

Winning the marketing race

 By [Johanna McDowell](#)

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"Social media has produced a more elusive consumer with short-term thinking."

While the fundamentals will always remain the same, 2015 will also bring 'silo-busting', 'agility marketing', and advertising decoupling and recoupling.

1. Consumers will become more and more involved in marketing and will continue to exert power and influence over brands. Transparency will become the most important tool of marketing - and the opportunity for brands to take the lead in this area will be significant. This means the best brands will not be those with the fictional or made-up stories but those that will give an accurate, real-time picture of what they are doing for consumers, at any given time.

2. Shareability. Campaign successes will be measured by how much they are shared by consumers. This will be a key factor in the ever more powerful social media stratosphere and will be one of several significant measurements that agencies and clients will need to consider when evaluating the success of a campaign.

3. CMOs will become Chief Simplifier Officers. Companies, by nature, create complexity and if the environment they are in is becoming more complex, companies respond by creating more and more vertical structures which will in turn lead to further complexity. CMOs will need to make 'silo-busting' a top priority in order to ensure that the company's brands are clearly positioned and understood both internally and externally if they want to succeed. Internal communications will be a vital part of this 'silo busting' drive.

4. Shopability. Digital marketers are realising that every screen, i.e. computer, smart and feature phones, digital outdoor and ambient as well as classical TV screens, all need to be shop-able. Commerce and transactions from those screens will become more common with greater linking and accessibility to solid sales measurements.

5. Advertising decoupling and recoupling. The trend has been happening overseas for some time and there are marketers in South Africa who have decoupling in place. Decoupling is separating the creative concept and production work so that an agency produces the creative concept but client (marketer) has a direct relationship with the production companies and therefore produces and prints their own work.

This has happened for some years with printing and has moved into press advertising material as well as occasionally broadcast materials, e.g. TV and radio commercials. However the complexity of producing TV commercials is ensuring - to a certain extent - that commercial production stays with agencies. For the rest, this potential loss of revenue (mark-ups on production are traditionally part of agency income) could have a significant effect on agencies.

6. Snackable content. Time-poor consumers - and business people - will be doing less and less long emails and more and more shorter communication and snackable content - emoticons are already used extensively by a few veteran digital users. This will increase.

7. Search for talent. All over the world, agencies and marketers are searching for the 'holy grail' of marketing and advertising talent. These days they are competing with the large digital channels such as Facebook and Google in order to secure the services of marketing technologists - those with a deep understanding of technology who will be able to use that knowledge to drive marketing strategy.

8. Media agencies will step up and lead. Traditionally, media agencies have been the planners and buyers of advertising for clients. They will continue in this important role but with their increasing knowledge and access to consumer trends and big data, much stronger than the creative agencies, they will become far more important as a key strategic partner to marketers. This is happening extensively in the US and I can predict that our local media agencies will tap into this trend and earn their much higher place in the level of importance that they have with clients.

9. Winners will be adept at 'agility marketing'. Social media has produced a more elusive consumer with short term thinking. This means that marketers have to follow 'likes', 'shares' and 'tweets' as well as click-throughs, which produce immediate - but not necessarily useful - data. Marketers who can select and manage this data and adapt their marketing strategies more quickly will be better placed to win the marketing race.

10. Procurement's powers will increase. Greater levels of accountability, financial sustainability and transparency will increasingly motivate marketing procurement within companies. Procurement will maintain their cautious approach but will become more adept and removing any road blocks within the procurement chain. In addition they will be more involved with agencies in producing better efficiencies and operations, not just fee and contract negotiation.

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ABOUT JOHANNA MCDOWELL

MD of the Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS), and partner in Scopen 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.

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