

6 pitfalls tripping up your digital marketing plans

By [Roan Mackintosh](#)

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Roan Mackintosh, managing director - Africa at Incubeta, re-visits his 2023 BizTrends predictions in a year that has delivered so much upheaval to the local market, that it demanded an update.



Source: © 123rf [123rf](#) Roan Mackintosh, MD - Africa at Incubeta, re-visits his 2023 BizTrends predictions

With the amount of uncertainty in our local and global environment, business leaders who are rigid in their views and unable to course correct are the ones who will lose out to their more nimble competitors.

Today agility is one of the most important attributes of successful businesses.

Incubeta's 2023 predictions focused on how to de-risk business to deal with uncertainty. At the time we had no idea just how mercurial the year would be, and so it's important to take stock at the halfway mark.



#BizTrends2023: Brands need a resolute attitude, but opportunities still abound

Roan Mackintosh 27 Jan 2023



Six trends to make corrections

Here are six trends that can help leaders make the necessary corrections to get the most out of the rest of 2023.

1. Mistaking marketing for a cost centre

Counterparts in the UK and other regions are seeing big budget cuts, with some clients pulling the plug on all their digital efforts. While the marketing industry in South Africa is obviously suffering, with budget reductions of between 20 and 30 percent, we are still doing better than many other regions and this should give us much to be hopeful about.

However, one big challenge is that marketing departments are still viewed as cost centres rather than revenue generating, and so when cuts need to be made they are easy targets. We have seen that the brands that are

weathering the current economic storm (and even pulling ahead of competitors) are the ones that are leaning into the opportunities that digital marketing offers, rather than a place to trim operational budgets.

2. We are a global village

While many people are dismissive about the knock-on impact of macro issues such as supply chain disruption and the war in Ukraine, South Africa is being impacted.

One trend we are seeing is that companies have been dealing with some rude awakenings when it comes to just how much the larger economic trends are impacting us all. For instance, the automotive industry took a big knock during the global microchip shortage. Similarly, retail margins continue to take a pounding as stores shell out profits to keep the lights on and fridges cold.

Business leaders should be wary of thinking they are impervious to macro changes and should be building resilience into their marketing efforts.

3. DIY will come back to haunt you

One big pitfall that the downturn has brought with it has been brands thinking they can do things themselves. Hiring a friend of a friend who can run some Google ads may get you through in the short term, but the algorithmic consequences will be felt after a few months. Trying to course-correct these short-term moves is difficult and takes some time, so think before you opt for the quick fix.

4. Being dumb about data

Doing more with less is also being felt in the project work, with some brands putting the brakes on tech investments. This could be online and offline integrations or tech implementations needed to help with data insights.

This can end up costing companies in the short- and long-term because being smart with data insights is what is helping many businesses get the most out of their spend and should be seen as an operational investment.

5. Online and offline disconnect costing brands

One of the biggest trends we are seeing relates to brands failing to invest in one of their biggest assets - their online channels. We are always surprised at how some brands are still focused almost exclusively on their flagship brick and mortar outlets, often at the expense of their online channels.

This is despite all the data pointing to a significant boost in online sales as customers choose digital over physical. This local trend is also a global one and a consumer survey conducted late last year found that not only was inflation

changing how consumers spend their money, but also where.

Around 30% of the survey respondents said they were buying no-name store products instead of their normal branded products and almost a fifth said they would be reducing in-person shopping visits in favour of digital buying. Neglecting digital channels also damages brand image and many local brands end up paying more to course-correct after they've lost momentum due to ill-considered cuts.



The year machines got smart and digital marketing came out on top

Roan Mackintosh 15 Feb 2023



6. AI shortcuts could come back to bite you

No predictions update would be complete without mentioning AI and how it has rocketed up board agendas. We've all been hearing about companies that have fired entire ad copy teams and replaced them with ChatGPT with a one-person oversight team to check copy.

Right now this may sound quite tantalising to those looking at keeping costs in check, but we will almost certainly start seeing the consequences in the near future and we can expect the pendulum to swing back to human workers again.

Tough for business

There's no doubt that 2023 has been tough for businesses everywhere. And indicators aren't pointing to a quick recovery.

But digital marketing still offers one of the best returns and cutting back on planned investments flies in the face of logic.

After all, your customers are also trying to box smart and will be relying on digital channels to help them make the best purchasing decisions possible. Having a sub-par digital showing will be handing your competitors the winning edge they're looking for, without them having to spend a cent.

ABOUT ROAN MACKINTOSH

Managing Director - Africa at Incubeta. Roan joined Incubeta in May 2019 after spending 11 years at WPP's global digital marketing technology and consultancy arm, Acceleration, where he was group business director. Roan's extensive experience as well as his insatiable curiosity have helped hone his skills in digital strategy and mobile advertising, making him a valuable industry commentator.

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