

This is what SA brands need to know about digital influence

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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Is SA online? The obvious answer is yes - how else would you be reading this? The real question is, what are you actually doing online? Here are the highlights of Popimedia's comprehensive breakdown of research into SA consumers' online behaviour and how it affects their purchase decisions, conducted earlier this year by Just Play.

On Thursday, 6 July, Popimedia hosted the Cape Town leg of its national digital influence research launch at the Grand Daddy Hotel on Long Street to an impressive audience as it kicked off well before the sun was up. This proved a fitting venue for a session on digital influence as the venue is pure Instagram-heaven, with interesting decor like silver mosaic panels and large yellow and tiny blue species darting about in fish tanks with embedded in the walls, as well as an antique elevator and rooftop bar that you need to see to believe.

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Our fish tank wall! @granddaddyhotel #justkeepsfloating #designhotel #fishtank #mirror #mosaic
#fishlover #reflection #twinkle #interiordesign #somethingdifferent #capetown #comevisit #hallway

A post shared by The Grand Daddy Boutique Hotel (@granddaddyhotel) on Jan 30, 2017 at 12:08am PST

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#mondaynights are #movienights in our Pink Flamingo #rooftop #cinema which of course means free #popcorn for everyone!
#granddaddyhotel #oldschool #airstream #capetown #popcornetime #designhotel #citycenter #datenight

A post shared by The Grand Daddy Boutique Hotel (@granddaddyhotel) on Jan 16, 2017 at 12:41am PST

But I digress. Following pre-coffee networking and a delicious cold breakfast, Popimedia’s marketing manager [Lisa](#)

Steingold kicked off by explaining that there's constant research being presented in the rest of the world on the role of social media for brands. After reading UK research on consumers' online journey that pushes them to making an offline purchase, Steingold decided it's time for an SA-specific view. This is thus their first formal research and Steingold confirmed there will be annual research findings in this sphere based on their customers' interest.

How does the online interaction influence offline behaviour?

Steingold then introduced Emma du Preez, marketing manager at Just Play, who explained the difference between the whimsical theory and real-world reality of digital marketing.

In theory, the beauty of digital marketing is that everything is trackable and we use these set, reliable stats to make smarter decisions while looking at beautiful interactive graphs, wearing trendy socks and sipping fancy coffee. Sadly, this is only the reality for a lucky few. In practice, time is usually an issue as well as deciding on budget allocation for this all-important research.

More than this though, there's the fact that the bulk of the external data we access is from overseas markets so while it helps forecast trends, it doesn't necessarily speak to the SA market right now, which is often the target.

That's why we need to contextualise our market, right now. Du Preez says this research was easily conducted through JustPlay, SA's biggest competition website with 1.5m registered users – to play online, respondents first answer a survey, from which the results are extrapolated.

SA's digital influence: who, what, where, how, why

For this particular research, Just Play surveyed 1,700 respondents. While this seems a low sample considering SA's total population, most of the overseas studies' results that get bandied about also have a sample size of around 1,500, so it's comparative in that regard. Du Preez said respondents are generally of LSM7+ and 66% were female so she acknowledged there is a slight bias gender bias in that regard.



Rotapova Valeriya © – 123RF.com

The data was also segmented through different age groups as the younger, 'mobile-first' respondents are more comfortable

living life online, including making purchases and purchase decisions. While a majority of multi-device users were expected, 54% claimed to use a single device. Of that, desktop proved most popular, then desktop and mobile, then desktop, mobile and tablet. A useful finding for those focused on responsive design and user experience.

Moving on to purchase behaviour then, 85% of respondents confirmed that they do compare prices online before they buy, which shows sophistication of market, and 78% take things a step further by searching for reviews before their purchase, whether online or offline. Du Preez pointed out this is an opportunity for the taking, for brands to own this content consumers are searching for, ensuring it is easily accessible – why not host those reviews on your own site?

Looking at mobile usage in particular, there's an interesting comparison of SA and SA mobile marketing: In the SA study, 37% of respondents claimed to look for coupons while in store, which Du Preez said is set to rise as Snap n Save starts making an impact locally.



#funfilledvelvet campaign to hit stores this Easter

Boomtown 24 Mar 2017



Almost half of respondents (47%) also check prices while in store and 51% browse social media while waiting in line. These are all opportunities for brands to embrace.

In terms of brands having actual influence in purchase decisions then, Du Preez said it's crucial for brands to know where consumers see the information that inspires them to find out more and make their purchase decisions. The findings show this as low on Instagram (apart from the youth market, of course), but Facebook out-performs TV as a purchase influencing channel, with banner ads and other online content also doing a good job here. Looking at Facebook specifically, 80% of respondents admit to checking their social media profiles more than once a day and 68% do research a product after seeing it mentioned on Facebook, whether organic or sponsored. Looking at specific verticals, fashion is definitely dominating online influence purchase behaviour as are home décor and appliances, as well as technology – much higher if you look just at males. Du Preez points out that there's obviously a longer customer journey and purchase funnel for pricier products like automotive, financial services and travel.

#Fitspo for the #Instawin

When it comes to Instagram, Du Preez said lots of local growth is expected here over the next few months. By vertical, this was dominated by fashion again, followed by sport, outdoor and health – not a surprise if you think of the popularity of the #fitspo hashtag. Technology brands as well as home decor and appliances and fashion also do well in eliciting interest on Instagram but websites are the biggest driver for actual purchases made in the last six months, especially in terms of influencing the move to close the loop and make a purchase, not just to find out more. This makes sense when you think of the rise of remarketing and where banners display after you've made an initial purchase.



How remarketing can make your digital ad spend stretch further

Johan Walters 7 Nov 2013



Lots of lifestyle brand posts and purchases are this happening on social channels as opposed to the business web.

Traditional purchase power

Looking at TV for context, as one of the biggest offline platforms to compare to, respondents claim it is still the biggest driver of research and purchase of products for home decor and appliances, and is also highest for entertainment research and decision making.

Ending off the session, Steingold said this is what building business on social is ultimately all about, delighting and exciting consumers. We need to have consumers in these digital moments of interaction to be better build our brands in the digital era.

That's the gist of the hour-long session. [Click here](#) to download Popimedia's white paper on the research for a deeper drill-down, as well as other toolkits and guides for #buildingbusinessonsocial.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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