

South Africa's online media increasingly well-connected

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Online media usage continues to show solid growth, according to the latest web traffic figures of South African sites, reported by members of the Online Publishers Association (OPA). The total number of visitors reported across all OPA member sites in the second quarter was 6.7 million*, compared with 4.5 million in the same quarter 2005, representing an increase in web traffic to South African sites of 48% in the last year.

A significant proportion of visitors to OPA member sites are from overseas (on average 63% of visitors), however the local audience for OPA sites has also expanded by 42.5% to 2.48 million in the last year. These figures show a clear pattern of expansion of online media usage amongst South Africans.

The growth of the online industry is welcomed by the OPA, but Internet penetration in South Africa has still to catch-up with other overseas markets. Lower income groups still remain a largely untapped market because of the cost barriers to both hardware and Internet access.

South African web users are predominantly from higher income groups based in the key urban areas of the country: Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. They typically are well-educated (82% have completed further education) and work in the office, where most Internet usage (66% of access) takes place. Gender split is almost completely equal with 51% of site visits being from males and 49% being female.

The growing adoption by this higher income group has led to a boom in online advertising which is expected to exceed R183 million by the end of 2006. However there is still much work to be done in making the online environment accessible to all South Africans.

"The latest web usage figures show online media as a mature and increasingly important media platform in South Africa. This is reflected not only in increasing consumption of online media but also in the value advertisers are placing on online campaigns. However, the challenge the industry must now overcome is removing the digital divide that exists in South Africa. This can only be removed by further driving down the costs and increasing the accessibility of online media," said Russell Hanly, Chairman of the OPA.

The OPA, that represents the key players in South African online publishing, has recently expanded its membership to include DSTv, Junkmail, New Media, Webmail and Autotrader.

*According to research by Nielsen//NetRatings.

Quarter 2, 2006, online usage figures (all visitors)

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Quarter 2, 2006, online usage figures (South African visitors)

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