Creating a brand safe environment for advertisers in Africa

By Louise Marsland

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Julian Jordaan, commercial director of 365 Digital, talks to Bizcommunity.Africa about the need to create brand safe, trusted, premium digital advertising inventory across Africa, by introducing programmatic ad buying. 365 Digital, supported by Google, recently conducted Ad Tech Masterclasses in Nigeria, aimed at "fostering a greater unified online advertising ecosystem and to bring about digital transformation to local online publishers in monetisation and ad technology".

Ad Tech Masterclass in Nigeria.

The Ad Tech Masterclass was attended by 60 of Nigeria's largest and most influential publishers, such as, *Punch Nigeria, Nigerian Tribune*, Ringier, and *The Guardian*. The full day masterclass covered:

- Website monetisation and developing a holistic approach to revenue generation.
- Ad technology and building for the future.

Are you running these Masterclasses in other markets, or is Nigeria the first?

The first masterclass ran in Johannesburg on the 19^{th} February, in collaboration with Google at their Johannesburg offices and was attended by 50 of South Africa's most influential publishers. Our intention is to host the masterclasses in South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya

Why is it so important to introduce programmatic ad buying across Africa?

There is a great need for brand safe, trusted, premium digital ad inventory in Africa. Advertisers wanting to tap into the Sub Saharan Africa audiences have been met with challenges of brand safety, scale and of course finding premium inventory. Our solution to this is to educate publishers on global ad standards, i.e. advertising best practices, ad technology and monetisation and then to assist them on the journey of offering their inventory to advertisers. The pivot from Direct Insertion to Programmatic Direct ad buying has accelerated over the past two years, with most global agencies and brands able to execute programmatic direct campaigns (Preferred Deals and Programmatic Guaranteed); some even choosing to only execute via programmatic direct. eMarketer in their 2018 *US Digital Programmatic Digital Ad Spending 2016-2020* report projects that in 2019 Programmatic Ad Spend will represent 84.5% of all digital ad spend – that leaves 15.5% to direct insertions. If publishers do not offer their inventory the way the buyers prefer to buy it, they will lose out on revenue opportunities. It is a matter of necessity that publishers make the shift to full programmatic enablement.

Unpack what a "brand safe" environment is for brands?

Guilty by association – the rise of programmatic RTB (open exchange) advertising has seen brands finding their ads appearing next to questionable, inappropriate or illegal content. The brand's reputation and consumer trust suffers because of the association. Brands worldwide are moving ad budgets to safer, more secure environments such as Programmatic Direct where they know exactly where their ads are displayed. Unilever recently announced that it will now handpick publishers to form a "trusted publishers" network where it will spend most of their marketing budget, in an attempt to improve effectiveness of its digital advertising. Moving forward. Unilever will conduct most of its digital ad campaigns via Programmatic Direct (Private Marketplaces or PMP).

What is the current environment for brands advertising with publishers across Africa?

Locally there are a handful of publishers that are able to offer their inventory via Programmatic Direct or PMP – we're talking about the top 10 publishers that have this capability. This means that the rest of the thousands of publishers which traditionally sell their inventory via Direct Insertion will either have to continue to sell in that manner, at the risk of not garnering the budgets from global advertisers, or they will have to make the shift and sell programmatically. The challenge for publishers is the lack of understanding of the programmatic technology, the access to this technology and finally the resource run the technology and sell the inventory programmatically.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mix magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMCG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.

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