

The impact of Covid-19 on the industry

By  Jessica Tennant

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It goes without saying that the marketing and media industry has been impacted by the coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic.



Credit: visuals on [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

According to Brand Finance's 'Impact of Covid-19 on Europe Brands 100 Report', the media and film industry will be hit hard.



Impact of Covid-19 on Europe - Brands 100 Report

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In a release, the company said: "Film production and promotion schedules have been affected by the outbreak, with Disney pushing back the release of its remake of *Mulan* as well as *The New Mutants*, part of the X-Men franchise.

"Hollywood is also feeling the effects of the coronavirus pandemic as the 25th Bond film, *No Time To Die*, has postponed its official premiere and release until 25 November.

"The box office will be hit hard as a knock-on effect from the closure of cinemas around the world.

"The effects of social distancing may mean more viewers are home watching TV or streaming online, however, Netflix has announced its decision to suspend production on all scripted series and films in the US and Canada.

"As massive televised sports events and festivals such as Glastonbury and Coachella are cancelled, music and TV executives will be feeling the strain of providing fresh and watchable content."

Locally, all cinemas are closed until after the lockdown or as otherwise directed by the South African Government, and consumers have moved online, with the industry following suit.

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In an attempt to curate a common conversation around the challenges brands are facing in this unprecedented situation, Andrew Ross, MD of Chaos Theory, has initiated an online discussion, titled 'Going Viral, Marketing in a Pandemic'.

The first episode will be live-streamed tomorrow, 31 March at 10am and the panel, moderated by radio personality and financial journalist Bruce Whitfield, will comprise industry experts Mike Sharman, owner at Retroviral, Musa Kalenga, chief future officer of Brave Group, Neo Makhele, chief strategy officer of Ogilvy SA and Mike Middleton, MD at WPP Liquid.

"Our local event industry is made up of bright-minded entrepreneurs and passionate service providers who, almost without exception, are small businesses," said Ross. "As strategic event providers, we have consulted with some of our key service suppliers directly impacted by the cancellation of our own event pipeline, and have found what we believe to be a solution relevant for the marketing industry right now."



Andrew Ross



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"As South Africans, we have access to great minds, great strategists and some brilliant thinkers at the forefront of communications in the world. More so than ever before, this thinking needs to be debated and shared for all to benefit."

The discussion will be staged and streamed for free by professionals in the event industry in exchange for a revenue split of money made by subscriptions to the stream, he said. "To make this work and to assist marketers and their service providers equally, we need corporates to back this initiative, industry professionals to offer their time and insights and marketing professionals to engage, and continue these crucial conversations."

"PSA to all marketers and SME - we have opened up the [#GoingViral](https://t.co/BEIg3txmfv) marketing Webinar on Tuesday from 10h00 for free to all SME's. Head to <https://t.co/BEIg3txmfv> for comp tickets. Pls share with any marketing teams, and SME's. pic.twitter.com/3Bm2OAJYFH— AndrewRoss (@maddog_sa) [March 29, 2020](#)"

I interviewed Ross to find out his views on the impact of the pandemic on the industry and why he thought to initiate this series...

"The event industry has been especially hard hit with almost all companies servicing the sector having seen a significant impact on their immediate business pipelines as well as future order books. It has affected all aspects of the industry from venues, décor suppliers, caterers, content production companies, technical suppliers, event management agencies and even transport companies. In the UK many of the large tech firms have started using their large trucks to pull groceries for Tesco's instead of sound systems for Madonna, just to generate some income."

What, in your opinion, is the biggest challenge facing the industry at the moment?

The biggest factor is undeniably the short-term decimation of order books as well as the medium-term uncertainty around

when things will get going again. It makes the entire scenario virtually impossible to predict and as a result has left a significant portion of the industry in limbo regarding any form of certainty around getting back on our feet.



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■ *How did this online event/panel discussion come about?*

We acknowledge the challenges the marketing industry, in general, are facing and saw no attempts to curate a common conversation around the challenges brands are facing in this unprecedented situation.



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■ *What is the objective?*

The objective is to offer a platform for marketers to share thoughts on the challenges and possible solutions brands will face now and in the coming months. I doubt three weeks ago any South African brand had an opinion on “brand voice in a pandemic” yet now every single brand in the country is facing exactly this challenge. If we can provide a platform for both industry-leading opinion and a meaningful Q&A section, surely every brand manager and agency strategist in the country can benefit from this.

■ *What would you say to encourage corporates and industry folk to listen in and support the initiative?*

We have to date seen an almost entire lack of support from corporates for this initiative. Whilst we acknowledge the significant challenges facing us all, we believe corporate South Africa can and should be supporting this, and other initiatives by SMEs to ensure there is indeed a valid pool of professionals around to support their efforts when the doors open up, and things return to as normal as can be expected.

We urge all SMEs to mail us as access is free for all qualifying parties. If corporate SA does not want to support this initiative, we still serve a valuable service as, in this situation, knowledge is power and we hope we are able to provide that to brand teams, agencies, corporates and SMEs alike.



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■ *What's next?*

We are already working on the second edition of ‘Going Viral’ which will be an in-depth discussion on the challenges and solutionist thinking required for SMEs to survive, given their unique ability to react and reinvent in the fraction of the time of large corporates. There is a positive side to this situation and we hope to profile this through relevant discussions in episode two.

The Loeries and Constitution Hill (the venue for this year's Loeries Creative Week), launched a campaign on Friday, 27 March to elicit creative solutions to deal with challenges around the pandemic, based on the premise that now, more than

ever, the world needs brave creativity to keep it thriving. The campaign encourages the brand communication industry to come up with proactive ideas to help alleviate the challenges currently facing society as the pandemic takes a foothold across Africa and the Middle East.



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Supporting businesses and industry has never been more important. Although there's much uncertainty, what is clear is that we need to work together to create solutions for the greater good of society and the economy as a whole. "Throughout our history, the brand communication industry has moved society in a positive direction through a range of different campaigns. Considering the scale of threat that is posed by Covid-19, this campaign could be another great example of how we create positive change in society through our ideas," concludes Preetesh Sewraj, CEO of the Loeries.

For more info, email Andrew@chaostheory.co.za. Tickets are available through [Quicket](#). Kantar is also hosting a webinar tomorrow at 11am, unpacking data from their Covid-19 Barometer, Kantar's syndicated study on how Covid-19 is influencing consumer behaviour, attitudes and expectations, covering over 30 markets - providing recommendations to help you navigate growth in a Covid-19 world. You can register your place [here](#).

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

Jess is Senior Editor: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com. She is also a contributing writer. marketingnews@bizcommunity.com

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