

Huffington Post to empower communities



By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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The 17th edition of the Huffington Post launched this weekend in South Africa. At the launch event in Sandton at Katy's Palace Bar, chief executive officer of The Huffington Post, Jared Grusd told attendees that the "timing of this launch is great because the world needs us more than ever. We can empower your communities to make more informed decisions about their world."

Grusd, who, although was born in South Africa, has not been back to the country until now, says the media landscape in the country is changing rapidly. "There has never been a more important time for South African citizens to contribute through digital and by being local first. In this regard, we are providing blogging platforms in all the official languages of the country."

He adds that language is not only important as it allows people to express themselves comfortably, but also because the world needs a high quality of journalism. "It is about giving perspective to what is happening around us and the ability to make sense of the world that is needed. Marrying worldwide journalism with products delivers what makes people want to engage with the news. It is not the access to information that is important as much as the ability to evaluate it."

The logo for Huffington Post South Africa is displayed on a dark green rectangular background. The words "HUFF" and "POST" are stacked vertically in a large, white, serif font. Below them, the words "SOUTH AFRICA" are written in a smaller, white, serif font.

In the future, he says, this will be enhanced through storytelling using innovative technology and augmented story telling. "Through video we can provide perspective on the migrant issue, by showing in real time what happens when migrants land in Greece on the beach. This allows the reader to be immersed in the story."

Commenting on the partnership between the Huffington Post and Media24, chief executive officer of Media24, Esmare Weideman called the Huffington Post “one of the sexiest, salient and most successful digital brands in the world today”. The brand, she adds, is one that fits in perfectly with Media24’s current journey from print to digital. “Partnering with the Post shows how eager we are to change.”

Grusd adds that the partnership with Media24 will extend beyond South Africa into the continent.

The former finance minister, Trevor Manuel, expressed the opinion that the media in South Africa does not know what the media is about. “It is a difficult challenge of which language alone and communicating in one of the official languages is only part of the problem. While we might be an 11 language nation, we are not a single nation. Political parties do not speak to this reality. We need to consider where SA is now and how we talk to the issue. If not, then we fail to recognise where we come from and where we are going.”

When considering the happenings abroad in the US and Europe as well as Turkey, then he says we should be scared. “The world we knew in the wake of World War II is no longer there. The country and the world asks of us to be responsible, but we no longer know who we are.”

Where is the media in all of this? He says too often it is about selling newspapers and not understanding what our responsibilities are. “It is about the continuity of our responsibility to each other and the responsibility of togetherness and looking out for each other - to be able to talk and engage with each other and reach out across the divide. While this a big ask,” he says, “It is one this new platform in the country must take seriously.”

A panel comprising of the DA’s Pumzile van Damme, the EFF’s Mbuyiseni Ndlozi and Chester the Puppet and Conrad Koch, chaired by the Huffington Post South Africa’s new editor-in-chief, Verashni Pillay, previously editor-in-chief of the Mail & Guardian discussed politics and social issues before the keynote address by the former finance minister, Trevor Manuel.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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