

Market leader AutoTrader breaks records again

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In South Africa the used car market contributes billions of rands per month to the country's economy, with market leader AutoTrader accounting for more than 80% of available used car stock and attracting an audience of millions of consumers each month. Today, as the dust begins to settle on the seismic event that is the national lockdown, [George Mienie](#), AutoTrader CEO, looks back at the company's most successful year to date, and provides meaning behind the numbers.

South Africa's largest automotive marketplace has driven over 3.5 million enquiries to vehicle sellers in the last 12 months. In addition to this achievement, 80% of all vehicles listed on AutoTrader were sold in the past 12 months.

Overall traffic is one of the broadest metrics the company records, and here AutoTrader attracted an average of over eight million visits per month, which is a 49% increase year-on-year. To Mienie, however, measuring traffic on its own is not enough.

"While traffic is an important measure, it's not where value lies," he explains. "Looking at one month or one metric in isolation never tells the full story, as it does not give context."

In order to deepen the company's analytic gaze, AutoTrader has invested in Google Analytics 360, which provides the most advanced website analytics available to the market.

"Google Analytics 360 allows us to predict consumer needs in real-time by connecting the dots across all the moments that influence a purchase," says Mienie. "Understanding behaviour and consumer response is a big step towards measuring the efficiency and relevance of what we are offering consumers and then assisting them to make informed vehicle buying decisions."

AutoTrader's actual search volume figures drill a little closer to the heart of consumer intent, and here the site's statistics have increased by 55% year-on-year. Consumer Advert Views (CAVs), potentially the final step between browsing and the buying process, increased by 71% year-on-year.

"But audience statistics are essentially a vanity metric," says Mienie. "At AutoTrader we focus on bringing quality, in-market car shoppers to our car sellers."

While traffic, search and vehicle enquiries are good quantifiers of performance, Mienie cautions that they are not the end of the analytical trail. "Car sales are the ultimate attribution of success. Maintaining growth in an established industry requires diverse inputs, across a broad range of consumer engagement platforms," he comments.

This year, the company recorded a 586 million reach via its public relations efforts, which equates to over R73m in promotion for SA's auto brands. AutoTrader's social media following increased to over 635,000 followers across various platforms, it nabbed third place in the YouTube advertisements leaderboard 'Q1 2020: South Africa, highest in automotive', and it became the first automotive marketplace to set up a regular podcast show, #AutoCentral, in South Africa.

Data is the new fuel for any business in the 21st century. The second [AutoTrader Car Industry Report](#), used by the motor industry to help inform business decisions, was published. "It provides invaluable insights into current trends and statistics pertaining to the South African motor industry. This report – which contains a wealth of information and data – is fast becoming recognised as an invaluable tool to players within our complex and rapidly changing automotive industry," Mienie explains.

Many more people are also searching specifically for the AutoTrader brand when looking to buy or sell their car. “We see this as a sign of trust, which is a very important factor for any online business. But it is but especially important for our business as our promise to consumers is that we are the most trusted motoring marketplace,” Mienie points out.

Stepping back to view AutoTrader’s performance as a whole, Mienie sees the emergence of a full picture that has been a long time coming. “The national lockdown was a black swan event, met by systems and a strong brand, already geared to meet consumers’ diverse demands,” he notes.

The success of the business, however, is ultimately measured by bringing car buyers and sellers together seamlessly. “But it’s trust and transparency that generate these long term, and multiple factors that drive that state of mind. That’s the true meaning behind our numbers. It is about understanding the consumer car shopping journey through measuring it in all its complexity, and then improving each month and year to deliver more and more value to our customers. Our efforts were well aligned before the lockdown began and this has served us well throughout the year,” Mienie concludes.

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