

Local newspapers - modest heroes in SA's media landscape

Issued by [Spark Media](#)

30 Aug 2021

Spark Media hosted Dr Jammie, director and chief economist of Econometrix who presented an informative view on Media Spend: Opportunities in challenging times.



On 26 August, Dr Jammie presented yet another enlightening Zoom webinar, this time to a media and advertising audience. He shared some profound views on the local economy, its trajectory and the implications of media spend.

Outlining how the recent unrest and looting had a short-term impact on the economy which should not be exaggerated, Dr Jammie showed that 10% to 15% of the economy was directly affected and the value of looted goods was around R2bn. The infrastructural destruction has been valued at R20bn to R30bn (which does not impact GDP) and the disruption of supply chains (ports and roads) have more severe long-term implications.

The most damaging effect is the knock-on investor confidence, which will have a longer-term impact on investment. However, international investors might be impressed by our country's commitment to the constitution and the rule of law. The recent looting has resulted in a consolidation of President Ramaphosa's powerbase and antipathy towards the RET (Radical Economic Transformation) faction in the ANC which could restore faith.

Ultimately, it seems that the impressive spirit of unity within communities to clean up and oppose the orchestrators' mayhem is what many proud South Africans are holding onto.

Adspend during this volatile time was obviously negatively affected. Print advertising suffered losses, mostly from the retail sector (its major advertisers) as during the pandemic, general dealers selling food and groceries were finding advertising less of a priority. Some retail categories were not operational during hard lockdowns and did not advertise as a result and most recently the uncertainty and stockouts led to a pull-back in some campaigns.

Digital advertising saw increases during this time. But a word of caution on the effects of spending too much hard-earned South African Rands on the Tech Giants – they don't pay taxes within our borders and that adspend leaves our shores without being re-invested in the local economy.

On the contrary, local newspapers contribute directly to the employment of vigilant journalists, who fact-check news, pay tax and stimulate local business in various communities across SA. Local newspapers play a role in levelling the playing field for small businesses. They are a vehicle for the promotion of corporate social responsibility, the betterment of communities and a watchdog on the authorities.

With the sense of community spirit increasing, the role of local newspapers is set to increase. Citizens of various communities actively protected “their” malls because they are aware of the cyclical consequences of the destruction.

It therefore still makes sense to advertise in local newspapers. As the dominant print media type, 4.9 million local newspapers are distributed across the country, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations (Q2 2021). Local journalists are trained to discern the truth and highlight corruption. Newspapers carry the cost of newsrooms which are responsible for verifying facts, which in turn increases consumer trust levels and mitigates the risk of spreading misleading information from unverified sources.

As advertisers and media professionals, we too should be held accountable for our decisions. Media planning has changed; it is now more short-term focused. It is important to understand that where and how we spend clients’ budgets will have consequences, some of which might only be realised when it is too late. The seemingly cheaper option now might not be the better option in the long run. If Tech Giants become too powerful, it could result in the disappearance of local journalists. Australia and France are two countries driving the call for Tech Giants to start paying for content in order to protect their news.

In South Africa, many consumers do not have the luxury of broadband internet and wi-fi at their fingertips and so a move to online advertising at the expense of print is short-sighted. We have a huge poor unemployed population who are unable to afford data costs, yet many of these communities receive a free local newspaper.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic and the recent unrest of July 2021, our marketing and media plans may have been focused on tech-enabled media, a data-driven future and even defining altruistic brand purposes... right now we should ensure that we understand our local environment as a priority. It is local consumers and local businesses that keep our economy alive – the question is do they feature in your brand plans for the future?

If your brand would like to learn more about local communities, please contact info@sparkmedia.co.za

" **Spark Media ‘leaps into local’ with comedian Themba Robin** 14 May 2024

" **Spark Media ‘leaps into local’ with new digital ad offering** 29 Feb 2024

" **New advertising opportunities for retailers as load shedding changes consumer purchase patterns** 30 Jan 2024

" **Spark Media in the 'Big Apple' for Retail's Big Show** 8 Mar 2023

" **Local papers continue to dominate as SA's top-performing print media** 1 Mar 2023

Spark Media



Spark Media, a division of Caxton & CTP Publishers and Printers Ltd, is South Africa’s largest print and digital media solutions sales company. It represents Caxton’s 115 local newspapers and 58 local websites, providing location-targeted content for brands and ad agencies at scale in 120 economically-active communities. It also produces ROOTS, SA’s leading urban, community-level quantitative survey that provides unequalled demographic and behavioural information on local consumers.

[Profile](#) | [News](#) | [Contact](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [RSS Feed](#)