

Huge online growth recorded for final quarter of 2009 with 2010 set to break even more records

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The number of South Africans accessing the web monthly increased 53% year on year to a whopping 7.5 million in the last quarter (Q4) of 2009, whilst total unique monthly browsers, both domestic and international, increased 52% year on year to reach a remarkable 14.9 million. This is according to a Nielsen Online report released by the Online Publishers Association (OPA) this week.

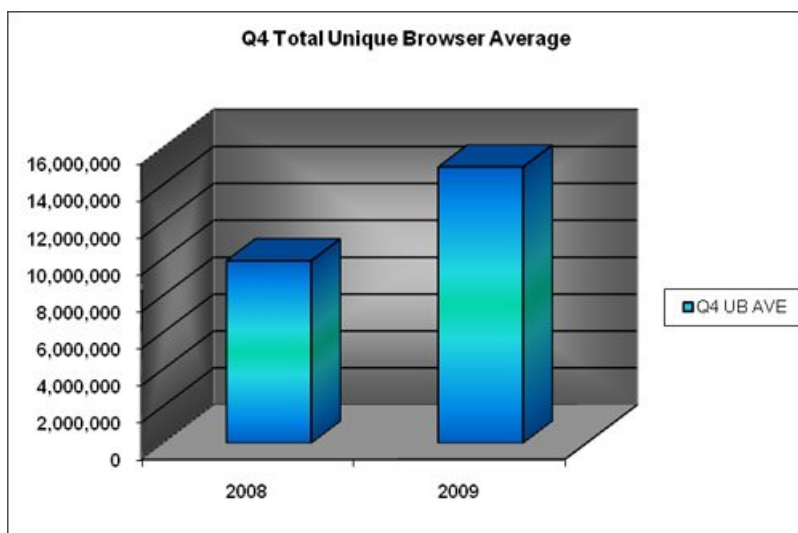
111 000 more South Africans per day visited OPA member sites in Q4 2009 compared to Q4 2008. 'This increase is indicative of the progressively central role that the internet plays in our daily lives', said Karen Dempers, Head of Marketing for the OPA, 'it also shows that local content is luring local eyeballs, testimony to the quality of domestic online properties'.

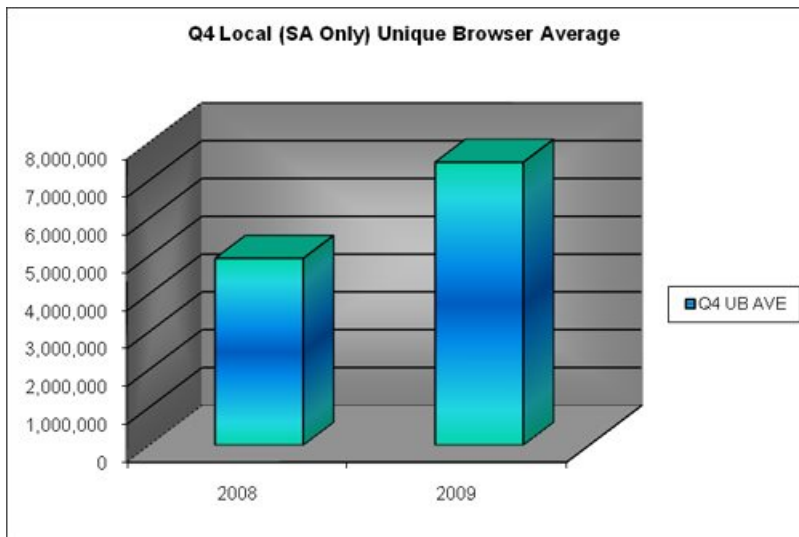
Interestingly, OPA member sites also saw a dramatic increase in the number of international browsers per day. Almost 145 000 more international visitors came to OPA sites in Q4 2009, a massive 56% increase. "This impressive growth illustrates a maturing local online industry; South African sites are not only better optimised for search but are also able to compete globally around content, user experience and user interaction," said Dempers.

Nielsen Online now also records traffic to mobile destinations and unique monthly visitors to OPA WAP sites grew almost tenfold from Q4 2008 to Q4 2009. This increase has definitely been driven by the growth in the number of WAP sites being developed and tracked by OPA members, with more than 71 registered WAP sites now being measured by Nielsen Online. Other factors affecting mobile traffic include an increase in the number of web-enabled handsets in the marketplace, growth in the number of South Africans accessing the mobile internet, and a move by many OPA members to detect mobile browsers on their websites and to redirect visitors accessing via their phones to their related WAP destinations.

Online traffic across both the PC and mobile web looks set to continue to increase in 2010 as more South Africans benefit from expanded bandwidth and the lower costs of uncapped ADSL recently introduced by leading service providers. "This important new industry development should favourably impact the number of pages viewed by browsers, the length of time they spend online, and their willingness to engage with higher bandwidth components such as online video. All these factors will enhance advertisers' opportunities to engage and interact with connected South Africans," concluded Dempers.

Please see graphs below.





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