

Global trends that will impact SA's creative industry

 By [Johanna McDowell](#)

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Although South Africa has many different issues from more developed countries in Europe and North America, some of the global trends that have emerged from there will have an impact in time in this country.



Johanna McDowell, Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS), and Partner in Scopen Africa, examines global trends that will impact the local creative industry

Sustainability and purpose

Sustainability and purpose were two key trends we observed at the recent Ad Forum Summit in Amsterdam where many of the 15 agencies that we met demonstrated their intentions around these two trends not only in the work that they were producing for brands but also in the way they behave as businesses.

Whether through employment policies, level of HR support for staff, interaction with the broader business community, the kind of power they use in their buildings, I had the sense that these agencies were able to be very focused on much broader issues than the day-to-day operational issues that might negatively affect them.

South Africa is not in such a position as we deal with the never-ending power cuts and economic conditions largely rooted in bad government policies and levels of corruption which seem to be pervasive.

Nonetheless, the global trends are being observed and there is a growing consciousness about the need for cleaner energy, sustainable power sources and even the possibilities of a four-day working week.



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In-housing agencies

On a more operational level, we see that the in-housing of agencies trend that emerged a few years ago – although truth be

told there has always been some sort of in-housing work being done by marketers if mainly executional only – continues to provoke discussion and interest from marketers and that aspects of digital marketing are starting to go in house for some clients.

The challenge here always is the shortage of talent, the opportunities for digital nomads who can work remotely from South Africa anywhere in the world and earn currency that is far more favourable than rands.

While this global trend exists everywhere it is exacerbated in South Africa by the amount of people who are emigrating – the current brain drain.

This definitely already has had an impact – not only on talent for in-housing purposes but also for talent in agencies in general and also within the marketing environment.

As far as in-housing as a trend is concerned it will expand and contract continuously – especially as the short-term cost savings do not necessarily get replicated in future years.



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Value of creativity

One of my colleagues at the AAR recently wrote a crystal-ball gazing piece where he mentioned the many factors affecting our industry and what could happen in 2023, and yet he commented how little attention was being paid to the value of creativity and how brands can employ this to achieve their marketing and business ambitions.

Interestingly I read a recent comment by a local agency leader who believes that the pendulum has swung too far to “all things digital” which probably has been caused by the current obsession with ROI and ROAS (return on ad spend).

I think he may be right and that the pendulum might swing back a little during 2023 more to bigger ideas and higher levels of creativity in order to build brands for the longer term.

Skills shortage impact on growth

On that note the question is being raised constantly here in South Africa about the skills shortage in the marketing community and that there are middle to senior marketing managers who have not been fully equipped with the skills they need to practice marketing at a level that will promote growth - the all important factor in our economy here in South Africa and of course globally. Unless these marketers are better equipped – and perhaps this is where agencies could assist – the

skills shortage will have a long-term impact on the growth of this economy.

These trends are quite serious, not light-hearted and frivolous. I do believe it is because we are in an era of post-pandemic re adjustment which will take us a few more years to navigate before we can finally look back and realise that we all came through it in one way or another -and hopefully better for having had what was a cataclysmic experience.

ABOUT JOHANNA MCDOWELL

MD of the Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS), and partner in Scopen Africa, with a background that includes being on both the agency and the client side of the fence, Johanna McDowell is well-placed to offer commentary on marketing and advertising in the South African and international contexts. She built her career in marketing and advertising since 1974, holding directorship in both SA and British advertising agencies. She was MD of Grey Phillips Advertising in 1988.

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