

Going beyond the so-called "new normal"

 By [Loyiso Twala](#)

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Kicking off in Wuhan, China's open-air "wet markets" in December of 2019, Covid-19 spread faster and wider than anything I have ever seen. When it hit, it landed a big blow with what started out as a 21-day lockdown in March of 2020 in Mzansi; lasting as long as April 2022 when the National State of Disaster was ended by our dear President.



Loyiso Twala, McCann Joburg's chief creative officer, examines what the new normal means to the creative industry

After all we endured, we have been left with this ever-buzzing buzz phrase, "the new normal". I think of it as the awkward state of going back to how things used to be, whilst embracing the open mind of how new or renewed things could be now as we shape our future. It is in this spirit that I view the trends that I have spotted going into 2023 and possibly well beyond it.

Much like Covid-19, they make a big impact and lead us into a new normal we sometimes never even knew we've always wanted.

Micro trend: The age of the adaptive logo

In a time where many disruptive brands are entering the market and many heritage brands are rebranding, it's relevant to highlight a design trend. 3D logos reigned supreme when design software advances made computer-generated imagery and its effects great for highly embellished graphics.

Around 10 years ago, when Apple updated to iOS 7, flat 2D logo designs took centre stage, helping to improve storage capacity for icons and imagery within the smartphone device's limited space. 2D is modern and 3D is outdated.

Recently, we've seen adaptive logos show up in a highly responsive world, where the logo isn't one single graphic but a graphic mark whose form can adapt depending on the context it is being seen in. This offers static logos a way of living in different iterations which gives them an animated quality. A trend I am happy to see growing.

Macro trends

- **Purpose is the product or service**



Courtesy of Whitney Museum

In the past brands commonly competed and lead with differentiation. I propose a trend that is noticeably different today.

As seen in recent times with the Grand Prix winners at Cannes Lions, the highest accolade for creative communication that drives progress, purpose is what gets

the awards for work that is not focused on typically selling a product or service but rather the heart and soul of the brand with broader impact relevant to the brand.

It's not about differentiation, but distinction discovered through insight and data sources to give the communication the edge it needs. And it's not creative for creative sake.

It's been proven that award-winning creative has up to 54% higher ROI than other work. This past year, out of the thousands of entries received, only 3% won. The most awarded piece at Cannes Lions this year, with 12 trophies – three of them Grand Prix - straddles the lanes of product demo with purpose to truly resonate.

This is the *Unfiltered History Tour* for Vice Media. *Lesso Lessons* by Roto & The Ministry of Health Kenya and *The Elections Edition* by An-Nahar Newspaper are also great examples of this trend.

With the advent of "green-washing" where purpose is viewed skeptically as something brands pursue as a once-off, this approach of making the purpose aligned to the product or service allows brands to be consistent in their purpose work.

- **B2B stand up**

From inception, the industry has celebrated creativity and as it matured, it celebrated creativity and effectiveness. In the spirit of celebrating possibly the most effective creativity out there, 2022 became the inaugural year for the B2B products and service category at Cannes Lions.

Much like how we saw a focus on health has elevated the work in the specialised medical advertising space, with the massive incentive of winning a much-sought after Lion, let's expect to see a rise of specialized agencies and even traditional agencies paying more attention to more B2B work than typically B2C creative opportunities.

Mega trends

- **Can the real Metaverse and AI please stand up**

The Metaverse promised to be a social virtual reality platform. Initially, the excitement around it made it seem like something new in its complete version had arrived and brands could now invest in it.

The truth is, the Metaverse, much like AI are not yet a full-fledged reality but more of a goal. A destination of sorts. Currently, we have augmented reality-like gaming platforms and 'human intelligence' in the form of machine learning really making these so-called virtual experiences real.

So the trend here is to expect brands to mature the current form of an intended metaverse and AI experience to continue dabbling and exploring the technology so as to stay ahead of the curve on the developments and to take their audience along with them for the journey; to grow together as the reality of the Metaverse and AI is realised with full accessibility and ease.

It's the world of inclusive technology getting more and more inclusive, where technologists can envision more practical views of what singularity might look like for the average middle-class humans living on planet earth.

- **Technology is media**

I could talk video and its growth from YouTube Shorts to Instagram leaning heavily on Reels plus streaming platforms that are more advertising friendly, but we all already know that video is high performing and growing as a media. So, I'll change channels on that.

For quite some time, technology has been spoken of as an enabler. And I agree, it is.

Now, we have seen technology take centre stage in innovation, making what was impossible possible for people in spaces of communication and medicine. When I take a closer look at it, in creative communications, I find examples where technology is more than an enabler and now also the media. It seems like, within integrated media plans of social, radio, TV, OOH etc. we need a channel included that can be titled "New Media" where technology is not the idea but the media serving the idea.

The *Hope Reef* execution for Mars Petcare is a great example of this, where Reef Star technology was so central, that without it the execution had no way of being seen. This trend, embraced broadly by our industry, will continue to see brands who have a new media strategy show up strong, appearing relevant in consumers lives in a very modern, forward-looking way that presents product as fit-for-life today and the future quite demonstratively.

An expensive trend? Maybe. Worth it? Definitely.

ABOUT LOYISO TWALA

From being one of the top 30 executive creative directors in Africa and the Middle East at Loeries 2020, Loyiso Twala is now the chief creative officer of McCann Joburg, which are locally part of the Ntshona Group and globally part of McCann Worldgroup
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