

Data takes the crown as a top 2018 digital trend

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As we embark on a new year, Pilira Mwambala, Ad Operations Director at [Mark1](#) - a cutting-edge digital media execution business, shares the top digital trends for 2018 and beyond. According to Mwambala there has been an upsurge in disruptive digital technology and innovations like VR, AR, AI, chatbots, blockchain, native ads, wearable technology and many others.



“We’ve witnessed the mobile device continue to give birth to a wide variety of key developments which allow consumers faster access to the world of convenience. We’re living in a data-driven world and I believe data will not just be a trend for 2018 but the core of all things digital and online,” he says.

He notes that today’s online advertisers are willing to pay top dollar for audience data that yields optimal return on investment (ROI) for their brand. Yet on the flipside, media owners are investing in both the technology and the people who can mine massive amounts of data and segment this into “off-the-shelf” commodities that can benefit advertisers with large wallets.

While players within the complex and dynamic digital marketing ecosystem strive to connect the puzzle pieces, consumers continue to generate, access and share massive volumes of online data. Online information, entertainment and education is available at the touch of a button. In the pursuit of unlocking the online marketing mix, Mwambala says online marketers have seen that data leads to understanding patterns within user behaviour.

The shapeshifting trend in online data stems from huge volumes of data that arise from free online apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Skype, Google (Gmail, YouTube, Google Maps), and so much more.

He says data from the [Winterberry Group, the IAB and the DMA](#) shows that in 2017, US marketers alone would’ve spent around \$10 billion on third-party data. Another \$10.13 billion will additionally be spent by US marketers on activation efforts to yield practical ROI from data insights. Overall, the digital ad industry worldwide is booming and digital ad spending is increasing.

In June 2017, IAB UK reported that the UK digital advertising market was worth [£5.56 billion](#). Q1 of 2017 marked the highest ever Q1 earnings for digital advertising in the US, hitting [\\$19.6 billion](#), according to IAB’s Internet Advertising Revenue Report. South Africa also witnessed a healthy growth of digital ad spending to the value of [R3.95 billion](#) with mobile, social media and paid search being key contributors.

In this article Mwambala shares his digital predictions for 2018 - data takes the crown.

Ads.txt:

A rise in online data transactions has expanded online marketplaces. Unfortunately, this rise brought with it an increase in counterfeit inventory across the internet. [WhiteOps projected](#) \$6.5 billion in financial losses for 2017, in the US alone due to ad fraud. Fortunately, IAB’s TechLab responded with a solution to combat domain spoofing. Online publishers are urged to implement a small text file on their properties which allows buyers to verify the authenticity and legitimacy of a seller’s inventory source. To date, around 30,000 premium publishers have implemented the ads.txt initiative and this trend will gain huge momentum in 2018 as both AppNexus and Google continue to drive the adoption of this initiative, highlighting transparency and brand safety.

GDPR:

Privacy, as well as data protection are key in the online advertising ecosystem. The quest to deliver relevant ads to consumers relies on tracking and measuring users' online browsing habits via cookie data analysis. For advertisers to effectively measure the success of data enrichment requires a comprehensive understanding of behavioural targeting. Enters GDPR. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a hot trend for 2018. GDPR as a legislation in EU for now, is a regulator for all digital marketing stakeholders to be accountable for data protection and safeguarding of personally identifiable information (PII). Cookie IDs will no longer be assumed as anonymous data. The European digital advertising ecosystem has until 25 May 2018 to fully comply or face fines of up to 4% of all global annual turnover (or [€20m - whichever is greater](#)).

Mobile data: #DataMustFall

South African retailers continue to push high-end mobile devices into the market. Pricing is no longer the biggest barrier to entry; the price of data is. Top-notch devices demand unlimited data or a Wi-Fi connection, all luxuries to the average person in South Africa. As much as we're seeing an increase in public Wi-Fi access in malls, business centres and universities, the price of data in South Africa is still high, compared to other countries on the continent, as well as globally. The IAB South Africa is a signatory to the [Issue Paper on Perspectives on universal free access to online information](#) and it's refreshing to see this industry body advocate for the acceleration of having internet access be declared amongst the basic human rights. Access to affordable mobile data and a growth in public Wi-Fi will help uplift the socio-economic issues that South Africa faces, opening wider doors to online education, online access to government departments and information-sharing.

"2018 will be interesting for the digital marketing landscape in South Africa. Data science and data analytics are poised to grow as there is a demand to tame big data. As the momentum of connected devices grows, so does the need for education and understanding of this paradigm shift," Mwambala says.

He says digital media stakeholders in South Africa will need to continue investing in data mining, machine learning, natural language processing, statistics and data visualisations. This is key for South Africa being a mobile first country, generating huge volumes of data on a daily basis.

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