaining 85 publishers make up 19% of the sites, with 117 sites - an average of 1.3 sites per publisher. This reflects the depth in the selection of vertical niche sites in South Africa, though advertising in most categories is dominated by the top sites, which in turn are often owned by the major publishers.

The reason for this is that most media buyers do not have the time and resources to contact, vet and negotiate with multiple sites to find the ones that are credible alternatives to the ones they already know well and advertise with. Many of them have good yields and engaged and loyal audiences, so they are great platforms for the right advertisers.

Many niche publishers are not running in the black, therefore, they cannot justify the costs of registering with industry bodies such as the DMMA. This results in a struggle to be listed in Effective Measure and in turn a struggle to get meetings with the bigger media buyers, who 'book' off Effective Measure.

AdFu tracks niche publishers

Last year's launch of the AdFu Premium Network had as its goal to help niche publishers get representation in front of bigger buyers.

By aggregating niche titles in verticals, they are brought to agency buyers as a single easy buy. The clients receive

targeted buys, but with access to a mass audience. Moreover, for publishers of vertical sites, it offers access to buyers, technology and membership to associations such as the DMMA.

This approach offers the best of two worlds - targeted buys with highly engaged audiences and mass reach - while creating new opportunities for small vertical sites without the sales resources to maximise sales of their inventories.

With fragmentation and complexity growing in the digital marketing and publishing environment, the industry needs new models of intermediation to bring buyers and sellers of advertising space together for their mutual benefit.

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