

DMMA provides feedback on pressing issues and trends within digital

The Digital Media and Marketing Association (DMMA) held its quarterly member briefing on the 21st of August 2012 in Johannesburg and on the 23rd of August 2012 in Cape Town.

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The briefing's schedule of events was as follows:

- **The state of online advertising and publishing** - presented by Geoff Cohen (DMMA Head of Publishers and CEO 24.com)
- **The results of the DMMA Blogger Debate and research survey findings** - presented by Suzanne Little in Cape Town (DMMA Head of Marketing and Head of Social Media at Quirk)
- **Legal issues affecting the digital and online publishing industry** - presented by Pria Chetty (Technology and Innovation Legal Advisor at PricewaterhouseCoopers)

Cohen began his presentation by stating that mainstream media was experiencing a period of massive turbulence, but explained that this was a common occurrence within the industry. "Media disruption is not a new thing- we have experienced disruption for more than 500 years, since the invention of the printing press! In our fast-paced world, the difference now is the speed and the scale of the disruption, aided by massive and consistent improvements in technology. In our era, this turbulence is predominantly caused by the emergence of digital as the fastest growth medium in the media landscape."

Advertising spend:

Online advertising spend has increased significantly since 2007, reaching a high of R700 million in 2011, according to Ad Marketing investment in the digital channels has been growing at more than 20% per year from 2007. However, when compared to the time spent across online channels as opposed to print media, the figures were still found to be disproportionately low. "Although the advertising spend is consistently increasing each year, the market is still dominated by a large number of brands engaging at low investment rates, disproportional to their investment in other mediums," explained Cohen.

Audience trends:

The amount of unique browsers has also increased over the past twelve months. The biggest percentage in audience growth was attributed to mobile, but it was once again noted that audience duplication needed to be taken into account. "We need now determine how we can use this knowledge to generate revenue," admitted Cohen.

"Publishers need to increase digital innovation, improve systems and brand engagement, know their audience and be as savvy with data as with telling stories," concluded Cohen.

Blogger survey findings:

The DMMA recently facilitated a Blogger Debate which aimed to resolve an issue that had arisen between bloggers, advertising agency and public relations agency owners, on whether bloggers were entitled to charge for promotional posts for brands or if it would result in loss of credibility. The discussion also aimed to define the rules of engagement, thus promoting an open channel of communication between the respective parties. The DMMA collated all the questions that arose during the debate and formulated an informal survey for bloggers to share their opinions. Suzanne Little presented the preliminary findings from this blogger research survey at the member briefing in Cape Town. The survey will continue to run until early November and the final results will be announced at the end of November.

The key take outs were as follows:

- **Why did you start your blog?** 81% of bloggers started their blog as a passion project; 12% to generate revenue; 5% to receive free products; and 2% for other reasons not listed.
- **Do you think an authentic opinion post is more valuable to your audience than a paid for post?** 78% said yes; 6% said no and 16% said "other".
- **Which metrics do you think should be included for measurement of your blog when motivating for remuneration?** (bloggers had the option to give multiple answers) 74% said measurement; 69% said page views; 50% said Twitter followers; 25% said bounce rate and 22% said "other".
- **In terms of being influential in specific spheres: What makes a blogger influential?** (bloggers had the option to give multiple answers) 74% said content of posts, 70% said interactions, 48% said unique views; 42% said page views; 41% said frequency of posts; 39% said Twitter followers and 9% said "other".
- **If bloggers are paid for their work, should they all subscribe to standardised rate cards?** 61% said yes; 28% said no and 11% said "other".

[Click here](#) if you are a blogger and would like to take part in the survey.

Legal issues affecting the digital and online publishing industry:

Pria Chetty, a Legal Advisor from PwC, presented on some of the issues that were impacting the digital and online publishing industry. A few of the key aspects covered were; changing revenue models in digital enforcing the need to regulate content preparing for the 'splinternet'- the battle between devices, platforms and closed communities; and a look at the value of the Creative Commons approach.

Chetty explained that digital technologies were causing a crisis in traditional media. "Digital technologies and technology convergence present formidable challenges to the industry as they erode many traditional revenue bases / business models. However, she went on to say that these technologies could present opportunities for new media. "Digital technology is broadening the consumer base."

Chetty explained that the key was for publishers to recognise and acknowledge that with the increase in digital media, there was a change in consumer behaviour. "Businesses need to respond and adapt to this if they want to be successful and ultimately remain relevant in this space," concluded Chetty.

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