

Online communities: The fastest growing online research methodology

By [Tessa Nowosenetz](#), issued by [KLA](#)

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While online research is becoming the norm globally, South African market research tends to lag behind somewhat when it comes to these kinds of research methodologies. Our perception is that our internet penetration rate isn't high enough to make online research viable - especially when it comes to accessing emerging and lower-end markets. Furthermore the industry seems risk averse to try new methodologies.

The reality, though, is that about 39% of the South African population has internet access*. That's 14 million South Africans that market researchers can access via online market research. This number is predicted to increase further in the next few years, driven largely by fibre network rollouts and the broadband infrastructure being extended into under-served areas. Smartphone penetration growth and faster mobile access speeds are also set to drive growth in the mobile internet access market.**

According to the Greenbook Research Industry Trends Report (GRIT) (2013)***, the most popular emerging research methodologies internationally are online, making it very clear that this is where the future of qualitative and quantitative market research lies. 78% of companies internationally (mostly first world countries) are making use of online surveys, 24% are using mobile surveys and 45% are using online communities.

Within online research methodologies, the Market Research Online Community (MROC) - an online community offering an alternative to a focus group - is the emerging methodology showing the strongest growth. Online communities resemble a social network, making it easy for respondents to navigate while being private and geared specifically towards research purposes. Respondents visit the community on a daily basis while the community is being run and complete various research-driven tasks. This methodology allows for far deeper insights and data to be generated, because researchers have access to respondents for a longer period of time, and they're not pressurised to generate responses within a two hour discussion.

Many of these online community platforms are also compatible with most smartphones, providing researchers with increased access to middle to upper LSMs (from about LSM 5 and upwards). Clients, respondents and researchers have access to the online community in their own time, making it convenient to moderate, view or participate.

Considering the growth of mobile and internet access as well as international online research trends, KLA is taking advantage of this growth by offering full-service online research options. We've been successfully offering online and mobile quantitative surveys, mobile qualitative methodologies and qualitative bulletin boards for more than five years and have seen a considerable increase in their demand during that time.

As a new addition to our full-service online offering, we've started offering online communities to several of our clients in 2013, and have successfully completed several projects using this innovative and exciting methodology. The official rollout of our online communities takes place towards the middle of 2014 - stay tuned for more details.

For more information

Visit www.kla.co.za or call 011 447 8411.

Sources:

*DM&MA(2013) SA internet users grew by over 2 million in last 12 months says DMMA, <http://www.dmma.co.za/news/sa->

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** PwC (2012). Entertainment and Media Outlook 2012-2016

***GRIT Report (2013)

About KLA Africa

KLA is a boutique market research agency, specialising in bespoke solutions aligned to strategic business and brand needs. Employing more than 30 professional staff members and a full complement of support services, KLA is able to offer clients a full service market research solution.

KLA was established in 1991 by founding partners Joel Kaufman and Robyn Levin. Joel was a respected strategist in the South African communications industry, with a passion for insights, and Robyn was an experienced market researcher.

When Robyn and Joel decided to emigrate to Sydney, Australia in 2004, Stephanie Matterson was appointed Partner and Managing Director - she remains at the helm today, steering the business to new heights.

In 2012 the business was sold to Kagiso Media - a fully empowered Black-owned broadcasting and information group - to enable its growth ambitions both in South Africa and the wider sub-Saharan region.

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Specialties:

Market Research, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Online/Digital Research (Qualitative and Quantitative), Research in Africa

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tessa has a Masters degree in Research Psychology from the University of Pretoria. After working for a year in academics, Tessa moved into the world of market research in 2008 and has worked for TNS, KLA and Columinate, where she specialised in online research methodologies for 2 years. She wrote and presented a SAMRA paper in 2012 entitled: 'How social networkers engage with brands'. Returning to KLA in 2013, she is leading and developing KLA's online qualitative offering.

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