

Digital, traditional media go hand in hand



By [Noëleen Bruton](#)

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It's been exciting watching the phenomenal growth of digital media both locally and globally in the past say two decades. This, of course, has given marketers a whole new category of media in which to spend our advertising budgets.

But where does that leave our traditional media - magazines, books, newspapers, radio, and television? The short answer is - pretty much intact. Our traditional media - also known as 'old' media - has also seen its fair share of explosive growth. For instance, since 1975 in South Africa, our media choice has grown from no TV channels to over 134; from seven radio stations to 138; and from under 200 magazines to more than 650 today.

We have been through a steep learning curve with this radical growth in media options and certainly many marketing fingers have been burned in the process. But we've learned that there are distinct advantages to each of the media categories, depending on who your target market is and what you're marketing.

By no means has digital media replaced traditional media in most marketing strategies, but it has added an additional spoke or two to the advertising wheel, which is a good thing.

Is it believable?

The bottom line is that traditional media has that vital element that consumers respond to - believability.

Even in the hotel reservation space where an online presence combined with online advertising is imperative, the best possible results are achieved with a mix of digital and traditional advertising. We learned a valuable lesson when we ran an entire campaign only through online, blogging, social media and our loyalty database. When bookings were not what we expected, we ran a burst of radio advertising and saw an immediate spike in sales.

Having said that, ignoring digital media is foolhardy. At this stage in South Africa, according to Nielsen's AdDynamix, there are 6.5 million internet users, 49 million sim cards in circulation with a 16% smartcard penetration, over 4.8 million Twitter users and 1.5 million monthly tweets, and many more impressive stats relating to digital media. However, it accounted for only 2.3% of the total adspend in the country in 2011 (South Africa spent R580 million on digital ad spend and R31 billion on traditional media).

Digital media in the mix

Digital media has become an essential element in the mix, but it's not an 'either or' situation. Of course there are anecdotes

to the contrary, such as South African comedian Trevor Noah selling out several performances at the Lyric at GRC, purely by tweeting about them. And where would Kulula.com be without the internet?

But those are exceptions rather than rules. It depends on what the product is and who the audience is. If the target market is young, we definitely have to include online advertising, but even then, I believe that it must be supported by other media as well. The balance between the two will vary based on the product and the market.

As an example, when we launched our new Tsogo Sun brand campaign last year, the media mix focused 90% on traditional media - television, cinema, and press - with a small presence in digital media. We believed the campaign required high impact and that's what television and cinema can deliver. But at the same time, we launched an online strategy, resulting in a lot of awareness and exposure in this space with little or no adspend, with for instance, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and blogs. We were delighted with the results across the board.

For us at Tsogo Sun there is no question. We have identified the web as a strategic growth area, but not at the expense of other media. We're positive about what digital media can add to our business, but it's not the holy grail.

ABOUT NOËLEEN BRUTON

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