

Brand safe programmatic environment grows in SA



By Paula Raubenheimer

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"Programmatic buying has proven that it's not a fad."

Programmatic buying has been a learning curve for South Africa in 2014. While there are no meaningful statistics available on the quantity of revenue flowing through real-time bidding (RTB) platforms in SA, based on discussion with buyers in the industry, there has already been huge growth in programmatic buying in 2014, but that is off a very low base in 2012 and 2013. With the global trend, as always, dictating South Africa's way forward, the market is poised to see a growth of spend in this area at a steeper curve in 2015.

While most brands are either testing or looking to test the programmatic waters, they are currently allocating small budgets to many major media buyers in South Africa to add programmatic buying to the marketing mix. Those who are not spending at the moment are certainly including programmatic spend into budgets and strategies to be implemented in the New Year. While the medium is no different to digital buys they have been making to date, programmatic buying allows buyers access to far more data than before. It is a case of working out how best to use that data to make intelligent buys that requires a deeper understanding. So it is just a new way of purchasing an already tried and tested product.



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From the publishers' perspective, while spend differs depending on the goals of the advertiser and the media mix created by the media buyer, any publisher which is not offering this as a solution is already losing digital budget. In 2015, as more media buyers equip themselves with the tools to make programmatic buys, they will be losing out on even more digital media spend. A very important aspect for publishers is that they have the technical know-how to retain control of the data collected from their users and then leverage that data to provide valuable, data-rich inventory to buyers.

We hope to see, as we have in developed markets, that publisher-digital sales teams use the efficiency of programmatic to sell the commodity of impressions and then enhance their premium sales offering by selling more creative digital solutions.

With the launch of very private (between single buyers and sellers) and private (a number of publishers and specific buyers) ad exchanges in the local environment, mitigation of risk is possible to avoid low CPMs for sellers and unsafe brand environments for buyers. Controlled, more exclusive marketplaces that local buyers and sellers can tap into will allow South Africa to grow programmatic buying in a safe environment.

The benefits of buying media in a brand-safe programmatic environment (speed of sale, impression price determined by the market and safe, accurate user data) will bring with it investment into the skill, technical ability and experience that is required for effective programmatic buying. There will be agencies or even brands that either invest time and money into creating skilled teams or make the decision to rather outsource to experts.

Either way, programmatic buying has proven that it's not a fad. We believe that an increase in understanding will grow programmatic spend as a portion of digital spend in 2015, but more importantly, grow the digital spend as part of the full marketing mix.

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Paula Raubenheimer is head of programmatic at SouthernX, The SpaceStation. Paula has a B Bus Science (Law) degree and completed Post-Graduate studies in Marketing and Advertising Communications. Before commencing with SouthernX, Paula was the group commercial director of the Habari Group. On leaving the Group in 2013, Paula launched an e-commerce store, which she made profitable after only four months of operation.

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