

Status quo of QR Code

The rebirth of the Quick Response (QR) Code is beginning in South Africa, where most people know it as a square, barcode-like pattern seen at points of sale or in apps like BlackBerry Messenger. The latter represented many South Africans' first exposure to QR Codes, when it became the quickest way to add a friend on BBM.



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In the past year, however, it has quietly gained new life as mobile apps such as SnapScan roped it in for payments at small merchants, flea markets and the like. It has also been appearing on print advertising, posters and window displays throughout the country. The upcoming release of the Online Retail in South Africa 2015 study by World Wide Worx will elaborate on the return of this app.

By the end of 2014, more than 2.1-million South Africans were using QR Codes, even as a debate raged around the question, "Are QR Codes dead?" Of these users, 1.1-million were male, with female users only marginally behind, at 1.04-million.

"Mobile payment systems are quickly becoming mainstream, and it will be fascinating to see how the more mechanical systems like QR Codes compete," says World Wide Worx managing director Arthur Goldstuck. "Ideally, there should be room for any system, with each one finding its ideal niche. But there are no certainties in a sector that is moving so fast."

QR Code usage is strongly age-related, with 673,000 users in the peak age group of 25-34. In contrast, the 15-24 segment amounts to only 471,000, while 494,000 are aged from 35 to 44. A similar amount of 425,000 makes up the 45-65 age group. Usage drops significantly with retirement age: the 65+ age group comprises 88,000 users.

Details coming in June 2015

A detailed breakdown of QR Code usage and demographics will be included in Online Retail in South Africa 2015, which will be released in June 2015.

The report is based on primary research by technology market research leaders World Wide Worx, as well as collaboration with Ask Afrika, the leading market research organisation on the continent. Data from Ask Afrika's Target Group Index (TGI), a research project with a sample of more than 15,000 respondents annually, will provide demographic and behavioural components of the report.

"TGI is a single-source database that provides brand and product consumption trends for South African consumers, coupled with detail around spending and retail shopping habits of South Africans that can be tracked over time," says Andrea Rademeyer, CEO and founder of Ask Afrika. "It allows us to build benchmarks and currency data which are both reliable and up-to-date. The partnership with World Wide Worx feeds directly into this purpose and we are thrilled to be working with Arthur Goldstuck."

World Wide Worx is collaborating with Ask Afrika to refine the communications, electronics and technology elements of TGI, in order to produce the most detailed picture yet of the digital habits of South Africans. The TGI research is conducted in two six-month "waves" every year, with a nationally representative sample of more than 7500 respondents in each wave.

The resultant data will be included in World Wide Worx's annual reports on Internet Access, Online Retail, Social Media and Online Banking in South Africa, among other. World Wide Worx will also collaborate with Ask Afrika on a Digital Barometer, to provide a clear understanding of the digital evolution of the South African consumer.

"The partnership with Ask Afrika represents the beginning of a new era for World Wide Worx," says Goldstuck. "We have the ability to adjust the survey instrument in line with new technologies and resultant changes in user behaviour as they emerge, which means we will have unprecedented insights into the way South Africans interact with digital and electronic products and services."

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