

# Breadth of digital choices creating confusion

Among the first insights from ongoing fieldwork for Agency Scope South Africa 2021/2022 - the fourth edition of the biennial study that provides insights into current trends defining marketers' most pressing concerns and solutions - a particular and pervasive mood across the industry stands out

 By [Johanna McDowell](#) 27 Aug 2021

The necessary changes imposed by the pandemic among marketing and creative agencies were acute and sometimes overwhelming. Suddenly, the essential topics became “agility”, “new normal” and “digital”. Adaptation and change was rapid and one key – and unexpected - impact is “uncertainty”.

Our first glance at study responses indicates that many chief marketing officers (CMOs) are feeling uncertain when it comes to choices. Considerations around digital, the various platforms and channels and feeling like they can't decide on a good media or digital plan because they simply don't have enough in-depth knowledge, have CMOs feeling unsure.



MARKETING

The power of knowing: First insights from Agency Scope UK 2021/2022

Johanna McDowell 29 Jun 2021



Apprehension about being totally reliant on the agencies and a feeling that they can't even really debate or argue with their agencies due to insufficient knowledge has left marketers less convinced of making the optimal decisions because they simply are not sure.

This reliance on their agencies, manifesting in a degree of uncertainty, appears to be growing as a topical marketing issue.

With so many platforms and channels in the mix and no time to have really gleaned enough knowledge of all of them means that marketers are even somewhat unsure of how to question or debate what their agencies are telling them.

In a sense, it's this lack of clarity that is making marketers relook at their relationships with media agencies as they look for who can assist them, besides their creative agencies.

At first glance, I'd suggest that working from this platform of uncertainty will encourage greater collaboration by marketers with their media agencies because of the tools and information that those agencies have available. It's a trend we have already seen take place in the UK, and could it be a sign of what's to come in South Africa.

The media agency's core function is to review all media options, and the CMO's reliance will be on doing the job thoroughly which will also include the many – and growing - digital media options.

Decrypting their uncertainty will likely mean marketers combining the guidance given to them by both media and creative agencies as they learn the ropes of the “now normal” world.

## ABOUT JOHANNA MCDOWELL

MD of the Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS), and partner in Scopem 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. [View my profile and articles...](#)