

Simon Dingle on how media is being reimagined in the 21st century

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

25 Nov 2019

With his characteristic dry, wry wit in full force, I sat down with entrepreneur-at-heart Simon Dingle for an exclusive interview after his Catalyst Africa presentation, on why an open internet that connects people is a winner for every industry.



Simon Dingle, in action at Catalyst Africa.

An interview with Simon Dingle is always a treat. Known by most as former host of (tech)5 on 5FM, his fast speech is peppered with his own observations as well as interesting factoids you probably wouldn't have heard anywhere else. And when he goes off on a tangent, he always finds a way to weave it back into the original topic.

So, whether you're spending five minutes or five hours with him, you're sure to walk away thinking about the world and how it works in a different way, as Dingle is not only interesting to talk to, but always interested in how we can do things better, especially when it involves fintech.

For example, his current project [Lettuce](#) is aimed at improving the world of money, and he was part of the teams that started 22seven and Luno, which streamlined fintech acceptance in SA.



#BizTrends2019: It's all about fintech

Dominique Collett 14 Jan 2019



Here's the highlights package of my recent chat with Dingle post-Catalyst Africa...

 ***We first chatted about a decade ago. What would you say has been the biggest tech catalyst since then?***

For me, personally, it's been cryptocurrency, because I've been working with it for the better part of the last decade. More

fundamentally, it's been seeing the internet continue to spread and transform industry.



Cryptocurrency advertising is an emerging industry

Craig Lebrau, Lebrau Press 4 Nov 2019



What we're currently doing with blockchain and associated technologies wouldn't be possible without the internet. We're still seeing battle lines around anachronistic ideas of intranets, for example, being reintroduced now as terrible ideas, like private blockchains.

The same companies that were selling snake oil to enterprises in the software space, with service-orientated architecture and other crap 15 years ago, are now trying to sell their crap under the guise of blockchain, and it's still crap.



The rise of the internet class

Damon Stapleton 26 Sep 2018



Luckily they're not doing so as convincingly anymore. Many chief information officers (CIOs) didn't know what the hell they were buying 15 years ago, and could afford to spend R100m on technology they were never going to use in the organisation.

Now, that ship has sailed. It's a very different world today.



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Danette Breitenbach 20 Sep 2019



That said, it's the open internet that still wins in every single example. Your company doesn't need, nor should it want, an intranet. Your company does not need, nor should it want, a private blockchain. The same goes for the country.

A good gauge for me is whether the latest iteration is something that connects people, whether it's giving us a global way to transact, or if it's just creating new domains and more siloes and loci of control.

#CatalystAfrica: Simon Dingle debunks fintech and cryptocurrency myths





Leigh Andrews 12 Nov 2019



If it's the latter, I don't think it deserves our support. If it's the former, you're literally on the money.

The internet gives us the platform to do that in any industry imaginable, and cryptocurrency is how we do that with money. That's been the biggest catalyst, both in my personal life and career-wise over the past decade.

■ **Interesting. Two of the points that resonated with me from your Catalyst Africa talk were on the news and storytelling link, as well as the 'borderless-ness' of the world. Please comment on the role of the media as a catalyst for growth, and how we often get it wrong.**

This is something very close to my heart, as I come from a media background, and I worked as a journalist for a very long time. My startup called [Lionheart](#) is looking at tackling some of these problems.

“ *Lionheart is a platform that makes it easy for individuals to support the journalists and investigators fighting fake news, corrupt politicians, dictatorial regimes, censorship and bad business.* ”

We have some interesting ideas but it's early days, so I'll reveal more later down the line.



Put truth first in news reporting and information-sharing in general

Leigh Andrews 18 Oct 2018



Back to the question at hand, I feel there's a perception out there that "the media has let us down".

This is true in some examples, but I also think that societally, we have let the media down.



The age of the artificial; the proliferation of 'fake'

Molly Fitz-Patrick, Red & Yellow 3 Sep 2019



Journalists are underpaid and expected, in some cases, to risk their lives to expose the truth, especially with Trump in the USA telling us "journalists are the enemy of the people". It's a pernicious and dangerous lie that we need to stomp on as soon as possible.

“ *I'm incredibly disheartened by this era of fake news and the idea that the media is the enemy and never gets it right.* ”

Certainly, the part about 'never getting it right' is likely true to an extent, but that to me is more a story of under-resourcing and the fundamental changes that have taken place, to what it means to be a journalist in the 21st century.

Future of Journalism: Media funding crisis runs deep

Danette Breitenbach 23 Sep 2019





It's interesting seeing how media has changed, and who the media has become.

For example, take the rise of podcasting, where the top five podcasts in the world feature episodes that are at least an hour long, sometimes 2.5 hours long.



#Bookmarks2019: Bravery in telling stories without fear or favour

Jessica Tennant 16 Apr 2019



We've replaced the cheap and pointless five-minute discussions with long narrative, long-form conversations around a single topic, where we actually gain a better-than-average understanding of that topic.

“ There is nothing so simple that you can reduce it to a two-minute soundbite on radio or TV, and that's what we're used to seeing from the news now, as everything is more complicated and in-depth than that timeframe allows for. ”

So, I'm also optimistic about how media is being reimagined in the 21st century. What I think is missing is some of the rigour and discipline of traditional journalism in terms of verifying facts, querying sources and, most importantly, fighting against the taint of advertising in the media.



Progressing the podcast bubble with the basics on Binary.fm

Leigh Andrews 13 May 2015



To me, the story of fake news is the story of how we've allowed the advertising industry to take crappy technology and reshape our entire lives around it.

That's the reason I won't use Facebook or Instagram, which I see as one of the most perniciously evil things ever invented.



Could crypto incentives help fight Facebook's fake news epidemic?

Bruce Silcoff 23 Apr 2019



We need to start, as a society, moving away from platforms that are advertising-supported and towards platforms that are audience-supported.

That's why I'm so excited about podcasting. Sam Harris runs '[Making Sense](#)', one of the biggest podcasts in the world.



How membership is becoming a sustainable business model for public interest journalism

Juanita Pienaar 2 Oct 2019



Whether you agree with his views or not, there's a lot of misunderstanding around the man.

But his model of audience-supported media means that when I listen to his podcast, I know that none of his opinions are being formed or influenced by a mattress company or underpants company trying to sell their thing in that time – interestingly, these are literally the two top advertisers in the world of podcasting.



Direct marketing advice from Seth Godin

Leigh Andrews 10 Nov 2015



I know I'm hearing Harris's opinions, pure and simple. We need more of that in the media.

■ ***Linked to that, you also mentioned the ever-shortening attention span in your presentation. How do brands then cut through that clutter and get 'chosen'? It's a question we keep asking...***

And it's a question I'll keep answering. The answer is, "with excellent products".



#BizTrends2018: Rewind from attention spam back to attention span

Leigh Andrews 8 Jan 2018



The product or service you're offering should speak for itself. That's always been the case.

“ *It's more fake news spread by the advertising industry that you simply can't run a business without advertising.* ”

You can, as good products speak for themselves and don't need advertising. I will fight that point to the death!

“ *“Brand Trust” - newcartoon and post on the growing trust gap in how consumers feel about brands and marketing*
<https://t.co/iICTqgxLSX#marketing#cartoon#marketoan pic.twitter.com/91Fc0JAEYS>— Tom Fishburne (@tomfishburne)
[November 24, 2019](#) ”

Part of a product being good is not just in what it enables and the technology it incorporates, but also in the story that it tells.

Again, you'll get the advertising industry telling you that they are fundamental to how you tell that story – bulls#it.



The best of times and the worst of times for journalism

Juanita Pienaar 14 Nov 2018



Good products tell their own stories, run their own communities, have their own audiences and don't need crappy technology to show ads on social media feeds.

Dingle certainly tells it like it is. Don't look for him on Facebook or Instagram, as he's not there – follow his [Twitter feed](#) for the latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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