

3 trends to consider in the ever-changing SA digital landscape

 By [Jenita Ferreira](#)

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The digital landscape is evolving at an astounding rate, and the emergence of Covid-19 has accelerated this rapid transformation of the digital ecosystem. As a result, digital agencies are finding themselves having to be creative and innovative to adapt to these uncharted territories.



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Here are three key trends to help marketing agencies navigate the ever-changing South African digital landscape.

Understanding marketing spend and what it means for client's ROI

There is much more of a shift to needing to understand what the ROI on marketing spend is. The digital realm is able to provide this in pinpoint accuracy from delivery of a message to conversion.

Whilst I don't believe clients will move all their offline spend to online tomorrow, there will be a gradual shift where clients will be keeping a stern eye on performance across all channels and moving budgets around to where the performances and conversions are tangible.

Digital is expected to be more effective in reporting returns. If brands have not integrated their marketing efforts yet, they should. Integrating planning, budgeting and reporting will ensure channels are performing the roles they were intended for. By doing this, I believe clients will not only have a clearer idea of how their marketing is performing, but they'll also invest more effectively in the future.

The influencer marketing burst

It's no longer essential to have a blog to be an influencer because microblogging is absolutely acceptable on Instagram or TikTok as the primary destination. And if you couple this with the need for people to find an additional income stream, you have a very large potential influencer base covering a wider range of topics. This type of content is consistently outperforming brand content – especially with the shift to online shopping (customers cannot touch the product) and the reduction of lifestyle content sources with magazines closing down.

It's essential to run trials with influencers on emerging platforms to stay ahead of the curve. What shouldn't be overlooked is the rise of the podcast influencer. This is a significantly underestimated niche channel with a highly engaged and mostly untapped audience. The big players like Facebook, Twitter, Discord, Spotify and even LinkedIn are already trialling podcasting-like features.

Influencer marketing will continue to evolve and much like all digital marketing, we need to evolve with it. Surely the rise of the non-influencer is next? I believe that leveraging existing eCRM initiatives could deliver on both consumer-generated content and word of mouth. Reviews have always proven powerful in the e-commerce space, so why would it be any different in the micro-influencer to non-influencer space?

Brands using consumer-generated content, create a sense of authenticity and boost conversions.

By encouraging your customer to contribute, you're tapping into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, leveraging the opportunity for brand loyalty and allowing the customer to be heard.

Virtual interactions to bridge the social divide

For most of us, this was through the form of video conferencing, but for others, they attempted a far more intensive virtual social/family/office environment.

The ability to work from home is now standard practice for many businesses which means that more people are at home and online more often. I'm sure I was not the only one to invest in tools to connect with loved ones more effectively. I found that my Pivo auto-tracking tripod, smartphone and smart TV helped me multi-task but also create a more immersive conversational experience, making loved ones feel like they were in my home and vice versa.

Technology is doing its best to replace real-world experiences and they are doing so in very creative ways like the virtual web conferencing software, Gather.Town. As gatherings and physical events have been restricted for so long, people may potentially be more shy and many will continue to rely on technology to bridge the social divide.

I think it's safe to say that during lockdown, everyone's digital-savvy got an upgrade and that's part of the reason why we are seeing these trends. Technophobes learned how to get on board very quickly as they realised they'd miss out on work, life and everything in between if they didn't. Hopefully, now that they've passed this hurdle, they'll embrace digital more in

the future.

That said, I do believe the technology and/or communications platforms that will do well in the future will be those that help people get back on the horse so to speak. We are naturally social creatures by design; it's only natural that we'll want to return to in-person connections so it will be interesting to see how these trends evolve or change in the next 12 months.

ABOUT JENITA FERREIRA

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