

Online leading ad spend revival

Online seems to be leading ad spend out of the recession doldrums in South Africa, with significant increases in revenue finding their way through Internet portals. In July this year, for example, Bizcommunity.com recorded an all-time high in terms of gross revenue since its launch almost 10 years ago.

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#) 8 Sep 2009

And while this was thought to be something of an anomaly at the time, Bizcommunity's August income reached almost the same high level.

Hopefully, this is an indicator of light at the end of the tunnel for SA's traditional media as well - all of whom have seen the results of advertising budgets being curtailed or severely tightened.

Rapid growth

According to the Online Publishers Association (OPA) recent stats show online readership growing at over 25%, from 4.8 million in 2008 to over six million for the same period in 2009.

There is a school of thought that, in tough economic times, advertisers will increasingly turn towards the digital arena, not only for its affordability but also its measurability. But the most recent statistics (Q1 2009) from the OPA reveal that there is another reason - advertisers will follow their consumers, and their consumers are hitting the web in droves!

According to the recently-released Nielsen Online Ranking Report, which reveals online readership figures for the first quarter of 2009, there has been a 28.5% growth in total visitors from 8.6 million in the first quarter last year to over 11 million in the first quarter of this year; and a 25.2% increase in local visitors*, from 4.8 million last year to over six million visitors this year.

Total visitors have increased over 11%, from the fourth quarter last year alone.

That's a substantial increase in anyone's language, representing steady growth and acceptance of the online environment as a mainstream medium.

Not skewed

Josh Adler, OPA head of measurement, comments that although the increase has been influenced by the growth of OPA membership and thus the inclusion of previously-unmeasured readership, the newer members are largely smaller publishers and have thus not unduly skewed the curve.

"The increase in membership is also a positive indicator, demonstrating not only the growth of the medium as a whole but also the desire for accurate and independent statistics. It's a sure sign of the industry maturing," he adds.

Adler also points out that the substantial overall growth figures are matched - and even well exceeded - by the growth of existing publishers. Many well-known websites saw audience increases of well over 50%.

It's also worth noting that the percentage of domestic versus international traffic has remained consistent over the period, which means that local titles are growing both local and international audiences in equal numbers.

More growth

Adler concludes that he expects these exciting growth trends to continue, adding fuel to the online fire and boding exceptionally well for its growth into the future.

“With statistics like these our industry will enhance its status as not only the most measurable platform for advertising, but also one that continues to attract an increasing share of consumer eyeballs.”

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).
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