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# ON THE RECORD...



**S**outh Africa's pivotal general elections are less than eight weeks away. The noise is overwhelming. New parties, old parties; young leaders demanding recognition, old leaders fighting to keep their fingers in the ... pie?

Threats and promises, manifestos and misinformation.

Ah, misinformation. That useful weapon of destructive mass communication. The warnings are out there. Beware of the information on social networks. Be careful of images; they could be deepfakes, generated by artificial intelligence. Ensure your information is fact-checked and delivered by credible sources.

Simply being able to read the news takes a whole new meaning, and hard work too, if sourced from a news outlet not recognised for having a strong relationship with facts and truth.

The Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change analyses online conversations and reports on a bi-weekly basis. In a late March newsletter, it reported that: "The spread of mis- and disinformation by MK-aligned accounts on X between 1 and 17 March 2024, seeking to cast the IEC as a captured institution is one of the key findings in the online analysis of election conversations."

It goes like this: "One of the allegations is that President Cyril Ramaphosa has invited the United Nations and the United States to South Africa ahead of an impending civil war and that drones should be utilised to track the transport of ballot boxes as the IEC cannot be trusted."

"Other users alleged that the CIA will intervene in KwaZulu-Natal to ensure that ballots support the ANC, and not opposition parties. They go further to allege that the metro police are in cahoots with foreign powers to action this. The IEC has refuted these allegations. The use of the term 'allegedly' harks back to content from the disinformation account @DKNMohammed, which produces content in support of the MK party."

This thread garnered over 380 000 mentions, an indication that dodgy accounts and bots will play a major role in South Africa's elections this year, and that media and consumers need to know how to navigate social media mis- and disinformation before casting their 'X' on 29 May.

Having the facts checked and at hand has never been more important. Ethical and trustworthy media has never been more vital. And yet, the news media remains embattled. Under-funded and under-resourced in a world where truth matters more than ever. CEO of Daily Maverick, Styli Charalambous, and Rahaman Abiola, editor in chief of Nigeria's Legit.ng, get to grips with the tricky subject of funding good journalism in The Media Yearbook 2024.

And that's just one side of the big beast called 'media'. The other side is advertising, another influential media sector. The advertising industry, says Gillian Rightford, acting head of the Advertising Communication Association, should be seriously concerned about ad fraud, one of its "most pressing challenges."

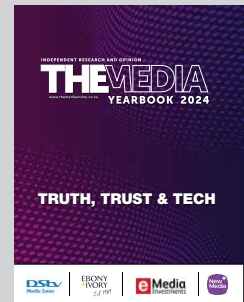
It's not just an ethical issue, she points out, but a financial one. "Only 36% of your investment may be viewed by humans. There is no guaranteed link between CPMs and audience quality." (See ANA's *Programmatic Media Supply Chain Transparency Study*, December '23)

It's clear all media sectors, especially journalism and advertising, have hard work ahead in 2024 if they are to emerge from digital transformation, the use of artificial intelligence and tech advancements with ethics, and the trust of consumers, intact.

And possibly the hardest part of it all will be convincing consumers to once again trust the media to do it right – and for the media to actually get it right.

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Got to love it.**

**Glenda**



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# DISRUPTING THE STATUS QUO

GILLIAN RIGHTFORD unpacks some of the bigger issues facing an industry marked by change.



Gillian Rightford

**S**outh Africa is poised (yet again) for a year of significant disruption, change, challenge and opportunity. The media, marketing and advertising industry, as all industries are, faces many of these. Let's unpack a few.

## CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The economic struggles faced by consumers in 2023 will continue to impact shopping habits and overall financial stability.

This uncertainty is likely to persist in 2024, as businesses and consumers navigate the impact of inflation, petrol and diesel prices, load shedding expenses and other economic factors.

The shift towards value-driven shopping, with consumers seeking out deals and discounts, is likely to continue, across all demographics. Online shopping will continue to grow in popularity as consumers look for convenience and cost savings.

**IN THE REALM OF DIGITAL ADVERTISING, AD FRAUD HAS EMERGED AS A SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY, LEADING TO GROWING APPREHENSION ABOUT MEDIA WASTAGE.**

But this online convenience needs to be made accessible to all consumers: offering the benefits of online shopping to broader income, geographical and age groups will solve real-world problems for consumers and offer growth opportunities for retailers and brands.

## TALKING TALENT

Critical global skills shortages are continuing to attract international employers to the region. This trend is expected to continue, as businesses seek out talent with specialised skills and good English at a relatively low cost, to drive innovation and growth. In response, South African universities and training institutions are increasing their focus on developing these critical skills.

This poses a challenge for local employers who may find it hard to match salaries and benefits – in an already small pool of talent. This could have a devastating impact on our talent pool, already severely impacted by the brain drain from the wave of emigration of talent in leadership or senior management.

## CAPABILITY BUILDING

In 2024, businesses in South Africa are increasingly prioritising human capital, emphasising employee training, development, and retention.

This shift reflects a growing recognition of how important people are in driving business success. Improving skills raises the ocean for all boats, as they say.

Additionally, businesses are adapting to new ways of working, with remote and hybrid work arrangements now common. These may require a new range of skills and a different approach to meeting management and, more importantly, decision making.

## ENTERTAINMENT FOR CONTENT

Global tech advancements will influence the local digital landscape, shaping consumer behaviour and business strategies.

Mobile and video content will continue to grow – and digital marketing is driving changes in advertising strategies, with businesses investing more in online channels to reach consumers. Creativity is key here – this is entertainment, not “bang on the head” advertising.

The creator economy is alive and well, and global audiences are receptive to South Africa's brand of content creation – be it be our humour, our music, our dancing or our opinions on global affairs.

## A BIG ISSUE: DIGITAL AD FRAUD

In the realm of digital advertising, ad fraud has emerged as a significant threat to the advertising industry, leading to



## BUT THIS ONLINE CONVENIENCE NEEDS TO BE MADE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL CONSUMERS: OFFERING THE BENEFITS OF ONLINE SHOPPING TO BROADER INCOME, GEOGRAPHICAL AND AGE GROUPS WILL SOLVE REAL-WORLD PROBLEMS FOR CONSUMERS AND OFFER GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR RETAILERS AND BRANDS.

growing apprehension about media wastage. Here are some insights on this issue:

Studies indicate that a substantial portion of online ad spend is wasted due to fraudulent activities, with approximately 22% of online ad spend being lost to ad fraud in 2023.

This alarming statistic underscores the need for heightened vigilance and robust measures to combat fraudulent practices in digital advertising.

Marketers are growing increasingly concerned about ad fraud, particularly in display advertising. “Only 36% of your investment may be viewed by humans. There is no guaranteed link between CPMs and audience quality.” (ANA, Dec 23).

The prevalence of ad fraud not only undermines the effectiveness of advertising campaigns, it also erodes trust in the digital advertising ecosystem. As a result, marketers are intensifying their efforts to identify and mitigate instances of ad fraud to safeguard their advertising investments and ensure optimal campaign performance.

The pervasive nature of ad fraud contributes significantly to media wastage, diverting valuable resources away from legitimate advertising efforts. Wastage is always present in any media campaign, but when it seems to be intentionally deceptive, it leaves a sour taste.

Intentional wastage not only hampers the return on investment (ROI) of advertising campaigns but also distorts performance metrics, making it challenging for advertisers to accurately assess the effectiveness of their marketing initiatives.

Addressing ad fraud is crucial for minimising media wastage and maximising the impact of advertising budgets on reaching target audiences. Legacy fraud verification agencies are deservedly being put under an

ever-increasing spotlight and the industry needs to come clean.

It's evident that combating ad fraud is essential for preserving the integrity and efficacy of digital advertising campaigns. By implementing stringent anti-fraud measures, such as monitoring traffic sources, verifying ad placements, and leveraging advanced fraud detection technologies (like Fou Analytics), advertisers can not only mitigate the risks associated with ad fraud and protect their investments from wastage, but ensure a more effective media buy. Bots don't buy products.

### CREATIVITY PAYS, SO PAY FOR IT

Agency remuneration is another big issue. Over the years, with the move to in-house agency capability, the shift to digital media and the need for Always-On and a constant need to fill the content pipeline, creative agencies have had their fees eroded – while their workload has risen exponentially. This was well documented in the book Madison Avenue Manslaughter by Michael Farmer.

However, the growing global evidence of the effectiveness of creativity – defined by WARC as the second biggest profitability lever behind brand size – seems to be creating a renewed push by marketers to improve their creative output.

“Creative is the most important actionable lever for marketers right now and has grown to a 12x multiplier versus 2014's 10x,” an opinion echoed by everyone from WARC to Prof Byron Sharp's Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, to Kantar, to the CMO's of the biggest and building companies on the planet.

One really hopes we will start seeing a reduction of spend against questionable (I'm being polite here) programmatic media buys, and for that currently wasted spend to be re-invested into creative talent.

Having said that, brands need to invest in the power of the creative lever, no matter what. It's time this downward trend (for many years) is reversed. Innovation is well revered in most corporates, and consulting and research budgets are plentiful. What is creative if not innovation? And it's often way more profitable than most innovation funnels.

Finally, with a pivotal general election ahead (here, and a few abroad), South Africa can expect heightened political activity, potential policy changes, and shifts in governance. Additionally, efforts to address economic challenges and stimulate growth are likely to be at the forefront of promises and government agendas. Building on the ad fraud topic, we need to be vigilant about disruptive and cynical social media campaigns and the role of AI in, literally, putting words in other people's mouths.

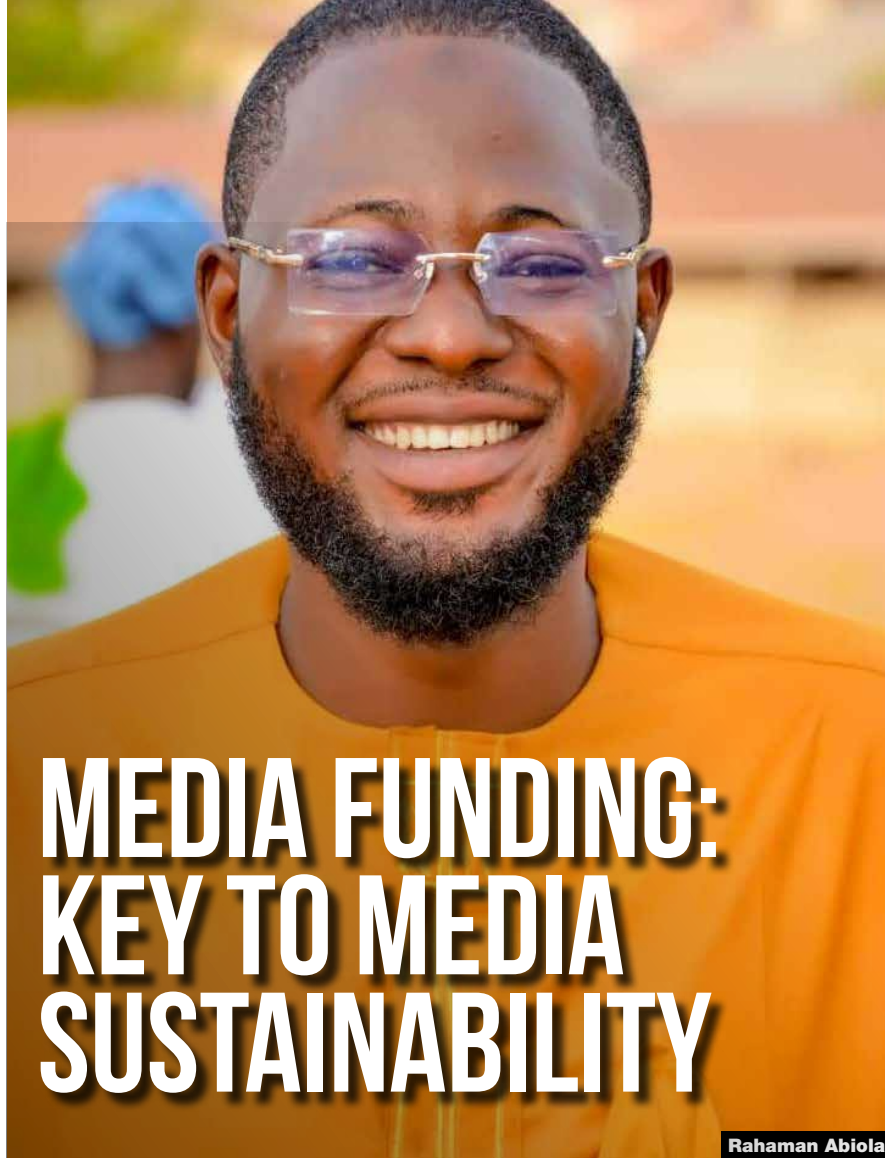
There's never a dull moment in this industry. We need to stay aware, look for opportunities, look to solve real problems for our people and stay vigilant to cynical plays that use tech for all the wrong reasons.

There are myriad brilliant ways to use technology, and we need to imagine and innovate to grow all of our worlds. ■

### Sources:

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# MEDIA FUNDING: KEY TO MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY

Rahaman Abiola

**Big Tech's disruption of the media ecosystem continues unabated; this time, with investment into startups highlighting the dire state of funding for news media – with disastrous consequences for all if solutions aren't forthcoming, writes RAHAMAN ABIOLA.**

**F**or anyone familiar with the dynamic landscape of the tech ecosystem, the term 'startup' seamlessly intertwines with the concept of funding. This symbiotic relationship, however, seems elusive for a crucial ecosystem tasked with safeguarding truth in our polarised world: the news media.

## WHY IS THIS?

A glance at the global media journey since the onset of Covid-19 unveils a drastic change and an overwhelming transformation for the media ecosystem:

- Global newspaper advertising, both print and online, plummeted from \$49.2 billion in 2019 to \$36 billion in 2024, marking a decline of 27% over five years, according to PwC.

Simultaneously, global circulation and subscriber revenue dipped from \$58.7 billion in 2019 to \$50.4 billion in 2024.

This is no surprise, as the world's media consumption habits have changed drastically

- As the world shifted towards digital transformation, the newspaper segment faced the dilemma of adaptation or irrelevance.
- The cost of production soared, pages dwindled and choices had to be made regarding advertisers and the depth of news coverage.

In responding to these emerging media habits and evolving news consumption patterns that fixed the future of the media, publishers pivoted, embracing digital

integration at the core of their operations. This entailed improvisation, innovation, and the launch of new products to stay afloat. For many, these new products include newsletters, podcasts, short snackable video content, push notifications, and increased reliance on AI for content personalisation.

**WITHOUT DISCOUNTING THE FUNDING STRUGGLES OF PLAYERS IN OTHER SECTORS, THE DIFFERENCES ARE STILL SIGNIFICANT, AS NEWS MEDIA HAS LITTLE TO NO ACCESS TO HIGH-GROWTH INVESTMENT OPTIONS.**

## THE FUNDING ABYSS

While no one expects the media to remain rigid and retrogressive, the lack of funding also contributes to publishers' decisions to make drastic changes and sharp detours to keep the business running.

Some newsrooms have even turned to monetisation platforms like Patreon to seek funding from their readers – a dependency that can hardly be sustainable.

It is troubling that news media, integral to society in every nation and economy, is only too easily overlooked when it should be supported and sustained to ensure continuity,

UNESCO reports that around 30% of African countries have no independent media. An analysis of funding opportunities available to news media organisations, and accessibility levels, among others, sheds more light on the precarious state of the news business – and the potential of a news dearth on the media landscape if this continues unabated.

Clearly, it's important that proper structures are set around investment in newsrooms.

A simple internet browse shows that media financing generally comes from civil societies in the form of grants, or multinational corporations who support the media as part of their corporate social



## WHILE THE EFFORTS OF ORGANISATIONS AND NEWSROOM FUNDING BODIES ... CAN'T BE UNDERSTATED, THE FINANCING GAP REMAINS DAUNTING – AND POSES A SIGNIFICANT RISK TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR NEWSROOMS.

responsibility initiatives. For example: MTN is supporting media sustainability by way of media practitioners' training, through the MTN Media Innovation Programme in partnership with the Pan Atlantic University's School of Media and Communication.

While sponsorship models like these are important, the impact is still comparable to the proverbial drop in the ocean. It doesn't solve the problem; it only takes the focus away for a while.

In contrast, the tech and SME industries bask in robust funding ecosystems.

Here is how they fare on their journey to business sustainability and operational relevance.

According to GlobalData, global venture capital (VC) investment in tech startups reached a record \$480 billion in 2022. In the United States alone, VC firms invested over \$300 billion in tech companies in the first half of 2023. The data shows how robust the tech funding ecosystem is. This also proves that tech startups generally have the easiest access to significant funding.

A slight detour to the small and medium enterprise (SME) ecosystem would also show the highly diversified funding options made available to players within this system, despite economic and operational challenges. In the US, the US Small Business Administration report shows that the office has provided over \$37 billion in loans and loan guarantees.

Other sources for SME funding across the globe include traditional bank loans, government grant and loans, angel investors and venture capital – which used to be less common for SMEs than for tech startups, but is beginning to gain traction in some sectors.

Further research shows the industries that have earned the most investment, with fintech at the top of the list with \$10.1 billion invested in 2022, and travel at the bottom of the list, with \$983 million invested in 2022.

Between these extremes, industries such as transportation, food, health, home living, marketing, real estate, fashion, and education, have enjoyed great levels of investment too.

However, the news media as always is missing on this list.

Without discounting the funding struggles of players in other sectors, the differences are still significant, as news media has little to no access to high-growth investment options.

While the efforts of organisations and newsroom funding bodies like Google News Initiative (GNI), Internews, International Center for Journalists (IFCJ), World Bank, and UNESCO can't be understated, the financing gap remains daunting – and poses a significant risk to the sustainability of our newsrooms.

The statistics above paints a clear picture of the disparity in financial support between the media landscape and its counterparts.

### CONSEQUENCES OF LOW MEDIA FUNDING

If this still seems like a problem that can be overlooked, the repercussions of meagre media funding, especially in a continent like Africa, extends far beyond financial constraints. They also include:

- **Reduced investigative journalism:** Without investigative journalism, there is no way to hold powerful actors accountable, nor would there be an avenue to tell the truth. Imagine truth vanguards like Nigeria's Fisayo Soyombo of FIJ or Kunle Adebajo of HumAngle getting 'silenced' by their inability to secure funds to keep their mind-blowing work in journalism going.
- **Media capture:** Lack of funding means increased dependence on foreign aid or government funding, which can lead to editorial interference and reduced press freedom.
- **Limited media diversity:** Lack of funding would mean difficulty in establishing and sustaining

independent media outlets, hindering the flow of diverse information and perspectives. Again, bye to truth and media sustainability.

Practical solutions are needed to avert the imminent demise of truth in news, and honest journalism. While many might think that few of these models are already being tested, it is important to note that testing in a pilot phase and not following through, means a lack of sustainability.

Some of these solutions include:

- **Support for independent media**  
Through initiatives like grant programmes, and tax breaks specifically for independent media organisations
- **Innovation in funding models**  
Beyond the exploration of readers' donations and membership programmes, alternative funding models direct impact investing from capable organisations, per media house, would go a long way in driving funding for newsroom sustainability
- **Capacity building**  
Investment in more programmes to help media organisations develop sustainable business models and improve their digital capabilities. Such investment in capacity building can be gained through partnership with technical skill partners, to teach skills and enhance knowledge adaptability for newsroom success
- **Addressing the digital divide**  
Increased government and private sector investment in bridging the digital divide to unlock advertising and subscription potential for African media.

As funding struggles persist, news media organisations across Africa face an uphill battle. The stark contrast in funding between the media landscape and its counterparts underscores the need for urgent intervention. The consequences of overlooking this issue are tangible, and impact the very fabric of society.

It is time to unveil the veil shrouding media funding, nurturing truth and resilience for a sustainable future. ■

**Rahaman Abiola** is an award-winning digital and human interest, Reuters-trained journalist who holds a degree in English and Literature. He is a recipient of the Kwame Karikari Dubawa Fact-checking Fellowship (2021), and beneficiary of the Nigeria Health Watch's Solution Journalism Fellowship (2022).



# PERFORMANCE, ON PURPOSE

**GroupM's inaugural UK event, an exploration into what's in store for 2024, unpacked the relationship between purpose and performance, opportunities for growth and change, and more...**

In an era defined by rapid technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviours, the media industry is at the forefront of a continual transformation.

At NextM UK 2024, we delved into some of the most pressing topics shaping the future of our industry, exploring the symbiotic relationship between purpose and performance in advertising.

In curated sessions led by industry experts, we dissected how impactful advertising can not only drive growth, but also contribute positively to consumers, society, and our planet.

NextM was not just an event, but an opportunity for collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

It provided industry leaders with an exciting opportunity to come together, exchange insights and collectively shape the future of media, to move into 2024 with the right tools needed to navigate an ever-changing market.

The morning sessions focused on AI, and began with a talk from Dr Suzanne Livingston on 'Meeting Intelligence with Intelligence.' She explored the diverse opportunities AI offers, delving into the philosophical, ethical, and creative dimension that challenge our relationship with technology – and how this can be for the better.

Dr Livingstone urged a mindset rooted in curiosity, discovery, imagination, and purpose, challenging our fear of AI and advocating for a collaborative relationship with machines: "We are beginning to shift our mindset and viewpoint from feeling

defensive as humans, to embracing non-human identities."

The subsequent 'Big AI Debate' panel was moderated by Zuzanna Gierlinkska, (chief solutions officer, GroupM Nexus UK) and featured Evan Hanlon (global CEO, Choreograph), Daniel Hulme (chief AI officer, WPP), Becky Power (creative director, Mindshare UK), and Irin Rahman (chief data and technology officer, Wavemaker UK).

The panel collectively viewed AI as an enabler, emphasising its role in content creation, analytics, and audience engagement. They also agreed on the need

**COLLECTIVELY, THESE SESSIONS PROMPTED A CALL FOR STRATEGIC THINKING AND INNOVATION IN RESPONSE TO THE ANTICIPATED EVOLUTION OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR.**



for AI to enhance human capabilities rather than replace them, which will allow agencies to focus on creativity.

Concluding the AI panels, London-based artist Jake Elwes discussed 'Queering AI', exploring the injection of poetry and art into AI systems and the ethical considerations this brings to light. Elwes' discussion concluded with an awe-inspiring screening of 'Zizi and Me', a satirical performance featuring themselves and Zizi, an AI drag queen.

## **'MARY QUEEN OF SHOPS' ... HIGHLIGHTED THE INFLUENCE OF FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS ON CREATIVE BRANDS AND SUGGESTED EXPLORING NEW RETAIL MODELS, INCLUDING THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF SECOND-HAND MARKETS AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES.**

### **CREATORS AND COMMUNITIES**

Shifting to the theme of creators and communities, The Voice of Our Generation is a Roar featured Kelly Parker (CEO, Wavemaker UK) interviewing Debbie Hewitt, chair of the FA and prominent figure at Visa Europe.

As the first female FA chair and with a background in senior business leadership, Hewitt discussed the parallels between the worlds of business and sport, and how she is able to bring a unique perspective to football's challenges. Emphasising its broad appeal, she explained how football can be an ideal tool for brands to connect with consumers.

Another session, 'Building Trust with Creators,' hosted by Hannah Pether, group account director at Goat, explored how brands can leverage communities to drive sales and make a positive impact.

Pether interviewed content creators Tasha Ghouri and Stephanie Yeboah as well as Goat's Ellie Hooper and Purple

Goat's Dom Hyams, delving into the intersection between brands and communities and the vital role creators can play in building trust with diverse communities.

Ghouri and Yeboah reflected on the importance of finding your niche and creating raw, authentic content and Hyams stressed the massive opportunity in the 'purple pound' for brands.

### **PREDICTIONS AND TRENDS**

Throughout the day, predictions and trends were a recurring theme in many of the sessions. In particular, in the 'Future of Retail and Commerce,' session, Mary Portas OBE, renowned as 'Mary Queen of Shops', shared insights into the changing retail landscape.

She highlighted the influence of financial considerations on creative brands and suggested exploring new retail models, including the growing importance of second-hand markets and innovative approaches. She also emphasised the significance of joy and human experiences in retail.

Additionally, the Consumer Provocations for 2024 session featured GroupM speakers, including Geoff de Burca (chief strategy officer at EssenceMediacom UK), Sophie Harding (head of futures and innovation at Mindshare UK), Monica Majumdar (head of strategy at Wavemaker UK), Shula Sinclair (chief strategy officer at mSix&Partners), and David Wilding (chief strategy officer at EssenceMediacomX), each discussing emerging consumer trends.

Harding questioned the concept of a singular "year of everything", De Burca emphasised the opportunity within retail search and SEO, and Majumdar suggested marketers acknowledge their blind spots for the over 45 audience and rethink how this may impact media plans.

Wilding highlighted the rise in media consumption, and Sinclair discussed the resurgence of "awe" in advertising, with a focus on creating compelling experiences for brand persuasion.

Collectively, these sessions prompted a call for strategic thinking and innovation in response to the anticipated evolution of consumer behaviour.

### **THOUGHTS FROM SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS**

In addition to these highlighted themes, NextM UK 2024 featured other notable guest speakers, including Lemn Sissay, who delivered a reading from his acclaimed poetry work, 'Let the Light Pour In.' The session on 'The Choices We Make,' led by Dan Bennett, Ogilvy, also provided an overview of behavioural science and its creative applications.

Bennett discussed the prevalence of System 1 and System 2 thinking, and explored various levers in behavioural science, drawing on examples like KFC's \$1 chips campaign. Further, the session on 'Recentering Our Collective Humanity,' delivered by Seyi Akiwowo, explored the need to centre humanity in leadership.

Akiwowo shared experiences of burnout and the crucial role of emotional engagement in leadership, offering insights around encouraging a heart-centred approach, the acknowledgment of one's humanity, and the cultivation of an honest collective.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

As we reflect on NextM UK 2024, we are reminded of our responsibility to drive positive change. We should all commit to leveraging technology, embracing authentic connections, and fostering strategic thinking to create a media industry that is both innovative and socially responsible.

**Together, we can shape a future where media experiences are truly transformative, inclusive, and purpose-driven.**

- Don't be afraid of AI
- Prioritise authenticity within communities
- Have an open mind to new innovative approaches

**GroupM employees in the United Kingdom contributed to this piece, highlighting the trends and issues media agencies will face in 2024. ■**

# NAVIGATING MEDIA PLANNING IN 2024

EBONY  
+IVORY  
*Est. 1969*

**Nombini Mehlomakulu, managing director of Ebony+Ivory, discusses the imperative of strategic thinking and the AI advantage.**

**H**earing over and over that we are in an “ever-evolving landscape of media planning and implementation” may be repetitive, but this state of innovation and flux is here to stay for the foreseeable future. While constant change is keeping us on our toes and staying ahead of trends is crucial, it’s also an incredibly exciting time to be in our industry. As we wade further into 2024, several key trends have, are and will emerge, emphasising the necessity of strategic thinking and the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and how these shape the future of media planning.

## THE SHIFT TOWARDS STRATEGIC THINKING

The media planning landscape is characterised by complexity, dynamism and an abundance of platforms, channels and content formats, and we are challenged with navigating a fragmented media ecosystem. Here, the strategic thinking offered by the media team at Ebony+Ivory becomes the differentiating factor for success.

### Audience-centric approach

Traditional demographics are giving way to a more nuanced understanding of audiences. We leverage advanced analytics and data mining techniques to identify and target specific audience segments based on behaviour, interests and preferences.



Nombini Mehlomakulu

This shift towards audience-centricity requires a deep understanding of consumer behaviour and psychographics, and our longstanding knowledge of where and how to reach the right consumers.

### Integrated campaigns

Single-media approaches are no longer effective in reaching today’s consumers who engage with multiple touchpoints across various channels. Integrated campaigns that seamlessly blend traditional and digital media are gaining prominence. Our team adopts a holistic approach that ensures consistency and coherence across all touchpoints to maximise reach, impact and return on investment.

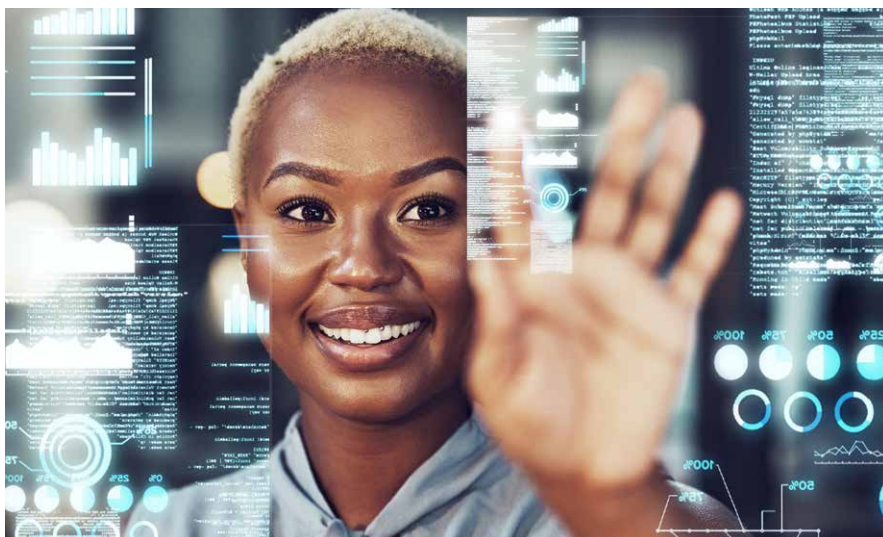
### Content personalisation

Personalised content has become the cornerstone of effective communication. With AI-driven algorithms, we can analyse vast amounts of data to deliver highly tailored content to individual consumers in real time. As integrated cross-functional media planners, we prioritise content personalisation to enhance engagement and drive conversion.

### HARNESSING THE POWER OF AI

AI is revolutionising media planning, offering unprecedented opportunities to improve productivity, efficiency and efficacy. In 2024, AI-powered tools and technologies are reshaping every aspect of media planning and implementation.

**THE MEDIA PLANNING LANDSCAPE IS CHARACTERISED BY COMPLEXITY, DYNAMISM AND AN ABUNDANCE OF PLATFORMS, CHANNELS AND CONTENT FORMATS, AND WE ARE CHALLENGED WITH NAVIGATING A FRAGMENTED MEDIA ECOSYSTEM**



## AI IS REVOLUTIONISING MEDIA PLANNING, OFFERING UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY, EFFICIENCY AND EFFICACY

### Predictive analytics

AI algorithms can effectively analyse historical data to help forecast future trends and consumer behaviour patterns. Our team is able to leverage the analytics, eradicate bias and national or geographical discrepancies to anticipate accurate market shifts, optimise media spend and identify growth opportunities.

### Automation

Manual tasks, such as media buying, ad placement and performance tracking, are being automated through AI-driven platforms. Having these automation tools at our disposal enables us to streamline workflows, reduce human error and free up time for our media planning team to focus all its time and effort on strategic activities.

It's about effectively harnessing the power of AI and integrating it with our decades of experience and knowledge to deliver the unique Ebony+Ivory edge in media planning and buying.

### Dynamic creative optimisation

Dynamic creative optimisation (DCO) uses AI to customise ad creatives in real time based on user data and preferences. By serving personalised ads tailored to individual users, DCO improves relevance and engagement, ultimately driving higher conversion rates.

Only a truly integrated digital and traditional media team like ours can harness this opportunity effectively, across a campaign to ensure real results. We leverage the best of our longstanding traditional media planning and execution skills with our digital media planning skills to create truly immersive campaigns.

### Natural language processing

Natural language processing enables our team to analyse and understand consumer sentiment from text data, including social media conversations, customer reviews and feedback. By gaining insights into consumer sentiment, we can refine messaging strategies and enhance brand perception.

## EMBRACING INNOVATION AND INVESTIGATION

In the fast-paced world of media planning, innovation is the key to staying ahead of the curve. We are embracing a test-and-learn approach as we explore emerging technologies to drive growth and innovation.

### Immersive technologies

Virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality offer immersive experiences that captivate audiences like never before. We are able to incorporate these technologies into our campaigns to create memorable brand experiences and foster deeper consumer engagement.

### Voice search optimisation

With the rising popularity of voice-enabled devices and virtual assistants, voice search optimisation is becoming essential for brands. Consequently, we are adapting our media strategies to optimise content for voice-search queries, leveraging conversational keywords and natural language patterns. We are constantly assessing how to fine-tune for dialects and pronunciation to ensure this is an effective tool in our arsenal.

## CONCLUSION

As we navigate the complexities of media planning in 2024, strategic thinking and AI-driven innovation emerge as the driving forces behind success.

We use three strategies to unlock new opportunities and drive meaningful connections with consumers.

1. Adopting an audience-centric approach.
2. Harnessing the power of AI for processing efficiency and in support of our strategic planning and implementation.
3. Embracing innovation and investigation in exploring emerging technologies that can drive growth and innovation.

In this era of rapid change and disruption, the ability to anticipate trends, adapt to new technologies and think strategically, we believe, will be crucial for staying ahead of your competition, engaging and converting consumers and achieving long-term success in media planning.

Let's talk about your media planning and buying needs.

Contact: [info@ebonyivory.co.za](mailto:info@ebonyivory.co.za) or call +27 11 327 6871/+27 21 035 1401

We can't wait to help build your brand with you.

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# A BRAVE NEW ERA: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF SUSTAINABLE MARKETING

Ninety percent of marketers agree that sustainability agendas must be more ambitious, and 94% concede that they need to act more bravely and experiment to drive transformative change, writes WILLIAM STUBBINGS.

**T**here is no question that the case for sustainability has been made – and unequivocally so. The United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals provided the framework to define the problems and businesses around the world – including Unilever, Danone and Patagonia among many others – have been showing the commercial benefits of acting on the challenges.

Kantar's research indicates that brands making a difference are creating value: sustainability contributed \$193 billion to the value of the Kantar BrandZ Top 100 Global Brands. Brands that are acting on the sustainability imperative are experiencing 31% year-on-year growth, according to the BrandZ Sustainability Index.

At 45%, sustainability remains the most significant driver of corporate reputation, meaning that organisations not taking their business impacts seriously face increasing brand and reputational risk.

The Sustainable Marketing 2030 report is a global research-based thought leadership project led by the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) in partnership with Kantar's Sustainable Transformation Practice.

The study has revealed that while progress is happening, with most sustainability officers now reporting to the CEO or board, and sustainability KPIs increasing, this progress is not fast enough.

In fact, 90% of marketers agree that sustainability agendas must be more



William Stubbings

ambitious, and 94% concede that they need to act more bravely and experiment to drive transformative change.

## MARKETING MUST STEP UP

From a consumer perspective, the challenge is that while 97% of people say they are prepared to take action to live a more sustainable lifestyle, in reality only 13% of people are actively changing their behaviour.

There is a growing acknowledgement that it's time for marketing to step up. Research reveals that 93% of marketers say brands have a responsibility to help people live more sustainably, and that marketing can make a difference in the sustainability journey.

Environmental scientist and author Donella Meadows argues there are several social paradigms and assertions people make that perpetuate the problems we're seeing. Consider, for example, the concept that there is always an 'away' where we can throw things.

In reality, very little of what we have produced since the mid-20th century has been recycled (only 9%) or incinerated (only 12%), with the balance in landfills, oceans and the environment.

By producing more than what we are managing to clean up, we are damaging the world in a myriad ways.

Another misperception is that all growth is good and possible, amid a widely held assumption that we can grow in perpetuity in a world of finite resources. Unpacking current production and consumption models soon puts paid to this idea. Growth can still be good – but how we achieve growth needs to change.

## THE FUTURE WE WANT

Then there's the idea better technology will solve our problems. This implies there is no cost to developing and refining technology; that there is equal access to technology, and we all benefit equitably from it. While technology is certainly an enabler to solving the problems, it's up to humanity to see it done.

Finally, consider the assumption that the future is something that just happens to us, and that we should try to predict it, rather than create it. As the pace of change and the rate of disruption accelerates, the future is becoming increasingly difficult – and expensive – to predict.

Meanwhile, we often overlook the fact that inspiring others with our actions today, can help create the future that we want.

**IN REALITY, VERY LITTLE OF WHAT WE HAVE PRODUCED SINCE THE MID-20TH CENTURY HAS BEEN RECYCLED (ONLY 9%) OR INCINERATED (ONLY 12%), WITH THE BALANCE IN LANDFILLS, OCEANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT.**

The good news is that marketing has the power to shape and change these mindsets.

## NEW ROLE FOR MARKETING

Sustainable Marketing 2030 outlines a new role for marketing with the aim of identifying the main challenges in progressing sustainability ambitions, and the opportunities for marketing organisations.

It offers a deep dive study into the levers associated with circular marketing and growth.

We anticipate that the results of the study will vary considerably in different parts of the world. People in the Middle East and Africa (MEA), for example, are faced with a very different set of priorities to those living in more developed regions.

Furthermore, those living in MEA are disproportionately affected by the combined impact of global and local economic, social and environmental crises.

People's concerns are directly related to where they are on Maslow's hierarchy of needs: in Africa, people are most concerned with physiological and safety needs, while those living in the global north view sustainability as a lifestyle choice connected to their values, morals and creativity.

Marketing's role is currently centred around purchase and use, within a linear value chain. This role needs to shift to a scope beyond purchase and use, to include circular principles.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation defines a circular economy as a "system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated".

In a circular economy, products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling and composting.

## FIVE KEY LEVERS

The WFA and Kantar developed a circular marketing and growth framework that identifies five key levers to achieve effective circular marketing.

### 1. Sustainability-first approach

The first lever shifts sustainability from a standalone strategy to an integral part of a business's ambition and practice. A sustainability-first strategy cannot be developed in isolation from brand strategy

or market activation. Having the correct resources, capabilities and insights are therefore the key enablers to overcoming this challenge. The starting point is recognising that sustainability is the strategy, not a business function.

### 2. Radical innovation

The second lever is about moving sustainable innovation from an incremental, tactical opportunity to a strategic transformation opportunity that future-proofs the business. This is done in order to enable more sustainable choices and make sustainable living easier and more accessible to all.

Africa is predicted to be the fastest growing region globally. It's therefore no wonder that multinationals are investing into the myriad new opportunities the region represents. The pace of innovation in Africa is rapid and disruptive. Businesses or brands entering the continent need to keep acting as challengers and be wary of becoming complacent.

### 3. Transformative relationships

The third lever aims to change exchange-based partnerships with limited impact, to transformative relationships, internally and externally. Marketers are well positioned to play a pivotal role in unleashing opportunities across the value chain by collaborating in shaping relationship agendas with other functions, including connecting activities across the value chain.

A powerful example was set last year by Old Mutual Investment Group, one of Sasol's largest shareholders, who voted against a number Sasol's proposed resolutions at its AGM, to catalyse better performance against their climate targets.

### 4. Creativity into action

The fourth lever aims to shift sustainability from a separate communication strategy to sustainability communications grounded in action. Communication must up the ante in normalising sustainable lifestyles.

Moreover, communication needs to be rooted in value chain reality and avoid greenwashing or greenlighting. Marketing has an opportunity to shift the narrative from fear and guilt to transparency and inspiration about what can and is being done, telling the real story through

culturally relevant frames and inspiring narratives that shape the mindsets that will ultimately change behaviour.

This requires new levels of boldness and integrity, which needs to start with the organisation and its agency partners themselves.

### 5. Value redefined

Lastly, a new definition of value is emerging, one that encompasses all natural, social and human capitals required to deliver commercial value. Value redefined is about changing the way sustainability is viewed; from a solely financial standpoint to a more integrated view of success that accounts for environmental and societal impacts and externalities alongside financial metrics.

## REDEFINING VALUE

Woolworths' Good Business Journey is one example of redefining value. Roy Baggattini, Group CEO of Woolworths, says, "There is no question in my mind that our value as a business and our values as a company are inextricably linked."

Ranking as the top sustainable brand in South Africa for both 2022 and 2023 in the Kantar BrandZ Most Valuable South African Brands study, the brand experienced a 2% gain in value against an average 9% decline among the South African top 30, showing that sustainable brands are more resilient in volatile economic climates.

The circular marketing and growth framework is based on the principle that it's no longer viable to drive business growth at the expense of the planet and society. Instead, brands need to be committed to a new paradigm of value creation that balances the needs of business, the environment and society.

This means that marketing can step up into a brave new era. One where its role can extend beyond being custodians of brands and the customers they serve, to becoming custodians of the wellbeing of society and the planet we all share. ■

**William Stubbings** is director, consulting practice at [Kantar](#). He is the senior leader in the South African team responsible for managing multiple client engagements across practice areas, developing the local sustainability practice and coaching and managing the local team.



Mergen Velayudan

# BROADCASTING, VIEWED THROUGH AN AI-POWERED LENS

**MERGEN VELAYUDAN** outlines how a customer-centric, ethical approach to AI unlocks a whole spectrum of innovation and opportunities.

**T**echnology has been pushing boundaries and driving transformation across industries for several decades – and in no other industry is this truer than in broadcasting.

Our living rooms were first lit up at night with the glare and static of analogue

television that over a few decades transformed into full HD. From sitting down at a particular time to watch our favourite TV show, we now have a choice of shows at our fingertips and at our convenience.

For the past 39 years, MultiChoice has been driving innovation in the broadcast

**WE STARTED EXPLORING AI IN 2017, AND SOME OF OUR AI INITIATIVES INCLUDE A CUSTOMER-FACING CHATBOT, AUTOMATED SUB-TITLING, AUTOMATED CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS AND AI-DRIVEN CONTENT RECOMMENDATIONS.**

industry. The single decoder transformed into a Personal Video Recorder, and even made way for services delivered over the internet.

Online streaming has forever altered the television broadcasting landscape, giving viewers unprecedented access to content from around the world. The focus has shifted to place the viewer at



the centre, with broadcasters and over-the-top (OTT) services offering choice, flexibility and convenience.

For its part, MultiChoice embraced the digital revolution by making innovation part of its DNA. It has brought the best entertainment and education content from around the world into the homes of 21.6 million customers across Africa. As the continent is becoming increasingly more connected, it is also benefiting from emerging technologies.

## LEVERAGING AI TO ENHANCE VIEWER EXPERIENCE

The most prominent recent emerging technological innovation is generative artificial intelligence (genAI). It is transforming content creation, content curation and discovery, as well as viewer engagement and analytics.

This is the new frontier of TV today:

- AI uses viewership data to provide broadcasters with intelligence and insight into viewing habits quicker and more effectively than before, which enables broadcasters to make swifter, better-informed decisions.
- AI streamlines broadcasting operations through automation, and optimises efficiency in areas such as content management and discovery, electronic programme guides and even volume controls.
- AI delivers enriched experiences to viewers, through machine-learning algorithms.

We are leveraging AI to enhance our business operations, organisational effectiveness, and cost efficiency. We started exploring AI in 2017, and some of our AI initiatives include a customer-facing chatbot, automated sub-titling, automated content highlights and AI-driven content recommendations.

We are harnessing AI to enrich the viewing experience of our customers, by enabling them to curate their viewing, tailored to their individual preferences and based on personalised recommendations.

AI plays a pivotal role in content creation and curation. It has enabled us to streamline production processes, identify emerging trends, and optimise content distribution strategies.

From automated video editing tools to AI-powered content tagging and metadata management systems, we are leveraging this technology across the content lifecycle.

## NAVIGATING CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Whilst AI unlocks many possibilities, it does have its challenges – such as algorithmic biases, data privacy concerns, and the ethical implications of AI-driven decision-making.

Broadcasters must navigate regulations related to data protection, consumer rights and content standards.

We have developed frameworks to guide the implementation of AI in our business, supported by an AI Centre of Excellence and an AI Ethics and Governance policy. We also take an inclusive approach by incorporating diverse perspectives and voices into AI development and deployment to ensure that AI technologies serve the needs and interests of all stakeholders.

By fostering diversity and inclusion in AI teams, we mitigate the risk of bias and promote equitable outcomes. The focus is on putting our customers first by approaching AI ethically, and with respect for their privacy.

## EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES

It is not just in the area of content creation and discovery, and data analytics that AI is having

an impact; it is also transforming our workforce.

AI has the potential to automate certain tasks and workflows, which creates new opportunities for employees to upskill and reskill themselves, and take on new challenges.

As a company, we are helping our employees navigate this new world through training programmes, mentorship opportunities, and partnerships with educational institutions.

## COLLABORATING WITH REGULATORS

As data, content, and employees are affected, regulators face challenges in establishing suitable guidelines and policies. At MultiChoice, we advocate for businesses to collaborate with regulators, engaging constructively and offering practical proposals for the seamless integration of AI into the business landscape. By doing so, we aim to ensure optimal outcomes for employees, consumers, our industry, and the countries in which we operate.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Navigating the complex intersection of AI and media, it's clear that ethical considerations must guide our approach to AI development and deployment. Prioritising transparency, accountability, and inclusivity allows MultiChoice to harness AI's transformative potential, creating an innovative and ethical media ecosystem.

Businesses, including broadcasting, will thrive by embracing emerging technologies through continuous innovation. The winners, ultimately, are viewers and customers, as the focus shifts to curating experiences that address their unique requirements. ■

**BY FOSTERING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN AI TEAMS, WE MITIGATE THE RISK OF BIAS AND PROMOTE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES. THE FOCUS IS ON PUTTING OUR CUSTOMERS FIRST BY APPROACHING AI ETHICALLY, AND WITH RESPECT FOR THEIR PRIVACY.**

**Mergan Velayudan** is a seasoned technology executive at MultiChoice Group, leading strategic initiatives in AI, cloud, and innovation. With over 12 years of experience, he spearheads the Cloud and AI Centres of Excellence. His expertise ensures MultiChoice remains at the forefront of technological innovation and digital transformation.

# South Africa's Digital Marketing Landscape in 2024

**Research findings point to five major trends that will impact digital marketers in South Africa in 2024.**

Digital marketing is relentlessly evolving as new technologies, platforms and consumer behaviours emerge. This constant change requires a continuous gaze over the horizon, while being aided by past indicators to stay ahead. Insight gleaned from data published by DataReportal.com on the 'State of digital in South Africa 2023' has yielded five trends that will impact South Africa's digital landscape in 2024.

**1. Mobile-first approach:** With 96 percent of the population owning a mobile phone and 87 percent using mobile internet, mobile devices are the primary way that South Africans access digital content and services. This means that digital marketers need to optimize their websites, apps, ads, and campaigns for mobile users, ensuring fast loading times, responsive design, easy navigation, and clear calls to action.

**2. Social commerce:** Social media platforms are not only used for communication and entertainment, but also for shopping and discovery. According to DataReportal.com, 67 percent of social media users in South Africa have searched for products or services on social media, and 55 percent have bought something directly through a social media platform. This trend offers digital marketers an opportunity to leverage the power of social networks, influencers, and user-generated content to drive sales and conversions.

**3. Video marketing:** Video is one of the most engaging and effective forms of digital content, especially on mobile devices. DataReportal.com reports that 93 percent of internet users in South Africa watch online videos every month, spending an average of 2 hours and 18 minutes per day on platforms like YouTube Shorts, TikTok and Instagram Reels. This bite size short form content is becoming increasingly popular, offering digital marketers new ways to engage with their audience.

**4. Personalization:** Consumers today expect personalized and relevant experiences from brands, especially online. DataReportal.com reveals that 64 percent of internet users in South Africa are willing to share their personal data with brands in exchange for more tailored offers or recommendations. However, with increasing concerns over data privacy, brands are focusing on transparency and ethical data use. Consumers expect clarity on how their data is collected, used, and protected. Digital marketers must prioritize data privacy and ensure that they communicate their data policies effectively.

**5. Authenticity over Artificial intelligence:** Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the way that digital marketing is done, enabling smarter and faster decisions, insights, and actions. As a result, AI is increasingly integrated into social media. However, research shows that there's a growing need to balance efficiency with authenticity. Different generations show varying levels of trust toward AI-generated content, with Gen Z more open to engaging with such content compared to older generations. Digital marketers must navigate this landscape carefully, using AI to enhance the user experience while maintaining a genuine connection with their audience.



**Arisha Saroop - The MediaShop Durban Managing Director**



# Influencer Marketing in South Africa

## A Deep Dive into Metrics and Practices of Influencer marketing

Influencers have emerged as pivotal players, bridging the gap between brands and the country's diverse consumer base. With the digital terrain more fragmented than ever, the pressing question for marketers is: How do you measure the true impact of influencer partnerships, and what strategies ensure success?

A recent Influencer Marketing Hub report sheds light on this, revealing that 63% of South African marketers now prioritize performance-driven models like cost per engagement (CPE) or cost per click (CPC). This shift underscores a growing emphasis on tangible results, aiming for a clear-cut return on investment in the



**Dashni Vilakazi - The MediaShop JHB Managing Director**

and music and fitness on X, further guide brand decisions, aligning influencer collaborations with product offerings and brand ethos.

### Guidelines for Influencer Marketing Metrics

In response to the above the IAB Marketing Influencer Marketing committee has prepared a white paper addressing the criteria for measurement and benchmarking for influencers. This takes into account the regulatory considerations, risk mitigation strategies that marketers can sense check before embarking on a campaign.

### Categories of Influencer Marketing

The influencer ecosystem is far from homogenous. Data from marketing platform Humanz, highlights the vast landscape of South African influencers, categorizing them from nano to superstar based on their follower counts.

The findings reveal a predominance of nano-influencers, individuals with 1,000 to 4,999 followers, known for their high engagement levels within niche communities. This contrasts sharply with the rarefied air of superstar influencers, boasting over a million followers but facing challenges in trust and engagement metrics.

These distinctions are crucial for brands navigating the influencer selection process, with the choice heavily influenced by campaign goals—be it niche engagement or broad-scale awareness. The popularity of categories like fitness, lifestyle, and fashion on Instagram,

### Navigating the Pitfalls

However, the influencer marketing landscape is not without its pitfalls. Over 48% of Instagram influencers in South Africa reportedly inflate their follower and engagement stats, a concerning trend highlighted by HypeAuditor. Techniques range from the dubious follow/unfollow method to outright purchasing of followers, casting shadows on the authenticity and effectiveness of influencer campaigns.

This underbelly of influencer marketing poses significant risks, potentially tarnishing brand reputation and diluting campaign impact. As a counter-measure, brands are increasingly turning to reliable verification tools and platforms, seeking to ensure the authenticity and integrity of their influencer partnerships.

While influencer marketing offers a potent strategy for brand engagement in South Africa's diverse marketplace, its execution demands careful selection, rigorous measurement, and a proactive stance against fraud. By aligning with genuine influencers whose reach and resonance match their campaign objectives, brands can navigate the complexities of the digital age, forging meaningful connections with their target audience.



# GENERATED: THE PIGEON WITH A CRASH HELMET

AI's accessibility and rapid rate of development means legislation will struggle to keep up with progress – which makes self-regulation paramount now, writes GRAHAM DENEYS.



Image generated from Google Gemini.

If you are a bit of an AI novice you've probably used OpenAI or Gemini to create an image using prompts like: "pigeon with a crash-helmet" in the style of Andy Warhol.

Then of course, if you have a strong hold on AI, you're more than likely breaking down doors and pushing technology into places you never thought possible. Either way, AI looks like a complete game-changer, and I can't wait to see what's next.

AI's potential brilliance is present in almost every conversation but, in among all of this excitement, is another side: legislation, regulation and control.

I've received a draft of the new [EU Artificial Intelligence Act](#). This document, a "proposed legal framework that focuses on the specific utilisation of AI systems and associated risks", is a solid piece of work considering the societal risks that have been raised in relation to AI thus far – but it also appears to be in a relentless race against technology and the pursuit of progress.

This race has already produced a semi-damaged internet. Yes, the internet has been revolutionary, connecting the world and opening doors of opportunity, but the simultaneous growth of its not-so-glamorous side has started to weigh heavily.

The opportunity cost of our advancements has been battered by misrepresentation, misinformation, fake news, and countless nefarious activities that have become a major threat to society, the planet and business.

Humans have been obsessed with this glowing oracle of connectivity since its inception, adopting and adapting to new applications, platforms and

technologies. But in our pursuit of progress we failed to fully recognise the associated rising tide and negative effects, and are still making rather late mitigation efforts.

## A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO PROGRESS

What we are now left with is an incredible human advancement that is as problematic as it is useful. We have to make sure we don't do this again with the incredible opportunity that is AI.

As AI is in its infancy phase, it presents us with an opportunity for responsible progress. The speed at which AI has been developing, and its easy accessibility, has led to a groundswell of [development in AI legislation](#), including the beforementioned EU AI Act, which is the first comprehensive AI law in the world. But while it constitutes progress in terms of official legislation, many governments, organisations and corporate bodies are still trying to play catch up with their official policies and guidelines.

It is therefore our responsibility to build complementing guardrails as we hurtle towards this exciting future.

We need to ensure that we self-regulate from the start, as opposed to waiting for reactionary and late-to-the-party interventions.

We will simultaneously need to evaluate future media ecosystems from the inside out. This will require an acute understanding of the risks alongside the advancements made, in the same way in which the scientific community has protocols in place. These protocols aren't designed to stifle innovation – they are in place to mitigate mistakes, potential dangers, and irresponsible actions. They are there to promote responsible innovation and progress.

It looks as though AI, and its close cousins, will more than likely permeate every part of our media and creative

ecosystems and we need to be all over it as it transforms touchpoints and interactions across the board, but a core lens of responsible deployment is paramount, ensuring that health, safety and prosperity of People and our Planet are always core components as we shoot for the stars.

We've already become rather relaxed and accustomed to the interchangeability of both AI and Ai in everyday engagements – but Ai is the synonym for the Pale-Throated Sloth (*Bradypus tridactylus*) that lives in the rainforests of French Guiana, while Ai is an abbreviation for Artificial Intelligence – just goes to show how easily small mistakes can creep in... ■

## UNACCEPTABLE RISK AI SYSTEMS ARE SYSTEMS CONSIDERED A THREAT TO PEOPLE AND WILL BE BANNED.

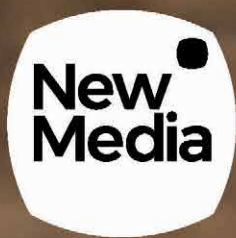
They include:

- Cognitive behavioural manipulation of people or specific vulnerable groups: for example voice-activated toys that encourage dangerous behaviour in children
- Social scoring: classifying people based on behaviour, socio-economic status or personal characteristics
- Biometric identification and categorisation of people
- Real-time and remote biometric identification systems, such as facial recognition

IMAGES: SUPPLIED

Graham Deneys is the chief strategy officer at [Dentsu Media](#). He is certified in sustainable marketing, advertising and media through the University of Cambridge's Sustainability Leadership Institute.

Graham Deneys



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# THE SEVEN DEIB TRENDS FOR 2024

Challenging as it is, the Fourth Industrial Age eases the path to DEIB for all, with intersectional integration being key to impact, says FATHIMA BECKMANN.

**T**he dynamic transformation the Fourth Industrial Age heralds is characterised by rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and an increased community call in socio-political and environmental justice.

Together, this spurs businesses, organisations and societies to fast evolve into co-creating long term impact for 2024 and beyond.

This journey of evolution presents greater opportunities and challenges for diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB).

This 2024 trend report explores the top seven key influencers of the DEI landscape.

## TREND I: THE INTERSECTION OF DEIB AND AI ETHICS

The rapid pace of digital transformation presents an opportunity, through the benefits of technological innovation, to co-create an equitable distribution for diverse communities and society.

For Africa in particular, a key lever for economic empowerment and development is to foster inclusive growth that aligns with broader sustainable development goals, which effectively contribute to poverty reduction and advance social progress.

With our continent's highly talented and youthful, diverse demographic, Africa holds immense global potential.

To advance financial and digital inclusion, organisations such as Mastercard Foundation, MTN, Ecobank, Vodaphone, Old Mutual, Microsoft, Google, WeThinkCode and others, for example, are crucial drivers in addressing these barriers, by harnessing DEIB principles within AI ethics frameworks.

DEI-led integration into the design and deployment of digital financial solutions, co-creation of micro enterprises for entrepreneurs and fintech innovations will ensure that Africa can lever up to fair and equitable access for all segments of society – in particular, women and youth.



Fostering a culture of ethical AI usage aligns with the broader goals of social responsibility, transparency, and accountability, contributing to inclusive growth and sustainable development across the continent.

AI equally plays a pivotal role in contributing to how we intentionally transition the workforce. We have an ethical responsibility to mitigate potential biases embedded within these technologies and frameworks, and to ensure that marginalised communities are not disproportionately impacted by job and career displacement, or algorithmic discrimination.

This is a pivotal moment to embrace AI as your saviour versus saboteur.

## TREND II: ADVANCING BELONGING TO PARTICIPATION

In 2024, intersectionality and political and social movements will galvanise DEIB programmes and initiatives.

Global and local employee resource groups (ERGs) will evolve towards uniting singular race, gender, sex and historic culture and more, leading to ERGs that will adapt to and embrace an intersectional approach, which is employee-network-led in behaviour.

'Intersectionality for context', a term coined by civil rights advocate, Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, emphasises the interconnected nature of social categorisations from race, social class, gender, sexuality, ability and more. Communities, governments, NGOs and organisations are increasingly recognising the integrated value of intersecting identities in their DEI initiatives.

This trend stems from high training investments, which pace slower post awareness and education. Forbes cites unconscious bias trainings alone have amounted to an investment of \$8 billion, with no metric results on change material realities of employees.

To advance belonging we need to drive participation – at every level of business; to go beyond existing training programmes, and channel efforts into effecting and actualising measurable, inclusive- and equitable-led policies, accelerate recruitment and retention strategies, and publicly hold leadership accountable for upholding DEIB as a consistent practice.

**AS WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD  
EXHORTS: DO MORE THAN  
BELONG: PARTICIPATE;  
DO MORE THAN CARE: HELP;  
DO MORE THAN BELIEVE:  
PRACTICE; DO MORE THAN  
DREAM: WORK.**



**“THE TREND OF DEI, HR, ESG, CSR AND SUSTAINABILITY FUNCTIONS MERGING ACROSS INDUSTRIES AND GEOGRAPHIES, WILL INCLUDE INTEGRATION WITH COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS, FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT AT SCALE.”**

**TREND III: IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER**

This leads to Trend III in 2024, which is inspired by the popular African wisdom: “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.” DEI leaders and functionaries often bear the heavy burden of fast transitioning environmental and organisational systemic challenges that have, over decades, entrenched inequities and biases within existing culture, leadership and workforce behaviours.

This singular task is often placed on under-resourced functions in not only dismantling the company’s systemic barriers, but also in shifting culture to create, embed, maintain and advance DEI-led impact.

In the current, evolving landscape diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging intersect in orchestration, together with human resources (HR), corporate social responsibility (CSR); environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and sustainability functions.

HR as the backbone of both employee engagement and culture is a crucial partnership for DEI initiatives. This union provides the co-creation and facilitation of diverse, equitable and inclusive hiring practices, consistent and measured DEIB training and initiatives – with measurable impact and equitable policies that prioritise and improve pay parity and gender equity – to fast-track meaningful progress towards closing the gender pay gap.

**TREND IV: DEIB, THE CATALYST FOR GENERATION CHANGE**

The amalgamation trend of CSR/ESG and sustainability functions and initiatives, closely aligned with DEI-led intent and programmes, will accelerate.

This is spurred by the increase of communities uniting to educate on, promote and hold leadership at every level in society accountable for socio-political and environmental justice, community engagement, and

economic equity for global citizens and marginalised communities.

This united partnership with shared intent across functions is the generation change catalyst for collaborative and transformative impact, for both prosperous and thriving people, and planet.

**TREND V: MEASURABLE INSIGHT LED AND DATA-DRIVEN DIVERSITY**

While DEI is valued, current research reveals a disproportion of visibility, investment, ERG employee engagement, hiring, retention and promotion, ally-ship, mentorship, content development and inclusion for multi-cultural employees.

Data analytics is revolutionising DEI efforts by providing valuable insights into workforce demographics, hiring practices, pay equity, and employee experiences. In 2024, organisations will invest more into leveraging data-driven approaches to identify gaps, set measurable goals, and track progress in their DEI initiatives.

This is a great opportunity to integrate AI frameworks with human engagement for data and insights that guide where key barriers exist – spotlighting advancement blockers, and the effects on representation support in gauging qualified impact on DEI-led initiatives and programmes.

**TREND VI: GLOBALISATION AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

In an interconnected world, organisations are embracing cultural competence as a cornerstone of their DEI strategies. Cultural competence goes beyond mere tolerance; it involves understanding, respecting, and valuing diverse cultural perspectives.

In 2024, organisations are prioritising cross-cultural training, language diversity initiatives, and global mobility programmes to foster a culturally competent workforce. Embracing diversity at a global scale enables organisations to thrive in diverse markets and navigate cultural nuances effectively.

**TREND VII: REIMAGINING SUCCESS AS A DISABLED ACHIEVER**

The title of this trend is from my dear friend Eddie Ndopu’s recent memoir, *Sipping Dom Perignon Through a Straw*. This incredible story of Namibian-born Ndopu was written using his ‘One Good Finger.’

As a global advocate for citizens with diverse abilities, Eddie’s journey is one that points to a growing trend: the increased recognition by global governments, organisations and society given to the importance of inclusivity for accessible workplaces, public environments, adaptive technologies to inclusive hiring practices and representation in key functional contributory and leadership roles.

Driven by legal, ethical, social and economic imperatives to ensure equal and inclusive opportunities for all, disability inclusion will gain significant momentum. Advancements in assistive technologies, and evolving societal attitudes, continue to create meaningful opportunities for participation and contribution, professionally and socially. Disability inclusion is crucial in ensuring everyone has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to their greatest potential.

In conclusion as we journey to our shared collective North Star and navigate the complexities of the 2024 landscape, diversity, equity and inclusion will remain at the forefront for global and local organisations – from those just starting on their journey, to those who are maintaining, and including the early adopter pioneers who are not only advancing and progressing change, but are also co-creating the disruption that will propel humanity to the next frontier.

In 2024 I encourage you to be bold, be courageous and helpful; embrace intersectionality, harness the progressive power of AI, ensure that digital inclusion is a reality, and hold the united partnership baton of collective intent and impact to effect Generation Change as an inclusive future for all in our lifetime.

As diversity, equity and inclusion thought leaders and change agents, it is incumbent upon us to advocate and champion these trends to inspire and cultivate environments where diversity is openly cheered, equity is upheld and honoured, and inclusion is a birthright for every one. ■

**Fathima Beckmann** is a global inclusion and communications strategist and thought leader.

# A TOAST TO TASTE



**As Woolworths TASTE embraces a digital-first future, editor-in-chief Kate Wilson reflects on her time leading one of South Africa's biggest content marketing success stories.**

I have had the privilege of being at the helm of Woolworths TASTE for nine years, during which it has grown from a much-loved award-winning magazine into a multichannel offering with a highly engaged online community. As a brand, it has been a cornerstone of the South African food industry for more than two decades, and I am unbelievably proud of what New Media and Woolworths have achieved since launching the magazine in 2003. This strong partnership, built on a shared vision of offering inspiration, ideas and solutions to an

Kate Wilson

audience that wants to cook and eat better and save time and money, has been the foundation of our success.

The awards we have won are a testament to the team's dedication and creativity, but the true reward has always been the connection we built with our audience. We supply them with accessible and inspiring recipes and help them weave together memories, traditions and a sense of belonging around the dinner table.

When I joined the team as editor-in-chief in 2015 – working for Woolworths TASTE had always been my dream job – the media landscape was changing rapidly. Print readership was declining and digital platforms were burgeoning. We knew we had to

adapt, but it was crucial to maintain the core values that had made the brand such a success: delivering high-quality, useful content that resonates with all South Africans.

## DIGITAL GROWTH

One of the biggest changes we implemented was a focus on digital growth. We revamped the website, launched TASTETube (influenced by Jamie Oliver's FoodTube) and expanded our social media presence. Translating our award-winning print brand into a digital execution took bravery, but our efforts paid off. We saw a surge in website traffic and the growth of a passionate online community. Our team's roles naturally evolved to incorporate digital content creation.

In 2021, we reduced the magazine's frequency from 11 issues annually to six, which gave us the capacity to invest even more in our digital content and channels. We felt incredibly honoured by the recognition we received over that period – a phenomenal 17 international awards between 2020 and 2022.

## TRANSLATING OUR AWARD-WINNING PRINT BRAND INTO A DIGITAL EXECUTION TOOK BRAVERY, BUT OUR EFFORTS PAID OFF

### WHAT MAKES TASTE GREAT?

Produced by New Media on behalf of Woolworths, the editorial positioning of Woolworths TASTE is not to 'sell' to customers, but to deliver useful, high-quality, engaging content to a potential audience of three million Woolworths shoppers.

Aside from the client's trade priorities, Woolworths TASTE's content aims to represent the diverse demographic of South Africa and attract new customers to Woolworths through authentic representation and inclusivity. The small full-time team works with a large pool of food editors, writers, stylists and recipe developers, while also managing video hosts and influencers to create content that speaks to all South Africans and serves the audience and trade needs of the client.

Content is designed to appeal to different customer segments – from the busy, reluctant cook to passionate food lovers – and strikes a balance between inspiration and convenience, accessibility and aspiration.



I was especially thrilled with the two special recognition awards we won at The Folio: Eddie & Ozzie Awards in 2021: Overall Editorial Excellence and Editorial Team of the Year. Being singled out in the year after the Covid-19 lockdown was amazing for the team, who had not only continued to produce the magazine remotely, but also produced 50 videos in six weeks when Woolworths exponentially increased the video brief. We just did it, from home – with all the pressures of the pandemic.

Then in December 2023, we achieved a significant milestone – our digital audience officially surpassed one million monthly users. This was, in part, due to the huge growth of traffic to our website, and, in part, due to the growth of our TikTok account (@wwtaste). A single video hit five million views on TikTok in December, and we continue to reach five million users on TikTok monthly.

It became clear that growth for our brand would come from digital executions, and it was decided to stop printing bimonthly issues in 2024 to focus our team's efforts solely on this goal. But the essence of Woolworths TASTE – its dedication to its audience – will always remain at the heart of everything we do.

### A VIBRANT AND DIVERSE TEAM

I am incredibly proud of the diverse make-up of our team. We have a vibrant mix of food enthusiasts, from serious nerds to those just getting started in

the kitchen. Our team also reflects the diverse demographics of South Africa with members of different generations, from various ethnic and religious backgrounds and speaking different languages. It's a blend of perspectives and experiences that fosters a truly creative environment, ensuring that we continue to deliver content that resonates with a wide audience.

I also want to pay tribute to two of our stalwarts: Abigail Donnelly and Phillipa Cheifitz, who worked on the magazine from the beginning. Phillipa was the first food editor and became a regular recipe contributor until the January/February 2023 issue – the



last one she contributed to (at the age of 81!). She is still one of my food heroes. And Abigail, our food director, remains with the team to this day. I credit her for enabling us to put certain chefs and food personalities – including some of our own contributors – on the map.

In a special guest column published in the magazine's 20th birthday issue (September/October 2023), my predecessor, launch editor Sumien Brink, raised a toast to TASTE. She noted that Woolworths had wanted New Media to create "the best food magazine in the world". What a brief – one I believe we have achieved. "Boundaries were pushed from the start," said Sumien. We will continue with this strong legacy as we leverage the many opportunities of a digital-first strategy: curated recipe collections based on dietary needs, interactive video tutorials and a vibrant online space for home cooks to connect and share experiences, telling uniquely South African food stories.

"All of this is possible as we continue to prioritise our core values: creating high-quality content, inclusivity and an unwavering commitment to our audience. This is what has made Woolworths TASTE an enduring success story that I am proud to be a part of as we start this exciting new chapter."

**This is sponsored content. ■**



# NEWS INDUSTRY MELTDOWN

Yes, news media scored many own goals, but it has crucial role to play in society – and cannot go unsupported, writes **STYLI CHARALAMBOUS**.

**T**he recent tsunami of bad news about the news has raised an interesting question. Are we seeing the effects of a market failure playing out, or are we seeing the death of an industry that failed to innovate and keep up with the times?

“Creative destruction” was coined by economist Joseph Schumpeter in 1942 to describe the dismantling of established processes to make way for new ones. A bitter and uncomfortable shedding of deadweight, as new products or technologies lead to the demise of the old ones.

Think of camera film and Kodak, the often-studied business school case study of product disruption. Few tears were shed as the world embraced digital cameras and smartphones because digital photography was easier, cheaper and better.

Prof Jay Rosen summarised many things that contributed to where we find ourselves — showing how we scored many own goals. Is journalism past its sell-by date, as some have argued? And does it matter whether it's a market failure instead?

Here are some thoughts.

First, it is important to distinguish which scenario is playing out. Mostly because, if we are indeed seeing market failure, the best and usually only response is for regulatory intervention and government support.

If it's a plain vanilla disruption of the Kodak kind, we will see new products and services fill the void of journalism, and society will be better off. Societies and democracies shouldn't decay, migrating from the news equivalent of camera film to digital.

It's also important to separate the newspaper segment of the industry from broadcast news on television and radio. Studies have shown that these newsrooms provide more original news reporting than any other over time, and

are probably responsible for most groundbreaking investigations that change our world.

Yet, they are the ones that have suffered the most financially.

## MARKET FAILURE ARGUMENT

The argument for market failure hinges on the idea that public service journalism, especially local and investigative reporting, is a public good, underprovided in a broken market system.

Anyone following the turmoil of the last 20 years will know that the digital revolution has severely disrupted the economics of the news industry. Advertising revenue, once the lifeblood of the industry, has massively shifted to tech giants like Google and Facebook, leaving news outlets gasping for sustainable revenue models.

This could be seen as a failure of the market to support vital democratic functions of the press, such as holding power to account and informing the public.

Additionally, the proliferation of free content online has led to a devaluation of quality journalism in the eyes of many consumers, who might not differentiate between well-researched, fact-checked reporting and more sensationalist or biased content.

Or a TikTok created in a teenager's bedroom.

This could be seen as a market failure where consumers do not adequately value a crucial product for democracy, but it is still valuable and sorely needed.

Adding an extra layer of complexity is when a few players (ala New York Times, Financial Times, etc.) are winning. “Winner takes most” is a common theme in news industry reports, epitomising the problem where a global publisher like New York Times is seen as a competitor for local news subscription budgets.

**Styli Charalambous**

**WE DON'T NEED ANY MORE PROOF THAT THE SYSTEM IS BROKEN; WE NEED SUPPORTIVE MEASURES FOR A CRITICAL INDUSTRY. NOW.**

## JOURNALISM AS A PUBLIC GOOD

The other element of the market failure argument is whether journalism is a “public good.” Usually, public goods are provided by governments, are not for exclusive use and can be used multiple times.

[The South African National Editor's Forum](#) settled on a definition that ‘public interest journalism’ refers to journalistic activity that is central to the democratic function and the protection and promotion of the South African Constitution, including investigative journalism, reporting on the daily affairs of public institutions, and local journalism focused on the generation of public interest stories in towns and villages and underserved rural areas.

So, while not all journalism is a public good, much journalism is created in the public interest and can be argued as such. While not as clear-cut as roads, clean water, and air, the democratic value to society of public interest journalism is, in my book and many others, a public good.

## CREATIVE DISRUPTION ARGUMENT

On the flipside, the argument for creative disruption posits that the challenges faced by the news industry are a natural part of technological advancement and evolution within the media landscape.

Prof [Jeff Jarvis asks if it's time to give up on old news](#) because “legacy” journalism has failed to become a service to society and be driven by the needs of those audiences they claim to serve.

From this perspective, the internet and digital platforms have democratised content creation and distribution, breaking down the barriers that once kept news media as gatekeepers of information. This has led to an explosion of new voices and perspectives, arguably enriching the public discourse.

Shifting business models towards digital reader revenue, subscription, membership, and crowdfunding are emerging as news organisations adapt to this new environment, albeit with few success stories.

This can be seen as a healthy, albeit painful, transformation that pushes

**IF IT'S A PLAIN VANILLA DISRUPTION OF THE KODAK KIND, WE WILL SEE NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FILL THE VOID OF JOURNALISM, AND SOCIETY WILL BE BETTER OFF.**

the industry towards more direct and engaging relationships with its audience, fostering loyalty and community.

The follow-up question is: at what cost to society? When Kodak and other camera film manufacturers developed their last negatives, society was unchanged, and many would argue that society was better off. Can we say the same if the news industry continues to haemorrhage in the way it has?

## SO WHICH IS IT?

My deduction is both. But much more of one.

Poor leadership, failure to innovate and clinging to old practices have certainly factored into the demise of many news outlets. Not to mention those who operate in the extremes of the attention economy, seeking to monetise our anger and fears.

But many news practitioners are doing incredible work in heart-breaking conditions and getting nowhere, thanks to economics that no longer work.

If we agree that the system is broken and that there is still immense value to society for that product/service, regulatory intervention is the only response that can restore a semblance of normalcy.

These take the form of incentives and subsidies to encourage behaviour changes from members of the public, advertisers and publishers themselves.

I write about these possible [measures in detail here](#), taking guidance from successful European efforts, sustainability research reports and other government-supported industries.

## SOME REGULATORY MEASURES AND INCENTIVES TO SUSTAIN MEDIA

For some, government intervention might sound scary, but there are many

examples where it can and has been done in a supportive and helpful way.

There are many precedents we can lean on and measures that can prevent systemic abuse. In 2009, the [Federal Trade Commission in the USA](#) held discussions with industry players around policy recommendations to support the “reinvention of journalism” in the Internet age. “Market failure” was already bandied about then, and some of the recommendations look quite appealing when viewed through the lens of an extinction-level event.

In countries where subsidies exist, like those in Scandinavia, we also find high press [freedom scores](#) and stellar [corruption perception](#) scores. More importantly, we see some of the healthiest news media organisations in the world. Regulatory support is not the only factor, but it is surely significant during periods of mass disruption to provide the space for innovation.

Those practising public service journalism feel very much like Sisyphus — destined to push boulders up never-ending mountains. We don't need any more proof that the system is broken; we need supportive measures for a critical industry. Now. ■

**This story was first published by Medium.**

As co-founder and CEO of [Daily Maverick](#), **Styli Charalambous** is responsible for driving business model innovation, data and technology adoption and membership. But mostly making sure people get paid. He earned start-up stripes and grey hair along the way in other ventures and is now a reformed accountant.

# SCANDAL!

# UnStoppable

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# NOW STREAMING ON

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## EVOD'S POPULAR FREE STREAMING APP IS UPGRADING

South Africa's youngest streaming platform is close to reaching one million registrations since launching in August 2021. The eMedia streaming service made history in the country by allowing users to watch local and international content for free. The service also has an option to subscribe for additional features and access premium content. And now South Africa's free streaming app has launched an upgraded version for an improved user experience, offering easier navigation, options to create your own playlist, recommended watching based on your profile and live TV streaming daily for programmes on eExtra and e.tv from 17:00 to 22:00.

More features include auto trailers to preview shows and movies and a data-saver option to select various playback qualities (HD, medium, data saver, etc.)

eVOD is home to award-winning locally produced movies and dramas. Since launch, the platform has released 12 eVOD original movies and series, with more to come in the next few months. Certain local series have even released a second season (titles like Housewives, Splintered Pieces and STOUT, whose second season was released recently).

Some of the most watched local movie titles include Piets Sake 1 and 2, A Queen's Lobola, My Girlfriends Father,

Atlantis, and an Afrikaans movie – Yolanda is Swanger. eVOD is also home to many Afrikaans telenovelas – hugely popular with South African audiences. Titles like Die Agentskap, #DisComplicated and Die Vreemdeling are a feast for all the senses. The ever-popular and hilarious Ouma Sarie (starring Moses Williams) is also now streaming on eVOD.

The streaming platform also houses a variety of international blockbusters in every genre, documentaries and local e.tv soaps, which can be viewed again. eVOD is committed to adding new, especially local, content, and the coming months in 2024 will have great surprises for viewers to keep them entertained.

Download the eVOD streaming app from the Google Play store for Android users and the iStore for Apple users. Current users of the eVOD app will be prompted to download and install the updated version to continue the viewing journey. The good news is that Huawei users can now also enjoy eVOD – download the streaming app from the Huawei App Gallery – for the first time! eVOD is home to subscription-free, award-winning local content, and so much more, with hours of streaming entertainment. You don't want to be without it.

FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:



# NAVIGATING TOMORROW

**With talent, creativity, and technological innovation – the triad cornerstone of progress – Africa will chart a course for a thriving future, asserts DAWN ROWLANDS.**

In traversing the diverse and dynamic terrain of Africa's business landscape, one finds a tapestry woven with threads of innovation, resilience and untapped potential.

As we embark further on this journey, the focus shifts from any single entity to the broader canvas of opportunities and challenges that define the region's economic narrative.

The rise of Africa as a formidable player in the global economy is marked by a convergence of factors – from rapid urbanisation and demographic shifts – to the proliferation of digital technologies and the growing appetite for entrepreneurship.

Within this context, the narrative of growth and progress unfolds, propelled by a spirit of innovation and a commitment to overcoming barriers.

At its heart lies the pursuit of solutions – real, tangible solutions that address the unique needs and aspirations of African markets. It is here that the role of talent, creativity, and technological innovation becomes paramount.

This triad forms the cornerstone of progress, enabling businesses to not only survive but thrive in a landscape characterised by complexity and uncertainty.

As we reflect on the trajectory of businesses operating within Africa, it becomes evident that success is predicated on a deep understanding of the local context, coupled with a willingness to embrace innovation and adaptability.

Gone are the days of one-size-fits-all approaches; instead, what emerges is a mosaic of strategies tailored to the intricacies of each market and community.

Against this backdrop, partnerships emerge as catalysts for growth and transformation. Collaborations between industry players, government agencies, and civil society organisations serve as conduits for knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and collective problem-solving.

## COLLABORATIVE CONDUITS

It is through such alliances that new avenues for innovation are unlocked, paving the way for sustainable development and inclusive growth.

In navigating the road ahead, several trends and opportunities come into focus.

The rise of mobile money solutions and digital payments signifies a paradigm shift in how business is conducted, offering greater accessibility and convenience for consumers and merchants alike.

Similarly, the emergence of cryptocurrency and blockchain technologies presents novel possibilities for financial inclusion and economic empowerment, albeit with accompanying challenges and regulatory considerations.

Furthermore, the prevalence of remote work arrangements and digital nomadism speaks to the transformative potential of technology in reshaping labour markets and driving skills development.

As artificial intelligence (AI) and automation continue to permeate various sectors, there arises a need for proactive measures to ensure that the workforce is adequately prepared for the jobs of tomorrow.

Against this backdrop of change and opportunity, it is imperative for businesses to embrace a forward-looking mindset characterised by agility, adaptability, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

By harnessing the power of data analytics, AI, and other emerging technologies, companies can gain deeper insights into consumer behaviour, optimise operations, and drive innovation across the value chain.

In conclusion, the narrative of Africa's business landscape is one defined by resilience, innovation, and boundless potential.

As we chart a course towards the future, the key lies in leveraging insights, embracing innovation, and forging strategic partnerships that enable us to navigate the complexities of today's world with confidence and conviction.

Together, we can shape a brighter, more prosperous tomorrow for Africa and beyond. ■

**Dawn Rowlands**



**Dawn Rowlands** is the CEO of [dentsu Africa](#). She is responsible for the growth of the African Network expanding the footprint in South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania taking dentsu Africa from five owned markets to 11.



# Kagiso Media Radio's standout podcasts captivate audiences

South Africa's podcast industry continues to show immense potential, with significant growth expected over the next few years. According to a Demand Sage report (2024), there are 504.9 million podcast listeners globally. While SA's podcast market is significantly smaller than that of countries like the United States, Statista projects that the local market will reach 4.8 million listeners by 2027.

**Kagiso Media Radio** (KMR) stations – Jacaranda FM and East Coast Radio (ECR) – have strategically curated and produced high-quality podcast content for their audiences.

From a suspenseful true crime Afrikaans edition of a South African favourite to enchanting African storytelling with a living legend, KMR's podcast offering promises listeners audio content that informs, inspires and entertains. The award-winning podcasts have captured audiences in South Africa and beyond.

**JacPod**, Jacaranda FM's library of bespoke podcasts, has become a go-to place for listeners searching for various topics. Since its inception in June 2018, the platform has grown in reputation and downloads. **True Crime South Africa - Die Afrikaanse Weergawe** – the Afrikaans spin-off of Nicole Engelbrecht's True Crime South Africa – won Gold at the New Generation Social and Digital Media

Awards 2023 for 'Best Use of Podcast/ Vlog to Promote a Brand or Event'.

**Don't Hold Back**, which is co-produced by Jacaranda FM and ECR with German broadcaster Deutsche Welle, won Bronze at the international Anthem Awards in the category, 'Education, Art & Culture/ Podcast or Audio/Awareness & Media Categories (Nonprofit)'. It was also a finalist at the New York Radio Festivals in 2023.

The podcast's host, Nozibele Qamngana-Mayaba, was recognised at the African Podcast and Voice Awards (APVA) in 2023 and was a finalist in the prestigious IAB (Association for International Broadcasting) Awards, in the 'Presenter of the Year' category (Radio and Audio).

Podcast lovers are also spoiled for choice on ECR's **podcast platform**. The KZN radio station's bespoke podcasts include the critically acclaimed **African Story Magic with Gcina Mhlophe**, which received an honorary mention at the DStv Content Creator Awards in 2023 in the 'Podcast of the Year' category, and **The Carol Ofori Podcast**, with ECR's 9am–12pm weekday host, which was a finalist in the same category.

At the 2023 APVA Awards, **The Hustle with Justin Harrison**, which has been spotlighted in Apple Podcast's 'New and Noteworthy' section, won 'Best

Finance Podcast' while African Story Magic with Gcina Mhlophe was named the 'Best Fiction Podcast'.

## HOW TO LISTEN TO JACARANDA FM AND EAST COAST RADIO PODCASTS

Jacaranda FM's podcast library includes: **Mevrou Mevrou**, **True Crime South Africa**, **The Dad Bodcast with Joe Mann and Themba Robin**, **Talking in Creative Circles**, **Baby Brunch**, The Parenting series with Elana Afrika-Bredenkamp, **The Money Podcast**, **To Catch a Serial Killer**, **Legal Luminaries with Iman Rappetti**, **Don't hold back: Say it loud!** and **True Crime South Africa – die Afrikaanse weergawe**. JacPod link – <https://www.jacarandafm.com/jacpod/>

ECR's bespoke library includes: African Story Magic with Gcina Mhlophe, **The Hustle with Justin Harrison**, **The Carol Ofori Podcast**, **KindnessCan**, KZN Future 50, Podcast Pick and **Snake with Nick Evans**.

East Coast Radio podcast link – <https://www.ecr.co.za/podcasts/>





# WHAT'S NEXT FOR RADIO?

Radio in South Africa celebrates its centennial this year – stamping itself as a stalwart and proving its enduring resilience – despite ongoing threats and challenges, writes NADIA BULBULIA.

**2**024 is a milestone year for South Africa, as we go to the polls for our seventh free and fair national election, while marking 30 years of democracy – and 30 years of independently regulated broadcasting.

And radio, in its centennial, proves its enduring relevance to its audiences, and its communities.

## VOTES ARE IN...

2024 is also the year in which global debates on the ethics of artificial intelligence are high on the agenda.

2024 has also been dubbed [The Year of Elections](#) – and [The Year of AI Elections](#) – and there is greater scrutiny of the protection of users of online social media platforms, and growing concern that online misinformation and disinformation campaigns will impact the outcome of the national elections.

It's therefore encouraging to note that platforms such as Meta, Google and TikTok have partnered with the IEC to curb disinformation ahead of the elections.

Radio, as a highly responsible and regulated traditional media format, has long played an active role in maintaining balance in its reportage, and will continue to play a moderating and informative role.

**...DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ... RADIO KEPT LISTENERS INFORMED AND EDUCATED AND, IMPORTANTLY, ALSO ENGAGED, AND ENTERTAINED.**

## A WIDER LANDSCAPE

It's hard to believe that 30 years ago, SABC radio services dominated the airwaves. Today there are over 200 community radio licensees, and more than 40 commercial and public radio services. The emergence of online digital content services had many predicting that traditional radio would be overtaken by digital audio. How wrong they were!

South Africa, rated as the most unequal country in the world, according to [The Gini Coefficient](#), is still burdened with the highest communication costs; even though data costs have come down, many citizens cannot afford digital online-only services. Radio is ubiquitous, and battery-operated radio sets are still widely available – a relief during loadshedding!

Radio experts point to the resilience and adaptability of radio, and the power of this medium was especially felt during the Covid-19 pandemic. Radio kept listeners informed and educated and, importantly, also engaged, and entertained.

Throughout the national lockdown, radio cemented itself as a community builder, bringing together citizens who were affected by COVID-19 as well as brands and organisations that were determined to alleviate the impact of the virus on the communities they served.

Radio has also been characterised as the original social media in providing social

connection to aggregate communities of interest and in the curation of content. More importantly, it is a credible source of news and information, especially in this age of fake news and alternative facts.

## GROWING COMMUNITIES

Since the introduction of community radio in our democracy, the public broadcaster has been a firm partner, offering training and capacity building programmes to communities. This hyper-local tier of broadcasting serves the needs and interests of specific communities and, while both commercial and public tiers have offered support wherever possible, there are inherent sustainability challenges that threaten the viability of community radio.

Funding sources are not guaranteed, and volunteerism is no solution in a country with unacceptably high unemployment levels. Entities such as the MDDA and GCIS are unable to support the entire community radio sector.

Resource constraints have resulted in the closure of several community radio stations – in part due to their inability to pay signal distribution fees, but also due to non-compliance with ICASA regulations and, at times, internal leadership battles.

Despite these difficulties, community radio is a success story in addressing the needs and interests of diverse communities across the country. Several community radio stations are available online and their content can be accessed nationally, and even globally.

## TUNED INTO TECH

Radio has embraced the technological shifts in the digital era, providing online digital services that have broadened the footprint of traditional linear radio.

Radio stations are developing their own apps, and specialised programmes have extended their reach through dedicated podcasts – which are growing steadily in the audio ecosystem.



**Nadia Bulbulia**

Artificial Intelligence is also transforming the creation of audio content with applications such as text to speech, voice-cloning and real-time personalised advertising.

AI-generated radio does not provide the very human connection and authenticity that makes for great radio. These technologies are useful tools in the development of content creation, but AI will not replace the radio host, the journalist, the reporter, or the aspirant musician.

Furthermore, legal and ethical issues are still under consideration. These range from copyright and intellectual property to manipulation and abuse. We'll be watching this space.

## INFLUENCING TALENT

At a recent radio masterclass event, a seasoned programme manager quipped that "radio is the OG of the influencer" adding that influencers are not new to radio; they are new to a younger generation. It's this younger generation, according to another seasoned broadcaster: "Who, without any professional radio training, believes that being an influencer is enough to host a programme – that's rarely the case; they are not all naturally talented, they still need to be trained in the art of radio."

It's about researching, preparing, and respecting your audience, she added.

Talent management, development and retention are vital for the success of any business. However, the freelance nature of radio talent poses a huge challenge. It also presents a wonderful opportunity to develop new and unique talent and talent that is tech-savvy and willing to work across platforms. There is also need for inter-generational skills transfer, as younger professionals in the sector will be leading radio of tomorrow.

## REQUIRED: SYSTEM UPDATE

Thirty years into our democracy, the SABC is still not publicly funded – which means competition across all three tiers (public, community, commercial) remains fierce.

The threats in the sector are no longer domestic, but multinational, with the rise of global content services.

This, in an environment of onerous regulation and where appeals for regulatory parity and investment

into public service content, and strengthening the national signal provider, are all ignored.

The outdated policy and regulatory instruments are no longer fit for purpose.

## THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In 2020, the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT) launched a policy review process to overhaul outdated policies and, finally, create an enabling environment for broadcasters in the digital age: [Draft White Paper on Audio and Audiovisual Content Media Services and Online Content Safety](#).

A key policy objective is to address regulatory parity between the heavily regulated broadcasting sector, and unregulated online content platforms. The policy review is also intended to repeal ownership restrictions in the radio sector.

However, four years have passed since the introduction of the policy review process – and there are no clear timelines on when this process will be finalised.

Meanwhile, the sector continues to compete directly with unlicensed services – and without any opportunity to consolidate or diversify.

At the same time, the Competition Commission has launched a [Media and Digital Platforms Market Inquiry](#) into the impact of big tech on South African news publishers. This follows global initiatives to develop mechanisms for fair compensation by big tech companies for the use of local news content.

The DCDT policy review and the Competition Commission inquiry present opportunities to potentially protect and foster radio in the country. But only time will tell whether these processes have any significant impact at all.

In the regulated broadcasting sector, policy and regulation moves at a glacial pace. It is therefore highly unlikely that the years ahead will deliver on any major policy changes.

Still, the sector itself will continue to adapt to technological shifts, market

dynamics and the threats of international competition for ad revenue. It will continue to be front and centre in the media mix in delivering rich and authentic local content to its fans and followers, and high audience numbers to brands and government communicators.

It will forge new partnerships and collaborate on campaigns to address societal issues – such as the Free Radio Initiative of the NAB on gender-based violence – and infrastructure vandalism, as well as campaigns against disinformation.

The sector will no doubt invest further in understanding media consumption through the work of the Broadcast Research Council (BRC), and it will continue to uphold constitutional principles of freedom of expression and continue supporting diversity and plurality through financial contributions to the MDDA.

## INTO THE FUTURE

The radio sector cannot wait for policy reform. The show must go on, and the public must be served.

Excellent quality content, audience engagement, innovation and collaboration will be key to ensuring the sector's sustainability. As former US NAB President and CEO Gordon Smith once said: "Broadcasting's best days lie ahead as both an engine of local economies and as an integral part of tomorrow's technological world."

The opportunities will also be found in partnerships with global forums such as the World Radio Alliance (WRA), to promote the power and value of radio. ■

**Nadia Bulbulia** is executive director of the [National Association of Broadcasters](#). She's recognised for her behind the scenes work in research and advocacy.

# PODCAST PREDICTIONS FOR 2024: A LOTTERY OF TRENDS

Paywalled content, interactive shows, monetisation means, talent pools and more – is it any wonder **SIMMI AREFF** reckons this could be podcast's year of reinvention?

**E**very year I try make podcast predictions that actually ring true, and each year I am either proven right – or blown away with what transpired.

Depending on the statistics you read, or who you choose to believe, podcasting on the continent – and in South Africa – is either in really good shape, or a market on the precipice of exploding.

But why inundate you with statistics when I could just take a small dive into the trends I think will become prominent in the months ahead?

With YouTube now in the podcasting space, all their major expansions with RSS integration point directly towards YouTube becoming a prominent podcast player. Sure, you probably already are consuming podcasts in the form of video, but now YouTube is set to become another popular place to upload your podcasts RSS feed to.

When will this arrive to African shores? We don't really know – we aren't usually top of mind in podcast landscapes when

**FREELANCE PODCASTERS  
MAY BE IN FOR A LOT MORE  
CONSULTATION AND PITCHING,  
AND PODCAST TALENT IS  
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PAID GIGS AS BRANDS  
LOOK TO INCREASE THEIR  
EXPOSURE TO  
DEVELOPING AUDIENCES.**



**Simmi Areff**

technology is created, but at some point of 2024 YouTube RSS integration and access to another platform's analytics will be available to podcast creators.

This should bring a nice refresh to the podcast app ecosystem, with creators having access to the YouTube recommendation system, commenting capabilities and the auto-play feature.

## **HOP ABOARD THE AI TRAIN**

Artificial intelligence (AI) will continue to make an impact on the podcasting landscape – whether it just makes your audio cleaner and a better listening experience, or whether it is providing different ways of promotion, or some other unidentified way of producing or generating content...



**RIGHT NOW, A LOT OF PODCASTS TREAT THEIR ADVERTISING LIKE RADIO ADVERTISING. I THINK THIS YEAR WE WILL SEE MORE INNOVATIVE PODCASTING ADVERTISING THAT HIGHLIGHTS THE BRANDS THAT ARE WILLING TO BE MORE CREATIVE WITH THE ONLINE AUDIO THEY DELIVER.**

The AI train is here and I urge everyone to jump aboard.

I would love to see AI focused on opening up podcasts to communities that speak different languages. I would love an AI tool that can translate an English podcast into allow our official languages, to allow more people to enjoy content and gain access to insights in their mother tongue. It also allows a creator's audience to grow.

Hopefully AI also plays a part in enhanced analytics and measurement tools for creators as well. This is one segment of the podcast landscape that grows year on year, and the more sophisticated the analytics, the easier it is to explain to future clients how good your podcast is for advertising.

AI has the power to make podcasting faster by saving time and energy through the tools it can provide.

This feeds into monetisation. Right now, a lot of podcasts treat their advertising like radio advertising. I think this year we will see more innovative podcasting advertising that highlights the brands that are willing to be more creative with the online audio they deliver.

Research suggests that audio adverts outperform video advertising when trying to grab attention and generating brand recall, so I fully expect this trend to continue and provide a plethora of new digital audio advertising methods.

### **OF PREMIUMS, PAYWALLS, INTERACTION...**

I also believe that 2024 is the year we see a lot more podcasts offer premium content behind a paywall. Paywalled content is not the only monetisation option – live shows and merchandise are also proving to be income-generating tools. This works if you have an engaged consumer.

The rise of interactive podcasting is also something I expect to see more of in this sector, with more listeners contributing to their favourite shows than before.

Whether this is done by polls Q&A's or real time commenting from streaming, I expect podcasts to provide listeners with a more immersive experience for their communities.

### **... AND POLITICS**

2024 will see a rise in political podcast content. This year, dubbed the Year of AI Elections, will provide more election coverage than before – from US politics to the elections at home, I expect more conversations on the topic in the buildup to several major elections.

What's more, live streaming these conversations is expected to increase sharply. Live-streamed panel discussions, breaking down manifestos and social commentary, will probably reach even further now – think Twitter Spaces, with your favourite trusted political commentators.

More communities listening and commenting on topics they have a keen interest in means there will be more listeners that creators have exposure to.

### **QUALITY OVER QUANTITY**

More shows mean more content – but is that necessarily good? This year, the success of podcasts will come down to how good the content is – not just in terms of the quality of the conversation, but also in the quality of the audio and video provided.

Quality gives the user the chance to engage more with the content – if it sounds bad, not many people will make it to the end of your episode. But if the story is good and the quality backs that up, I expect a surge in fans for particular podcasts.

This also feeds into the types of shows we are able to consume: this year, expect a lot more genres and execution methods. Not everything needs to be a host interviewing a guest expert; maybe more narrative stories will come into play.

We may also hear more listener stories – there will be a lot more room to play around building a niche community that suits the type of content a podcaster produces.

This year feels like the year of reinvention in the podcast landscape.

If you are a podcaster, I expect you to have a lot more gigs lined up, as the need for talented producers is growing – everyone (brands and clients included) wants a podcast platform – but not everyone can make them, or even knows where to start.

Freelance podcasters may be in for a lot more consultation and pitching, and podcast talent is expected to land more paid gigs as brands look to increase their exposure to developing audiences.

**THE RISE OF INTERACTIVE PODCASTING IS ALSO SOMETHING I EXPECT TO SEE MORE OF IN THIS SECTOR, WITH MORE LISTENERS CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR FAVOURITE SHOWS THAN BEFORE.**

Another expected growth curve is with podcast stables that have talent pulling in one consolidated direction – you like one type of podcast? Well, you will probably like the other offerings in the same network.

These are my predictions. I hope some of them come true – and that, even if not, at least some of these trends made you think more about the podcast landscape and where you, the creator or the brand, can fit into it for the rest of 2024. ■

**Simmi Areff** is a pioneer in the podcast space, having successfully launched two podcast companies (POC Podcasts and All Ears FM), won numerous awards, and features prominently in Apple and Spotify charts. He now heads up the podcast division at [Arena Holdings](#) and his hilarious podcast [Badvice](#) is a must-listen.

# IDENTIFIED: FMCG MARKETING'S AI REVOLUTION

AI's ability to tap into our response to stimuli adds a whole new spin to strategy, and calls for the digital twin approach, writes **NOMBULELO YENA**.

It is not every day that one discovers something that completely disrupts their views and strongly-held opinions.

Recently I had the privilege of attending an artificial intelligence workshop. It became evident that AI, when correctly prompted, can unlock a world of endless possibilities.

## IT'S ABOUT DESIGNING CAMPAIGNS THAT NOT ONLY CATCH THE EYE, BUT ALSO TOUCH THE HEART, LEVERAGING THE AMYGDALA'S IMPACT TO CREATE A LASTING IMPRESSION.

Like: how we tailor our media efforts to connect with our audience through the most effective channels and timings – be it a prime-time slot on SABC or Mzansi Magic – or through targeted mobile advertising; the concept of the amygdala and what we refer to as a 'digital twin' is integral.

The idea behind a digital twin in marketing is to focus our money on reaching potential clients rather than a broad, undifferentiated audience, marking a departure from traditional advertising strategies. This method highlights the importance of adopting innovative media planning and holistic 360-degree campaigns that challenge traditional limits.

As marketing veteran Simone Zanetti insightfully remarked, "AI will take the jobs of

those who don't adopt it," highlighting the urgency for marketers to embrace advanced technologies and methodologies in their strategies.

In a landscape where technological innovation continuously reshapes consumer engagement strategies, a recent foray into the capabilities of artificial intelligence has unveiled a ground-breaking perspective on marketing within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry.

The workshop's revelation, that AI can harness the power of human emotional intelligence – particularly through insights into the amygdala's function – marked a pivotal moment in my understanding of modern marketing strategies.

This almond-shaped neural cluster, embedded in our brain as part of the limbic system, emerges not just as a biological component, but as a beacon guiding the future of consumer connection and brand loyalty.

### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE MEETS AI

The amygdala's primary role in emotional processing, especially its swift response to stimuli, has profound implications for marketing.

In the FMCG sector, where the battle for consumer attention is fierce and decisions are made in the blink of an eye, leveraging the amygdala's innate responses could be the key to unlocking unparalleled consumer engagement.

Traditional marketing strategies, heavily reliant on showcasing product features or benefits, pale in comparison to the potential of creating narratives that resonate with the core of human experience.

This emotional resonance, powered by AI's analytical precision, can transform the way brands connect with consumers, fostering a deeper, more meaningful relationship.

### STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS IN FMCG

The practical applications of amygdala insights in FMCG marketing are vast and varied. By crafting advertisements or packaging that instantly trigger an emotional response – be it excitement, satisfaction, or even urgency – brands can significantly influence consumer behaviour.

This strategy transcends the conventional focus on product attributes, venturing into a realm where psychological insights shape consumer perceptions and actions. It's about designing campaigns that not only catch the eye, but also touch the heart, leveraging the amygdala's impact to create a lasting impression.

### BEYOND TRADITIONAL MARKETING

My journey through the realms of above-the-line and digital media has been profoundly influenced by this understanding. Recognising that the core fears and desires of our audience significantly enhance our strategy, we've tailored our efforts to engage the amygdala within the crucial first three-to-five seconds of exposure.

This insight has been instrumental in our approach to media planning, ensuring that every aspect of our campaign, from timing to platform selection, is meticulously calibrated for emotional engagement.

The result? A marketing strategy that not only captures attention but also sustains interest and loyalty, proving the efficacy of amygdala-focused approaches in forging strong brand connections. ■

**Nombulelo Yena**



**Nombulelo Yena**, with 10+ years in media, specialises in ATL and digital media. A BA from AAA School of Advertising laid her strategic foundation. Starting as implementation planner, she progressed to senior strategic planner and now leads FMCG brand media strategies, focusing on impactful ATL and social campaigns for societal engagement.



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# THERE'S NO PERFECT CREATIVE PROMPT

Fascinating? Frightening? AI is a lot, but it cannot replace human creative expression, writes CANDY DEMPERS.

If I were looking for a movie title for the year 2024, I'd seriously consider *Changed*. I think it's a strong contender, hot off the heels of the 2023 blockbuster 'AI'. I'm not sure if these titles are thrillers, comedies, or dramas, but there is a serious dose of reality in each storyline!

The game has changed. The tools have changed. And the rules have changed. (Said in big movie trailer voice.)

In the creative economy, change is an inevitable constant and I believe there is a mutual relationship between change and creativity. Creativity drives change, and change also leads to creativity.

There is no argument that AI is a game changer. In the agency space, AI's ability, and its impact on the services we offer, now needs to be incorporated into our strategic thinking.

## NEW TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Virtually every aspect of what we do, can have a layer of AI added. But just because we can, does not necessarily mean we must.

What we must, is be cognisant of the options that AI adds in our environment: my LinkedIn feed alone is evidence of colleagues experimenting and tinkering with AI.

From text, condensed summaries, images, voiced articles and video, there are a lot of tools to play with. We are still at the

stage where AI-generated content can be recognised. The writing is just a little off. The tone does not match your personality and the word choice has you googling the meaning at times.

Phrases like 'in conclusion' 'to begin with' 'let's look at' make regular appearances, though they're not in your lingo. Watching and listening to AI-generated footage of myself, created from a few sentences and pictures from my phone, is both fascinating and a little frightening.

## IT'S (MAYBE) MIMICRY, NOT MAGIC

Large language models are being refined and refining themselves, and will gradually become more like you, or a version of you.

As an agency it is important to understand the tools and their impact. Staff who are curious and interested in the future of creativity are key in making sure both audiences and clients benefit from the positive effects of AI.

But it is the very interest and curiosity that AI sparks, that it does not have.

Creativity is the catalyst, glue and essence of every idea and concept. Creativity is fuelled by several aspects that don't have an AI prong and, in my mind, cannot be mimicked despite thousands of hours of learning.

Creativity is often guided by an understanding of emotions, empathy, impact, and interpretation.



Candy Dempers

There is no substitute for time on earth and lived experiences. It is these factors that allow us to find a way to connect abstract ideas to people in a meaningful way.

Creative expression resonates because it has no defined rules and formula – and can even defy logic.

Babies start dreaming while still in the womb. Children create entire make-believe worlds with events and characters. Daydreaming and doodling are all part of our imaginations that manifest in vivid thoughts and actions. Technology cannot mimic this; it can only copy and create iterations, not original thoughts or ideas.

Oh look, a bird! Human creativity is random, and the creative process often links unrelated ideas to create innovative solutions. Catchy melodies and hooks in songs, the clever solutions to basic problems. The punchy campaign line or brand story that speaks to the audience in

**WATCHING AND LISTENING TO AI-GENERATED FOOTAGE OF MYSELF, CREATED FROM A FEW SENTENCES AND PICTURES FROM MY PHONE, IS BOTH FASCINATING AND A LITTLE FRIGHTENING.**

## PERFECTING THE PROMPT

We put ChatGPT to the test, using basic prompts on the article included on this page; we've given it three ratings.



Thumbs up



Thumbs down



Something useful

There's no doubt that the potential for sentence starters exists, but the pen remains mightier than the digital sword!

**1. Please suggest three snappy headlines for the attached article to be published in a media industry trade publication.**

- 👍 The Creative Revolution: Embracing Change in the AI Era
- 👍 Beyond Algorithms: Unleashing Human Creativity in the Age of AI
- 👤 "Lights, Camera, Creativity: Navigating the New Landscape of AI-driven Innovation"

**2. Please write two LinkedIn posts that can be used to hook a potential reader to click through and read the entire article. Post must be no more than three sentences.**

- 👤 In the ever-evolving landscape of creativity, AI emerges as both a tool and a challenge. How do we balance the power of AI with the irreplaceable essence of human creativity? Join the conversation on navigating this dynamic relationship! #Creativity #AI #Innovation
- 👍 As AI reshapes industries, understanding its impact on creativity is paramount. While AI excels at analysis, human ingenuity remains unparalleled in emotional connection and originality. Let's explore how we can harness the best of both worlds for ground-breaking innovation! #AI #Creativity #FutureOfWork

**3. I'd like to create an appropriate image for the article attached; please can you give me three prompts to use on the appropriate image tool?**

- 👤 An image depicting a blend of traditional artistic tools (such as paintbrushes, pencils, and can vases) alongside modern technology (such as computer

screens, tablets, and AI symbols), symbolising the intersection of creativity and AI in the modern era.

- 👤 An illustration of a human brain with gears representing AI algorithms intertwined, showcasing the collaboration between human creativity and AI technology to drive innovation and change in the creative economy.

- 👍 A visual representation of a movie theatre marquee displaying titles like "AI" and "Changed" alongside images of futuristic AI-inspired artwork, illustrating the evolving landscape of creativity in the entertainment industry driven by AI advancements.

**Human created ending:** I love experimenting and testing the free AI options. At times it is frustrating as AI doesn't always pick up what I'm putting down. Figuring out excel formulas has become a form of wizardry, as has writing code to make an HTML email signature. I save time but waste it too. I find interesting trains of thought but delete endless words and sentences that add no value. It's like the modern-day writer's block!

**AI created ending:** Incorporating AI into creative spaces offers unparalleled efficiency, enabling rapid analysis of vast data sets and generation of content. It opens doors to new possibilities, augmenting human creativity with innovative tools and techniques. However, reliance on AI may risk diluting the authenticity and emotional depth inherent in human-driven creative endeavours, necessitating a delicate balance to preserve the essence of genuine artistic expression.

**"CREATIVE EXPRESSION  
RESONATES BECAUSE IT HAS NO  
DEFINED RULES AND FORMULA  
— AND CAN EVEN DEFY LOGIC."**

their language and their context. Creativity is a human solution.

How does AI describe the smell of petrol or freshly cut grass? Does AI prefer hot or cold milk in its filter coffee? Can AI laugh so much it hurts or stay awake all night because of a fever?

AI is a brilliant tool. A time saver. Analytical. AI is an aggregator and a resource of technical data. AI can be a catalyst to conversations and ideas. It can check and compare. It can sort information and identify anomalies. It's a game changer.

But AI won't cry in a movie when everyone else is laughing. AI won't watch a scene with one eye open because seeing the action with both eyes is too much and too scary! AI doesn't get goosebumps when the music starts playing after the hero has died. AI doesn't fall asleep or change the channel.

Creativity continues to fuel the journey of change, let's keep creating and being the lead characters, producers, and directors!

Note: no part of this article was generated by AI 😊 ■

**Candy Dempers** loves all things media. An industry veteran with radio as her first love, she is a sales and marketing specialist whose field has expanded into TV and digital media, where she heads up the team at [MediaHeads360](#).

# SHOOTING FOR THE STARS

Freshly relaunched, partnered up and primed to exceed audience expectations, Showmax is set to clinch top spot as Africa's streaming service of choice, writes MARC JURY.

**A**lready, 2024 has been an exciting year for Showmax. In February, we relaunched our service on a new platform across 44 African countries, complete with new brand identity, new app, new products and new original programming. This was a game changer for Showmax, after eight years of progressive growth.

Backed by MultiChoice Group and global media company, Comcast NBCUniversal, who see the potential for the business to scale, we're in a new chapter in our story – with a clear ambition: to become the number one streaming service in Africa.

Born on the continent, we'd already pioneered many streaming breakthroughs in the market, and are part of the leading entertainment platform of choice across Africa.

But remaining relevant in a competitive market means an ongoing reflection on what streaming means for Africa and Africans.

Over the past year, as we've worked to bring the new Showmax to life, we've continually learned, adapted and refined our approach.

**WHETHER THEY'RE  
STREAMING VIDEO OR MUSIC  
OR PODCASTS, AFRICANS  
FROM LAGOS TO NAIROBI;  
JOHANNESBURG TO ACCRA,  
ARE A MOBILE FIRST  
AND – OFTEN –  
MOBILE-ONLY AUDIENCE.**



Marc Jury

Today we summarise it simply: we want to make it easy for our customers to access and afford the stories they love. We want them to be entertained, inspired and engaged. That's the purpose of our platform. That's the purpose of the streaming sector at its core.

While the operating models are changing and audience demand matures, streaming remains one of the world's newest media platforms. Its ability to scale is tied directly into fibre network infrastructure, data costs and quickly evolving technology at every step of the streaming pipeline.

## POISED FOR PRIME POSITION

From continuously enhanced smart devices (TVs, phones, tablets, gaming consoles) to AI-integrated recommendation engines; from efficient content delivery networks to important security and malware protocols, streaming is a dynamic industry – and we are well positioned to become Africa's leading streaming platform.

The unique complexities and context of Africa means that a streamer must be flexible and future-focused. In bringing the new Showmax to life, we calculated multiple variables, then made the best possible decisions for our customers today – and those we want to have in the future.

We know that we've got to scale – and scale fast – to meet the impending opportunity to fulfil the streaming needs of the youngest and most exciting continent in the world.

Key to our plans was finding a streaming platform that had been rolled out across multiple markets, could host millions of simultaneous live streams, and had a great implementation team. Having built our own platform from the ground up, the decision to move our service onto a third-party platform wasn't one we took lightly.

## COLLABORATION IN OUR DNA

In Comcast NBCUniversal, our majority shareholder MultiChoice Group delivered a partner who sees the opportunity for growth in Africa, and is willing to explore it with Showmax, having judged us to have the right credentials and experience.

This pivotal collaboration provides Showmax access to the powerful Peacock platform, and exclusive access to international content. Having already set streaming records in the US, we know the Peacock tech stack is robust and upgraded daily, with thousands of engineers working to improve it from hubs across the globe.

Partnership is vital in our industry, never more so than in Africa, where collaboration is part of the continent's DNA and where creating a community is as important as creating a legacy.

With Peacock, we know we can create a strong customer community across Africa – and we can do it well.



A key takeaway for us from this partnership process, is that collaboration is the future of streaming; taking the best skill sets from the biggest providers and bringing them together, benefits the customer most.

This is why our payment ecosystem, for example, is facilitated in part by companies like Moment and Rapyd: specialised payments vendors working to build the biggest payments network on the continent. Mobile payments are an area of specific interest to them and us. Fittingly for Showmax, the mobile economy and the smartphone is at the heart of our expansion drive.

### PARTNERS ENHANCE POSSIBILITIES

There are 450 million smartphones in Africa, and Africans communicate, transact, and participate in the digital landscape, thanks to the device they hold in the palm of their hand. Whether they're streaming video or music or podcasts, Africans from Lagos to Nairobi; Johannesburg to Accra, are a mobile first and – often – mobile-only audience.

We work closely with leading telcos in many markets to offer data-bundled services, while also offering standalone plans that puts the control of their data usage directly into the hands of the consumer: customers can decide at what resolution they will stream, based on whether they want a high-quality picture, or to conserve data.

In collaborating with telco partners and in creating our own user-interface, we've put the data currency of the smartphone right at the front of our thinking.

Aligned to this, we're extremely passionate about what content we offer, as research demonstrates that streaming is a game of two halves: technological advances and content curation.

At the top of our priorities is live sport, which has driven the growth of streaming the world over.

We looked at various sporting properties, evaluating which would be most beneficial for us to offer to our customers first, and the answer was Premier League; the world's biggest soccer league, which has over 250 million fans in Africa.

With nearly 20% of the global TV audiences for any given matchday coming from Africa, the widespread appeal of the Premier League is hard to deny.

With Premier League as our focus at relaunch, we've specifically designed for mobile audiences, to put the Premier League into fan's pockets. While our intention is to showcase Premier League as our first sports live streaming plan, we'll constantly monitor the market to see what sporting properties are viable for streaming in Africa.

### CONTENT COMPETITION

The success of streamers in the future will be the ability to be flexible and responsive to market trends, and to recognise the appetite for other live programming before our competitors do.

One space where Showmax has already proven its ability to understand the customer is in content; we were quick to understand that our audience wants the best of international, and the best of African.

Today, we acquire movies and series from some of the world's biggest studios including NBC, Universal, Peacock, Sky, Dreamworks Animation and Telemundo – along with Banijay, BBC, Discovery, eOne, Fremantle, HBO, ITV, Lionsgate, Paramount, Sony, WarnerBros and more.

From Emmy and Golden Globe to BAFTA and Oscar-winning content, our customers have access to a wide range of pop culture and cinematic titles – from HBO's House of the Dragon, Succession and White Lotus to Paramount's Halo and Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning to Sony's Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse.

### ORIGINAL, HOMEGROWN EXCLUSIVES

I am, of course, most proud of Showmax's creation of exclusive, original, African content. Our homegrown slate offers a mix of languages, genres and stars – so whether you are searching for titles from East, West, or Southern Africa, as part of Africa's 'most loved' storyteller, we've got you covered.

We've adapted books from African authors for the small screen (The Wife); shone a light on gritty real-life crime with our standout documentaries (Rosemary's Hitlist, Steinheist, Devilsdorp); localised big global formats (The Real Housewives); made our own reality shows (The Mommy Club, Bae Beyond Borders, This Body Works for Me), created 2D African animation (Twende); debuted African fantasy series (Blood Psalms); comedy (Ekahya Backpackers) – and we've produced prime-time drama (Adulting, Flawsome, Wura, Outlaws).

In total, more than 1 300 hours of new Showmax Originals will be released across Africa in 2024, so viewers can watch, on average, more than 3.5 hours of fresh local content on Showmax every day of the year.

### KILLER CONTENT

Our current relaunch slate includes Red Ink, Catch Me A Killer, Cheta M, Sadau Sisters, Youngins, and Wyfie, among others.

Our standout co-production Spinners has been on-sold to Australian and Brazilian broadcasters, having already screened across French Africa.

As we look forward to the rest of the year, my team and I are looking forward to creating a new Showmax #StreamingForafrica era. We've built the structure, executed the transition at the start of the year – and are now well positioned to become Africa's leading streaming platform.

Our customers have been wonderfully loyal and stayed with us, through the migration onto the new platform, and as we've worked to implement Showmax 2.0. For them, we'll continue to be proudly African and boldly ambitious – as befits a continent as diverse and vibrant as ours. ■

Marc Jury is CEO of Showmax.

**WITH NEARLY 20% OF THE GLOBAL TV AUDIENCES FOR ANY GIVEN MATCHDAY COMING FROM AFRICA, THE WIDESPREAD APPEAL OF THE PREMIER LEAGUE IS HARD TO DENY.**

**On a scale of 1 to 10 -  
how transparent is  
your agency partner?**



Not too sure how to answer that?

We'll give you a hint - it's all about whether you have ADMIN level access to your advertising accounts with Meta and Google. We, in fact, advocate for clients to own their ad accounts and give partner level access to their agencies.

## WHY?

1. Clients should own control over who has access to their campaigns and the associated data - this is a business asset after all.
2. When agencies own the ad account and restrict your access, it's very easy for them to only report on the most favourable metrics. Equally, you are restricted from seeing just how much of your budget is actually being spent.
3. If you are a high spending client and ad account ownership sits with the agency - you run the risk of any account level benefits (elevated service, bonuses and other similar benefits) being attributed to the agency rather than to your business.

As a team that is regularly asked to audit media buying accounts, we've outlined 3 real world examples, where clients have had the wool completely pulled over their eyes.

*How confident are you that this is not your agency?*

Client A {FMCG Advertiser}	Client 2 {FMCG Advertiser}	Client 3 {Performance Advertiser}
<p>A regular buyer of YouTube advertising and with no access to their ad account - this client was led to believe that a reasonable KPI for CPV's was R0.60.</p> <p>The agency reports indicated that they successfully exceeded their KPI's on every campaign - achieving a buying rate of R0.40c.</p> <p>The ACTUAL CPV rate varies from R0.06 - R0.15c per view. <b>We identified that for every R100,000 invested in YouTube - the buying agency was pocketing R75,000.00 and only spending R25,000.00 on media.</b></p>	<p>A regular buyer of social media campaigns, where the production cost on a video asset is in the region of R500,000.00 and the objective should be views, we identified that the buying agency was only ever buying for Reach and focussed on the "fantastic" Reach numbers in their reporting.</p> <p>Further investigation indicated that campaign frequencies were rarely over 1x and the watch time was on average 1 second. <b>We determined all campaign spend to have been wasted budget.</b></p>	<p>Google Search is a key driver of conversions for this client. With no access to the ad account, this client was billed for the full budget on a monthly basis. Red flags arose as Google Search, a pull channel, consistently matched the budget. Upon investigation, the buying agency failed to disclose significant underspend across the year, but had continued to bill the client in full.</p> <p><b>The underspend amounted to a 6 figure value that was only disclosed once access to the ad account was requested.</b></p>



# AI FOR YOU, ME — AND HISTORY

Newzroom Africa co-founder **THABILE NGWATO** outlines her innovative vision of the impact generative AI could have on newsroom operations – with tips on how to navigate the exploration of tech’s most startling new tool.

**T**here’s no doubt that artificial intelligence will affect how we report, gather and produce news. The imperative for news organisations now, lies with how we deal with its many ramifications.

I attended the World Economic Forum’s annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland in January, where the role of artificial intelligence (AI) across the world was a popular subject of discussion, with several key concerns.

## 1. WILL AI TAKE OUR JOBS?

Of course, AI will change the way we work across industries, including media. This is already happening and, realistically, many specific tasks may be performed better, or faster, by AI.

But that doesn’t necessarily mean people will lose their jobs. It just means we have to adapt to new technology, as we’ve done in the past.

The most productive use cases for AI are likely to involve humans using it as a tool to enhance their work, rather than it replacing them. We should focus on how we can use it to get better at what we do, instead of fearing it.

AI’s intended purpose is to refine existing systems – human intervention is still required for the cognitive and emotional intelligence perspective, and for quality control purposes.

Storytelling, which is ultimately what media is, is a fundamentally human ability, which requires empathy, understanding and insight – qualities that cannot be emulated by machines.

AI may be able to mimic this skill by manipulating existing content, but it cannot feel, nor create it in response to human experience, as journalists do.

This distinction limits AI capabilities, relative to humans, especially in creative fields like ours.

**Thabile Ngwato**

**STORYTELLING, WHICH IS ULTIMATELY WHAT MEDIA IS, IS A FUNDAMENTALLY HUMAN ABILITY THAT REQUIRES EMPATHY, UNDERSTANDING AND INSIGHT — QUALITIES THAT CANNOT BE EMULATED BY MACHINES.**



## 2. WILL IT RUN OUT OF CONTROL AND TAKE OVER?

Only if we let it. Globally, we already have a serious problem with fake news, propaganda and mis/disinformation proliferating on social, even mainstream media, and a huge risk with AI is that it is able to generate content that looks and sounds real, populated with real human beings – and this, in the early stages of its development.

In the wrong hands, this capability is a genuine threat to our systems of knowledge and information sharing, in which media plays a vital role.

Technology has already impacted on elections the world over, and with 2024 being widely regarded as 'The year of AI Elections', it's clear this new tool requires careful regulation at national and global levels.

For us in the media, it requires greater vigilance in cross-checking information, verifying facts and attributing image sources.

In that sense, the role of the media, with humans in control, becomes ever more important. Ultimately, AI is not a conscious entity; it doesn't "understand" what it is producing, which is why it is prone to generating artefacts like hallucinations.

But while it can't fully replace human beings, we're going to have to get better at understanding it, and detecting fake content.

From the media production point of view, I see AI as an additional layer to current ways of working. Here, it's not a threat but an opportunity to refine and enhance process – especially if we use it wisely.

## 3. HOW CAN WE UPSKILL WORKFORCES?

By providing adequate training when introducing such systems into workflow processes, encouraging employees to explore their curiosity about AI, and empowering them to view it as a tool that can assist, rather than a threat.

We can take important lessons from history – notably, the industrial revolution that, despite initial fears, resulted in continued technological innovation, economic development, greater employment opportunities and increased prosperity overall – albeit unequally distributed.

The lesson here is that resisting the tide means being left behind, while exploring the opportunities and learning to apply new technology, develops valuable, sought-after skills.

## 4. HOW DO WE TRANSFORM TO INCORPORATE?

Newzroom Afrika embraced AI since day one. We pride ourselves on being innovative and pioneering new forms of storytelling, using the latest technology.

The tech in our studios allows for seamless integration with all AI activities that we have taken on in the past and we look forward to showcasing what we have in store in this regard, for the upcoming election season. ■

### NEWS GROUPS AND GENERATIVE AI

Transformation consultant and coach Lyndsey Jones, author of *Going Digital*, works closely with WAN-IFRA Women in News' Digital ABC programme, and offers sage advice to newsrooms navigating AI.

The extract below is taken from her article, *What are the pros and cons of using Artificial Intelligence in your newsroom?* published by the World Association of News Publishers.

#### News groups will need to consider the following:

- **Transparency** – so users can understand how AI is being used and works
- **Ethics** – AI should be deployed in ways that uphold ethical standards, such as accountability, fairness and privacy
- **Data quality** – review and monitor the quality of your data, which can be biased and if left unchecked, can skew results
- **Verification methods** – fact checking, verifying the source of origin, and monitoring need to be strengthened and ingrained in newsrooms
- **Staff skill sets** – training in AI skills should be paramount so editorial departments can understand and consider the impact on journalism
- **Collaborate** with data scientists and journalists to ensure the best possible use of AI.

#### Countering mis/disinfo

For news groups, to be a trusted source of information is also part and parcel of the company's value proposition. So what should media groups do as the danger of misinformation, disinformation and influence is increasing?

#### They should set up safeguards such as:




- **Establish guidelines** on how to use generative AI and publish them on your website for transparency. See the examples of *Wired* or the *Financial Times*
- **Clearly label** AI-generated content and vigorously source your material to build trust with users
- **Enhance** a fact checking and monitoring desk, including the origin of images.
- **Always have a journalist** in the AI newsroom workflow, and the Editor should still be ultimately responsible for all published content.

**Thabile Ngwato** is a dynamic entrepreneur with an innate passion for broadcasting. With experience in both radio and television, the former news anchor and producer co-founded [Newzroom Afrika](#), a 100% black-owned, 50% women-owned news channel in 2019. She also sits on the boards of Rapid Innovation Investments and the Ngwato Nkosi Group.



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# CHAMPIONS

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**3.7 million** **UNIQUE** audience reach in the month of February 2024.

**4<sup>th</sup>** **RANKING ON:**



Sources: Instar DStv-I, Adults 15+, 5<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2023 | Amplitude, 5<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2023, Uniques

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# CALLING IN THE FUTURE OF STREAMING

**Steadily replacing linear TV as the go-to option for content consumption, marketers should wisen up to streaming's shift from the Age of Curation to the Consolidation Era, write LESLIE ADAMS.**

**T**he other day, my three-year-old came across a landline telephone for the first time while at the paediatrician. This non-functional telephone was part of a “busy board” set-up equipped with locks, dials and other things to fidget with, intended to keep hyperactive toddlers entertained (and distracted) while awaiting their turn to see the doctor.

He asked me what it was, and I told him that it was a phone. “No,” he said assuredly, “That’s not a phone. *That’s* a phone,” he explained, pointing to my mobile.

**CUT TO 2024, AND NOT ONLY ARE WE SEEING PARALLELS BETWEEN THE LANDLINE VS CELLPHONE SCENARIO WITH LINEAR TV VS STREAMING, WE’RE ALSO SEEING IT IN THE WAY WE’RE TUNING IN TO OUR STREAMING SERVICES.**

It occurred to me that he had never before, in his three short years on earth, seen a telephone up close. My wife and I – like most millennials – only have cell phones. No landline to speak of at home, despite it being such an important fixture in our childhood.

We’ve come a long way in a few short decades.

In the early days of telecoms, the battle was between the landline and the mobile phone. The incumbent was cheaper, already-scaled and government-funded, meaning almost every home had a landline – even rural villages shared a centralised line – and public telephone boxes were scattered all over the country.

So when mobile was introduced at a higher cost – for both the device and usage charges – telecoms needed to find a way to drive mass usage, as cellular phones, at that time, belonged predominantly to business execs and the elite. How did they do it? Pay as you go. Slowly, landlines started to become redundant and today are seldom seen, barring office blocks.

Cut to 2024, and not only are we seeing parallels between the landline vs cellphone scenario with linear TV vs streaming, we’re also seeing it in the way we’re tuning in to our streaming services.

Consumers now want over the top (OTT) providers that allow for the incremental consumption of content through more flexible payment offerings and hybrid subscription models. We don’t want contracts or commitments, we want

the “pay as you go” content option in streaming.

Telco banks, always one step ahead, have seen this, and are feeding our consumption. You can also forget your password-sharing crackdown; we’re finding new ways to side-step and watch as a community.

But let’s take a step back and take a look at where we’ve been, where we are now, and where we’re heading.

## YESTERDAY

There was live TV, with the news, sports and all your favourite shows that you planned your weeknight dinners around. Then streaming arrived, with a whole lot more content – and grew at a steady pace.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic hit. As digital transformation sped up, our consumption patterns changed.

The work day shifted, with people no longer slaves to the 9-5 – and with this, “appointment viewing” started to fall away. People were able to watch what they wanted, when they wanted.

Live TV viewership declined in direct proportion to the increased eyeballs on streaming services.

**Leslie Adams**





**I EXPECT THAT AI WILL INTRODUCE A WHOLE NEW LEVEL OF PERSONALISED CONTENT, EVOCATIVE OF BLACK MIRROR'S BANDERSNATCH, WHERE VIEWERS CAN INTERACT WITH THEIR CONTENT AND PLAY A ROLE IN THE OUTCOME.**

Then loadshedding ramped up, and things escalated even further. People were charging up their devices in power hours, downloading their favourite series from Netflix or Viu, and timing their binge-athons to when the lights went off.

Enter the acronyms: OTT/VOD/FAST/SVOD/AVOD/BOD/TVOD... all of these speak to the new chapter in the consumption of broadcast content.

In international markets, the last few years have seen live television replaced with streaming as the primary content delivery mechanism.

Locally, we're right behind.

## TODAY

Globally, streaming is well established; in South Africa alone, viewers have around 30 streaming services at their disposal. With proliferation resulting in more options than ever, the industry is faced with huge amounts of churn, with viewers toggling between subscriptions in search of the content they want to see at any given moment.

Welcome to the Age of Curation, where platform-switching replaces channel surfing.

Moreover, with South Africans facing continued financial strain, we're extremely cost-conscious and want those platforms that will give us most bang for buck – or rather, most content for cash.

This highly competitive environment has forced streaming providers to explore new ways to monetise their businesses.

The streaming landscape, originally known for its walled-off gardens, is now becoming a welcome home for advertisers, as platforms look to move their business models to a more ad-friendly environment and unlock new revenue streams.

With evolving business models, we have seen subscriber month-to-month models – similar to Pay TV – introduce ad-funded tiers, much like free-to-air TV.

Seen through an African lens, you can expect more of these hybrid subscription video on demand (SVOD) and advertising video on demand (AVOD) models, flexible payment options (subscribe for a day or a week!) and offerings built around community-centric based viewing.

We're not quite there yet, but we're on our way.

## TOMORROW

This status quo is expected to steer the streaming industry into its Consolidation Era. The impending acquisition of MultiChoice by French pay-TV giant Canal+; the merger of Discovery and HBO to launch 'Max'; the evolution of Disney and ESPN – these all point to a growing desire for a more centralised, less fractured streaming environment.

Smaller players have run out of funds, while boards are under increasing pressure from shareholders to increase profitability.

But for consumers who've been struggling with the rising cost of living for some time, these moves may already be too late. We've realised that free ad-supported options are not so bad, and are more than happy to watch our favourite shows in exchange for a few ads – in fact, we've been doing this with YouTube for years already!

Then there's the murkier side of the coin: dubious third-party sites and many, not-altogether-legal options to get all the content we want without paying for multiple subscriptions.

## ENTER ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

How it will transform streaming remains to be seen, but there's no doubt it will. The full realm of possibilities are well beyond my imagination, but I expect that AI will introduce a whole new level of personalised content, evocative of Black Mirror's Bandersnatch, where viewers can interact with their content and play a role in the outcome.

This will allow users to explore many storylines previously unexplored, purely based on the shortage of manpower and budget. From a content perspective, it could lead to people being able to watch each and every show according to how they would like the story to unfold.

**WELCOME TO THE AGE OF CURATION, WHERE PLATFORM-SWITCHING REPLACES CHANNEL SURFING.**

And for advertisers? It would allow the incredible opportunity to target audiences with highly relevant, contextual ads tailored to them as individuals, rather than over-generalised demographical groupings.

Streaming is the ultimate merger between digital and traditional advertising. While we see loadshedding eating away at linear TV's reach, the streaming industry – much like the rise of the mobile phone a few decades ago – is now growing at a rapid pace.

Ten years later, it is deeply entrenched and a fundamental part of our daily lives.

So brands and marketers: you'd be wise to make that call. ■

**Leslie Adams** is sales director at [Reach Africa](#), which specialises in premium gaming, audio and video on demand (VOD) solutions for brands and marketers.



# THE EVOLUTION OF SPORTS MEDIA FOR MARKETERS, RIGHTS HOLDERS AND ADVERTISERS

With sports streaming on the rise, traditional broadcasters are no longer the gatekeepers of sports content. TUMELO SELIKANE considers the implications, and the trends...

In South Africa – a notoriously proud sporting and sports-loving nation – sports media marketing platforms remain in high demand. However, with ongoing shifts in consumer behaviour and media consumption habits, both media owners and buyers are having to pay attention to keep pace.

The old cliché, “knowledge is power” has given way to “data is power” – particularly in the kinetic and highly competitive sports media world.

Given the vast amount of data available in the digital age, however, sometimes extracting the insights you need can be a challenge.

At Nielsen, we extract and extrapolate to keep sports media stakeholders empowered.

Here is a brief summary of the insights garnered from the latest research.

## THE PAY TV PARADIGM: WHAT COMES NEXT FOR BROADCASTERS?

With the proliferation of streaming options bursting onto the scene, audiences are becoming more fragmented and traditional broadcasters

are losing their grip as the sole gatekeepers of sports content.

Viewers now have the flexibility to choose from a variety of platforms based on their preferences and interests, leading to a more diverse and dispersed audience base.

According to the Nielsen Fan Insights Study, which incorporated research conducted in May 2020, July 2022 and July 2023, sports content consumption levels have declined on both free-to-air and pay TV since May 2020 – most notably, between 2020 and July 2022.

We approach this century’s quadranscentennial with rapid technological advancements and an equally fast-moving shift in consumer behaviour.

In sports-mad South Africa, the sports broadcasting industry is rapidly evolving.

This is mainly due to necessity, as the meteoric rise of over-the-top (OTT) streaming services has disrupted traditional sports rights distribution, challenged the status quo and ushered in a new content consumption standard.

So, what comes next for the often-beleaguered broadcast industry?

Pay TV broadcasters can’t help but pay attention to the transformation. After an initial period of resistance early in the game, they are beginning to embrace OTT platforms, finding ways to adapt and adopt streaming to provide consumers with consumption options that work for them.

DStv has strategically extended its broadcast offering, making its channels available via the recently relaunched DStv Stream. Similarly, the platform’s parent company MultiChoice has expanded the English Premier League offering by including it on the latest iteration



Tumelo Selikane

...LOADSHEDDING, THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PUSH AND THE RELUCTANCE OF VIEWERS TO PAY FOR THEIR TV LICENSES, MAKE THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT DIFFICULT.



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of its own OTT service, Showmax.

National broadcaster SABC has been growing its subscription base and sports audience on the SABC+ streaming platform since its launch in November 2022, further allowing the free-to-air consumer an opportunity to watch sports on the move.

However, the public broadcaster faces several financial challenges in terms of acquiring broadcast rights, and it will be interesting to see how they navigate the Olympics and any other major upcoming events.

The recent trend of getting brands to sponsor the broadcaster to acquire rights could be problematic, and an unreliable business model. Other factors, such as loadshedding, the digital transformation push and the reluctance of viewers to pay for their TV licenses, make the operating environment difficult.

The SABC will require some robust strategies, innovative solutions and dynamic commercial models to keep serving sport to the nation.

## DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING: SETTING A NEW STANDARD

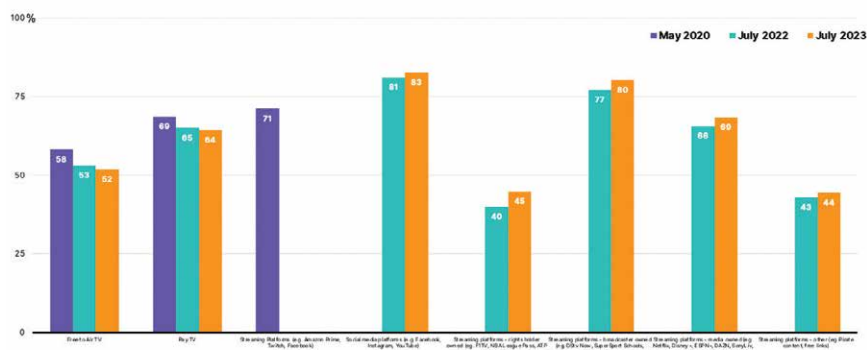
From live events to behind-the-scenes footage, online sports streaming has revolutionised how we watch and engage with our favourite teams and sports heroes.

Social media platforms and most streaming options have steadily gained traction in the sports consumption space, year-on-year. And streaming platforms owned by rights holders (for example, DStv) have taken the lead – for now.

It's essential to differentiate the roles social media and streaming platforms play in the sports consumption arena – with social media entrenched as a robust communications and marketing tool, and streaming as the key consumption tool. This critical distinction needs to be factored into all plans for both rights holders and broadcasters, along with sponsors in the sports industry.

## Watching Sport on TV / Streaming Services – all/asked

Sport consumption report  
NFISA May 2020 / July 2022 / July 2023



Source: Nielsen Fan Insights | SA May 2020 / SA July 2022 / SA July 2023 | Supersport sport consumption report

The chart above shows that sports streaming is on an upward curve. However, TV broadcasts have not quite yet shown a drastic decline. This highlights that linear TV is still the dominant viewership option, while mobile viewing and short-form content on social media complement linear TV.

A surge in pay TV broadcasters transitioning to streaming platforms seems inevitable. However, this shift will likely lead to fragmentation in the streaming landscape, forcing consumers to assemble a bundle of platforms to fulfil their viewing needs – particularly for sports content.

Still, given the nation's devotion and passion for sports, fans, by and large, are likely to subscribe to as many sports platforms as they can afford to pursue their sports viewing.

## SPORTS SPONSORSHIPS AND INVESTMENT: EVENT-DRIVEN SPEND TAKES THE LEAD

The lines between entertainment, marketing and sport are becoming increasingly blurred. Sports sponsorship is a dynamic, ever-evolving stage that consistently finds innovative ways of captivating brands, organisations and other relevant stakeholders worldwide.

Three notable trends have occurred have become apparent, and these have firmly informed the energetic resurgence of sports sponsorship in the past two years:

### 1. Covid-19 rebalancing

The lifting of Covid-19 restrictions and a return in consumer confidence has seen a rebalancing of sponsorship fees and a recovery of market conditions.

### 2. Commercial development

Rights holders are driving commercial development through new rights and data-led approaches to extract greater value from the current inventory.

### 3. Major events and responsible branding

Brands are leaning more towards short-term sponsorships tied to significant events, rather than signing long-term deals. And as brands navigate the harsh economic climate, this will likely continue.

The impact of hosting major events, such as the 2022 Women's Cricket World Cup, 2022 Netball World Cup and the Betway SA20, has significantly boosted sports sponsorship and revenue for various rights holders in SA.

Furthermore, the sponsorship has evolved beyond partnerships for the sake of visibility, giving rise to authentic collaborations grounded in shared values, ethos and a mutual dedication to effecting positive change.

Socially-conscious brands are transcending mere partnerships and embarking on shared missions where brands and sports entities unite to pursue singular objectives, forging meaningful

**WITH THE PROLIFERATION OF STREAMING OPTIONS BURSTING ONTO THE SCENE, AUDIENCES ARE BECOMING MORE FRAGMENTED AND TRADITIONAL BROADCASTERS ARE LOSING THEIR GRIP AS THE SOLE GATEKEEPERS OF SPORTS CONTENT.**



No.	Country	Sponsor	Industry Sector	Sponsorship Object	Sport / Type	Sponsorship Title	Duration	Rights Fee p.a.	Status
1	South Africa	KFC	Food And Beverage	Cricket South Africa	Cricket	T20 Internationals Official Title Sponsor	From 2023	R20M - R30M	Renew
2	Global	Investec	Financial Services	The Champions Cup	Rugby	Title Sponsor	2023 - 2028	R20M - R30M	New
3	South Africa	Bidvest	Trading And Distribution	SASCOC	Multi-Sports	Operation Excellence Title Sponsor	From 2023	R20M - R25M	New
4	South Africa	African Bank	Financial Services	Soweto Marathon	Road Running	Headline Sponsor	2023 - 2028	R18M - R20M	New
5	South Africa	African Bank	Financial Services	Soweto Marathon	Road Running	Headline Sponsor	2023 - 2028	R18M - R20M	New
6	South Africa	Hollywoodbets	Sports Betting	The Sharks	Rugby	Title Sponsor	2023 - 2026	R18M - R20M	New
7	South Africa	LottoSport	Apparel	Cricket South Africa	Cricket	Official Apparel Partner	2023 - 2029	R18M - R20M	New
8	South Africa	Telkom	Telecommunications	Telkom Netball League	Netball	Title Sponsor	From 2023	R15M - R20M	Renew
9	South Africa	Cadbury	Confectionary	South African Rugby Union	Rugby	Official Confectionary Partner	From 2023	R10M - R18M	New
10	South Africa	Castle Lager	Alcoholic Beverages	South African Football Association	Football	Official Partner	From 2023	R10M - R15M	Renew
11	South Africa	Fidelity ADT	Security Services	Lions Rugby Company	Rugby	Currie Cup Title Sponsor	2023/24	R10M - R15M	Renew

alliances that resonate with audiences and generate societal impact.

As a subtext to the three major trends we have seen in sports media spend, there has been a significant uptake in women's sports sponsorships, which seems logical, considering it's an area that has historically been overlooked –and this trend is likely to maintain momentum for the foreseeable future.

The financial services sector is still strong in sports investment, particularly with the big banks leading the pack. And we would do well to keep an eye on the crypto industry making a comeback in sports sponsorship, as public interest resurges.

The illustration below highlights some of 2023's top sponsorship deals. Note, however, that the various entities did not directly declare actual rights fees. Still, Nielsen's inside track in the sponsorship landscape places it well to give an approximate indication of the deal values.

Globally, football has maintained its position as the sport receiving the most sponsorship support, thanks to the excitement generated by the 2022 Qatar World Cup.

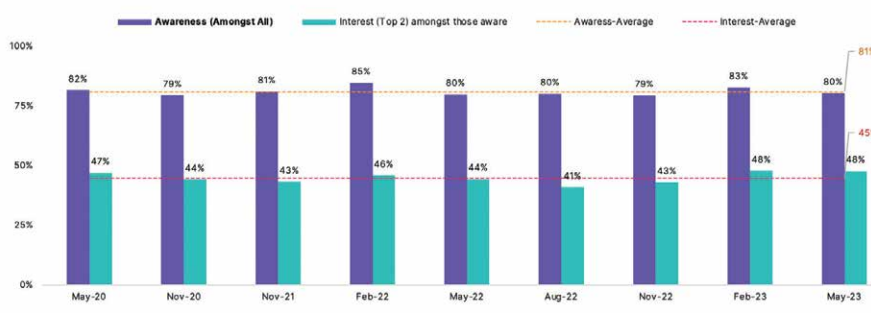
A prime example of this is the massive commitment made by Adidas, who extended their partnership with Manchester United until 2035 – a record-breaking deal valued at £900 million, which came into effect in June 2023. This 10-year extension marks the most significant agreement in the history of the Premier League.

## THE NEXT BIG THING: THE OLYMPICS

En masse, South Africans show higher levels of interest in content representing the country, its athletes and events that raise

### Awareness of and Interest in Summer Olympics

All NFI SA Respondents  
NFI SA Waves: May 2020 to May 2023



**This data affirms that the Olympics is an event of national interest, and the national broadcaster will likely find a way to broadcast the games.**

the bar for South Africa on the international competitive stage.

Nielsen Fan Insights data shows that awareness levels of the Summer Olympic Games average out to 81% across nine waves of NFI SA data collected between May 2020 and May 2023. This speaks to South Africans' wide range of sports interests and the sports that will see notable interest levels amongst NFI SA respondents, with an average interest level of 45% in the Olympic Games.

### WHAT NEXT?

Media buyers, brands and rights holders have had to reconsider how they approach sports media in order to deliver on audience requirements and be more effective and engaging.

As streaming options continue to increase and sports go digital, competition

in that area is hotting up, and maintaining a connection with sports-hungry consumers generally boils down to who owns the rights.

What is exciting, though, is that sports branding and media options are more diverse and exciting than ever. This clearly calls for all role players in the space to be more aware of the data driving audiences while being increasingly creative and innovative in capturing consumer attention in the near future. ■

**Tumelo Selikane**, managing director of [Nielsen Sports SA](#), is an experienced commercial, brand and marketing and entrepreneur with over 12 years' experience growing revenue and increasing market share through commercial and client service relations.



# ARE WE HUMAN? OR ARE WE DANCERS?

Static is dead – and it's high time we move to AI's creative beat, and revolutionise the multimedAI landscape, exhorts  
**MIKE SHARMAN.**

**Mike Sharman**

**T**hat famous line 'Are we human or are we dancers' from The Killers' song Human, is taken from a Hunter S. Thompson quote that refers to the dichotomy between raw-reality and existing in a templated, structured way of being.

There is infinite debate around the AI revolution and what it means for humanity and the functional impact – will the machines render us redundant?

At the time of publishing, OpenAI has been posting on X about the impending public launch of Sora, its text to video AI capability. If the samples are anything to go by, 2024 will offer us an industry-defining moment of articulating our ideas at the initial pitch level.

Considering most ideas are terminated at zygote stage, we can now show and sell better 'prototypes' of thought to offer clients more comfort than ever before about the executional opportunities. By defining the idea more holistically, communicators will now be able to obsess more about the dissemination component. We are proponents of 'earned virality'.

**'EARNED VIRALITY' IS  
RETROVIRAL'S NOTION  
THAT VIRALITY STEMS  
FROM A PLACE OF EARNED  
MEDIA THINKING — EVERY,  
SINGLE, TIME.**

'Earned virality' is Retroviral's notion that virality stems from a place of earned media thinking – every, single, time.

If an idea is 'traditional media newsworthy,' it will do better than idea that trends on a social platform, achieves 15 minutes of fame and disappears into the ether.

## **SECRET SAUCE**

What's the secret sauce? I think the reality is that we start out really looking at ideas, and start questioning: can this thing break the news? Can it cut through the clutter of mainstream media?

If that is something that we can guarantee ourselves — and the gut has

all the feels — then this is going to be a success.

Our job is to create remarkable content that authentically generates an emotional connection with an audience and then it rationally drives the potential to create a sale, or a download, or some form of action.

We're not just in the business of entertainment and awareness, we're in the business of commercial transactions. If the idea is remarkable enough to make it onto the news, we're onto something that is potentially viral-generating, award-winning and emotion-moving.

## THE DEATH OF THE STILL IMAGE? AI HAS TURNED THAT THINKING ON ITS HEAD

Static is dead! Industry experts wax lyrical about the importance of video content: reels, TikTok and how we need to feed the various social algorithms with moving picture because that's what performs best.

What I'm excited about is that AI gives us an opportunity to really lean into the reinvention and the reinvigoration of static. Instead of there being multimedia it's multimedia — with an AI-focus.

If we use Barbie Mania as example — it basically stormed the entire world, and South Africa wasn't immune.

We wondered: 'What if we take one of South Africa's most iconic bBrands such as Ouma Rusks and we pair it with AI to showcase what Barbie x Ouma would look like?'

Human intervention coupled with Generative dAlncing delivered this [beautiful great-grandmother](#).

She's not real. She's a Midjourney creation, crafted with humanity to add the brand and the nuance of South African-ess. The most fantastic part of this was that this was being used as an experiment to ascertain how the inhabitants of local social platforms would take to this figure.

Spoiler: many South Africans were positively excited when they saw her appear on their timelines.

Jokes popped up, such as: 'Is that Elon Mmusk's mom?'

Our response: 'No she's actually not May Musk, she's May Rusk!'

Off the back of this single image, we generated more than R1 million in PR talkability. The conversation in both the social and earned media space resulted

**IF THE IDEA IS REMARKABLE ENOUGH TO MAKE IT ONTO THE NEWS, WE'RE ONTO SOMETHING THAT IS POTENTIALLY VIRAL-GENERATING, AWARD-WINNING AND EMOTION-MOVING.**

in record-breaking engagements for the brand, and news headlines in various tier one news and consumer sites.

'May Rusk' even became a topic of interest on JacarandaFM.

My tweet alone garnered 130,000 views.

Something as basic as a still image with a remarkable insight stood out from the crowd, and elevated the brand to a national talking point; it piqued joy from a cross-section of audiences and various backgrounds, shapes and sizes.

AI enables a brand to be remarkable and to show up in even more creative ways than ever imagined.

## FROM TEA AND RUSKS TO BEERS AND BOKS (GRANS)

We like to zag against brand zigging. The Rugby World Cup 2023 and the Springboks, in particular, had more than 50 different brands invested in the team. We all know that brands love to support winners. Success for a team ultimately translates into a collective, customer high — and conversion of customers wanting to be associated with, and to emotionally invest in, the brand associated with victory.

Castle Lager is the longest-serving sponsor of the Springboks — but the landscape has become so cluttered with a plethora of partners all vying for their pound of rugby player flesh, that we needed to refresh this relationship.

Our AI Ouma inspired us.

A key insight is the number of South Africans

raised by their grandmothers — approximately 11% — 1 per cent — and the fact that players like Mapimpi and Kolisi reference their grandmothers in interviews, ad nauseam.

None of them have been given a platform to be celebrated, however.

So we raised a glass to the women who raised our heroes.

We traversed the country and found various grandmothers / gogos / and

oumas of Springboks, created a three-part branded series in English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, brought their stories to life and released them into the world before each of the Green and Gold's Rugby World Cup pool matches.

AI inspired, certifiably viral.

Once again, our ideas commence with content, we then take that content and pitch it to the various news' stations.

Too many brands will try to create an opportunity to have their brand manager or CMO be the hero in the earned media space.

For effective PR opportunities, we love deploying the stars of our branded content as spokespeople — from an authentic point of view, — to be on the news, be on radio, be on TV and — as seen in the case study — Melody became our cult hero spokesperson for all the various above the line media opportunities.

## JUST AI IT!

It's easier than ever to experiment, fail, create, pitch, get approval and execute. 2024 is an opportunity for brands and their agency partners — from entry level to chief creatives — to have fun again.

Humour is back — Cannes Lions confirmed it with the introduction of a 'humour' category — Lol!

As agencies it's our mandate to create tomorrow what didn't exist today. Now more than ever — from analytical thinkers to creative savants — we have the tools to make, remarkable.

Just AI it! ■

**Mike Sharman** is chief creative officer of [Retroviral](#), which has made more brands 'go viral, globally' than any other agency in Africa. Sharman was a finalist in SA's Entrepreneur of the Year (2018), and a Mail & Guardian Top 200 young (under 35) South Africans (2013). He is the co-founder of influencer marketing platform [webfluential.co](#), [retroactive.digital](#), and athlete ecosystem [MatchKit.co](#). He is also a co-founder of the Put Foot Foundation — a charity that has raised substantial funding and secured 100 000+ school shoes for children across the SADC region.





Cobus Heyl

# MEDIA. IT'S SUCH A DIRTY WORD

**Maligned and mistrusted, yet bigger and broader than one all-encompassing term, there's room for growth in all sectors of the industry, writes COBUS HEYL.**

**T**he worst thing about media is the word. "Media." Much of the current narrative surrounding the industry focuses on its challenges, such as declining trust, job cuts and the struggle of traditional media brands to increase ailing revenues.

Each year, the Edelman Trust Barometer highlights growing concerns over trust in media, yet this discourse overlooks the sector's differentiation. The term 'media' encompasses a broad array of platforms and sectors, each with its own dynamics and potential for growth.

**PEOPLE THRIVE ON DEEP CONNECTIONS AND MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE SUBJECT MATTER THAT INTEREST THEM. DTC TAPS INTO THIS.**

Investment banker Reed Phillips provides an insightful sector-by-sector breakdown in an op-ed he wrote for us at Media Makers Meet (Mx3), highlighting areas of M&A potential in the media (publishing) and tech sector.

It looks like this:

- Rising stars: AI and the creator economy
- High growth potential: Book publishing and events
- Moderate growth potential: B2B and (focused) digital media
- Low growth potential: News and magazine media

His nuanced analysis suggests that the general pessimism about the media might miss out on specific opportunities for growth and innovation.

## **A QUICK RECAP**

The digital landscape has transformed the media industry, leading to the emergence of new platforms that operate on ad-driven models similar to traditional mass media, but on a much larger scale.

This shift has effectively ended the era of mass media as we knew it, with internet fragmentation allowing audiences to gather around various personal and professional interests. Around those interests, they can create micro-communities with a handful of people, to cross-border communities with millions of people.

The rise of focused publishing in areas such as B2B and the creator economy shows that success in today's media landscape requires a departure from the generalist approach towards more targeted, authentic engagements with audiences.

Despite the challenges faced by once-celebrated digital news media giants like Vice Media and BuzzFeed, the prevailing narrative about media misses the broader picture.

The struggle of these companies in a market dominated by Big Tech and changing advertising dynamics does not spell the end for news media as a whole. Instead, it underscores news media companies' need to adapt by focusing on niche markets, enhancing direct relationships with their audiences, and diversifying revenue streams.

The success of independent news outlets like Daily Maverick, or niche startups like Good Things Guy demonstrates the viability of a focused approach over chasing broad, platform-fueled traffic.

Earlier this year, I [wrote about three trends](#) for New York-based Creative Licensing International...

## 1. MEDIA VERTICALISATION

As mentioned above, vertical media publishers with community-first strategies are resilient, even thriving. These publishers understand that the "glamour days" of media are gone but that "smaller" and "successful" can go together. Whereas publishers-built-for-platforms outsourced audience relationships to

platforms, those with strong, direct audience relationships (and data) could build robust, diversified revenue streams with less dependence on platform-generated traffic to fuel ad-driven models.

Vertical media thrives on this direct engagement, bolstered by the success of Substacks and podcasts, and reinforced by investment in specialised content areas developing high-quality, authentic relationships with their audience.

I wrote more about the trend towards niche and B2B [here](#).

## 2. DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER

Direct-to-consumer (DTC) strategies have evolved beyond subscription models to encompass a holistic approach that includes first-party data collection, deep audience relationships, and diversified monetisation methods.

The synergy between media verticals and DTC strategies is evident, as a focused approach enhances the ability to cultivate these relationships and implement effective monetisation strategies.

One example is the continued value of newsletters, while a sector like eventing provides publishers with another tremendous direct engagement channel.

People thrive on deep connections and meaningful conversations around the subject matter that interest them. DTC taps into this.

I wrote about ways to maximise direct audience relationships [here](#).

## 3. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI represents the biggest and most fascinating trend of them all. This is the backdrop against which everything else happens. The rate of change is rapid. Any disruption is fraught with friction (eg, The New York Times versus OpenAI and Microsoft).

**“PUBLISHERS AT LEAST ACKNOWLEDGE THE DISRUPTIVE POWER OF AI BETTER THAN THE HEAD-IN-THE-SAND APPROACH THAT EXISTED IN MANY COMPANIES WITH THE EXPLOSION OF THE CONSUMER INTERNET IN THE 1990s.”**

Much like in the 1990s with the digital revolution, there is an energy around AI that makes life exciting.

Those developing AI will again be the rule makers, but from multiple conversations at and around our Mx3 events, it 'feels' like publishers at least acknowledge the disruptive power of AI better than the head-in-the-sand approach that existed in many companies with the explosion of the consumer Internet in the 1990s.

I'm personally quite fascinated about how AI will change the way consumers interface with content, and I touch upon that [here](#) and [here](#).

This [free-to-download report](#) which we produced from an Mx3 AI meetup in London in December last year, offers some insight into developments in the sector.

Ultimately, building a media business is hard, and it will remain that way. We will see brands and businesses disappear, as you do with every new wave of disruption.

The good news is that 'media' is not dead. You just need to know where to look. ■

**Cobus Heyl** brings a uniquely global perspective to his analysis of the future of media as it intersects with technology and changing consumer behaviours. He has actively worked across Africa and Europe and continues to run multiple industry events around the world. As co-founder of Media Makers Meet (Mx3), an international B2B information services and events company, he connects industry leaders through online and in-person channels to share knowledge and shape conversations about media, tech and the future. Learn more at [mediamakersmeet.com](http://mediamakersmeet.com) and connect with Cobus at [linkedin.com/in/cobushey1](https://linkedin.com/in/cobushey1).

**“VERTICAL MEDIA PUBLISHERS WITH COMMUNITY-FIRST STRATEGIES ARE RESILIENT, EVEN THRIVING. THESE PUBLISHERS UNDERSTAND THAT THE ‘GLAMOUR DAYS’ OF MEDIA ARE GONE BUT THAT ‘SMALLER’ AND ‘SUCCESSFUL’ CAN GO TOGETHER.”**

# WHY CREATOR MARKETING SHOULD BE A CENTRAL PART OF YOUR VIDEO STRATEGY

**RENALDO SCHWERP** explores the symbiotic relationship between creator marketing and video strategy and how brands can navigate the ever-shifting currents of audience engagement and brand authenticity.

In the ever-evolving realm of digital content marketing, where trends evolve at a rapid pace, successful storytelling is often the linchpin that holds everything together.

I've stumbled upon an unexpected love story that needs to be shared.

For the past 10 years, digital strategy and TV production, respectively, were my daily song and dance; lately, the two intersected regularly.

It is at this intersection that I was witness to the transformative impact of creator content marketing on video strategies.

If you're reading this, you recognise the importance of video marketing for your brand. Brands can no longer get by on images and text alone – nowadays, that just gets lost in social media clutter.

Not to mention that consumers have become inundated with a plethora of video content formats: live streaming, augmented reality, 360 videos... the list goes on.

This growth is leaving behind brands who aren't releasing branded video content weekly – or, dare I say, daily. But whether you're a novice or an expert in the field, getting your video strategy and content right, and

consistently so, takes some trial and error.

I'm a firm believer that the key lies in trying new things, engaging first-hand with new formats and trialling trends with content creators.

## THE POWER OF CONTENT CREATORS

Incorporating content creators into your video strategy is not just a choice; it's a strategic imperative. These creative visionaries bring a fresh and authentic perspective, injecting vitality into your brand narrative.

By collaborating with content creators, you tap into a wellspring of innovation, connecting with diverse audiences through their unique voices.

By using content creators, the focus is on having fun while driving business or campaign objectives.

The quickest way to do this is to always to create an environment where creativity flourishes, and creators feel empowered to showcase their skills authentically.

This ethos extends beyond our projects at MultiChoice Group; it's a guiding principle that has fuelled my career as a broadcast and content strategist.

The reality is that content creators intimately know video platforms, understand their audience, and, most importantly, live in the space you want your brand message to land in. As the industry navigates the exciting landscape of platforms such as TikTok, brands must take cues from content creators.

TikTok, in particular, is a force to be reckoned with, keeping all of us on our toes as it reshapes the way we consume and engage with content.

**Renaldo Schwerp**

This shift, along with indications that consumers trust content creators on brands and social media over traditional media, signifies the exponential growth of the industry.

This is further illustrated in the increase of content creators in niche topics – everything from lifestyle to politics – the latter being a topic and trend to observe closely with the national election coming up.

According to Statista, influencer advertising spend in South Africa is estimated to increase by 11.6% annually. This is an opportunity to redefine the relationship between content creators and branded videos.

**INCORPORATING CONTENT CREATORS INTO YOUR VIDEO STRATEGY IS NOT JUST A CHOICE; IT'S A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE. THESE CREATIVE VISIONARIES BRING A FRESH AND AUTHENTIC PERSPECTIVE, INJECTING VITALITY INTO YOUR BRAND NARRATIVE.**



## BUILDING AN AUTHENTIC VIDEO STRATEGY

Building a brand presence through creator and video marketing, much like traditional marketing efforts, is a gradual process. A common misconception surrounding creator marketing is the idea that a single post from an influencer or content creator can instantly translate into sales.

Notably, deep-branded engagement finds its stride with macro- and nano-influencers, organic and paid – all in the mix.

**A GOOD VIDEO STRATEGY IS NOT JUST STRATEGISED IN A CORNER OFFICE OR BOARDROOM – IT IS CO-CREATED WITH THE VERY INDIVIDUALS WHO BREATHE LIFE INTO OUR DIGITAL NARRATIVES.**

Keeping a finger on the pulse of video trends, audience preferences, and emerging creators is essential for staying ahead. Yet, it's within these challenges that the love story I mentioned a few paragraphs back emerges.

A prime example of this unlikely love story unfolding was with the launch of *I Blew It* Season 6 on Mzansi Magic. To support the launch of this hit show's new season, we

seamlessly integrated content creator marketing and shortform video.

Our approach was simple: create and shoot scripted skits, akin to mini-episodes, in collaboration with some of the most prominent digital content creators in the industry.

These skits not only garnered significant shares across various social platforms – close to a million organic video views – it also propelled the 'I Blew It' hashtag to trend on X (formerly Twitter) on the day of the show's premiere and the following day. The first episode's TVRs speak for themselves.

The success of these collaborations underscores the power of this unexpected love story. And this is just one of many examples of why content creators need to be a crucial part of your video strategy, whether you are a broadcast brand or not.

However, these two aren't solely responsible for their beautiful love story. It can only work if it leverages a strong organic and fine-tuned, targeted paid approach, which pushes out these high-quality and authentic content pieces to the people who care about seeing it without relying on social media algorithms to make it happen because we all know that the algorithm is a fickle mistress.

Without jinxing this relationship, I am excited to see it unfold and grow as I navigate the ever-shifting tides of video strategy while embracing the power of creator marketing. It excites me as this relationship is rooted in collaboration, authenticity, and a commitment to letting the one lead the other and vice versa.

A good video strategy is not just strategised in a corner office or boardroom – it is co-created with the very individuals who breathe life into our digital narratives. ■

**Renaldo Schwarp** explores the symbiotic relationship between creator marketing and video strategy and how brands can navigate the ever-shifting currents of audience engagement and brand authenticity.



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# HOW GREEN ARE YOUR DIGITS?

Digital may have seemed the sustainable alternative to print, but even that now needs conscious strategy and action to offset our carbon footprint – JOE STEYN-BEGLEY points us to where, and how.

**N**o matter which way you spin it, our current trajectory is unsustainable. Our only planet is in serious trouble, and we humans bear the responsibility.

There is hope: we can play an equally strong part in our planet's healing, as we did in its ailing.

With climate change contributing to increased environmental degradation, it is crucial for every industry to take steps towards reducing their impact. Ours is no different – in fact, the media and marketing industry has a unique, substantial role to play in this effort.

The energy consumption required to produce and distribute content has a huge impact on the environment: from printing materials and running ads to powering data centres, our industry's carbon footprint is significant.

By embracing sustainability, we can reduce our environmental impact, enhance brand reputation, and appeal to socially conscious consumers.

Before we get to what that sustainability means for our industry, we should understand how we affect the environment, as it helps determine where we could best offset that impact.

## SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CYBER SPHERE

Did you know that the internet is responsible for around 2-4% of all greenhouse gas emissions – and that this is on par with the aviation industry?

Just by using the internet and transferring data, we are releasing around 330m tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere each year. Of that, online advertising is responsible for 60m tonnes – the equivalent of 66m flights between Johannesburg and Cape Town.

With the inexorable increase in online video consumption, driven by the accelerated uptake in social platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, this is only going to get worse.

In ExchangeWire's Sustainability in Advertising report – based on a survey of 130+ senior-level media professionals in Europe – more than half said that they



require their advertising partners to report their carbon emissions to them. And over 90% said sustainability metrics will be increasingly important for their actions within the next 24 months.

These are encouraging numbers, indicative of the change needed.

Of course, I'm not suggesting that we stop using the internet but, just as the fossil fuel industry is faced with unavoidable but needed change, so are we.

## STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

It is important to recognise that sustainability is an ongoing journey.

As much as we monitor our metrics and economic impact, we should regularly assess practices, and improve where necessary.

Conducting environmental audits, setting emission reduction targets, and monitoring progress are crucial steps in this process.

By continuously striving for sustainability – and reducing energy consumption – the media industry can set an example for other sectors.

In this endeavour, the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) established the Global Alliance for Responsible Media (GARM) in 2019, to address the challenge of harmful

content on digital media platforms. Along with globally renowned brands such as Diageo, Unilever, Procter & Gamble, L'Oréal, Reckitt, Mastercard, and others, they established a steering committee to specifically focus on sustainability. The GARM team developed the world's first guide to sustainable media for advertisers. Unveiled at the Cannes Lions International Festival in 2023, it provides advertisers and their agencies with real, actionable steps to help reduce the direct carbon emissions of their activities, as outlined below.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT THE INTERNET IS RESPONSIBLE FOR AROUND 2-4% OF ALL GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS – AND THAT THIS IS ON PAR WITH THE AVIATION INDUSTRY?**

### 1. Partner responsibly

Using sustainable suppliers in the media value chain is a major step towards reducing your greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This means reassessing who you work with, encouraging to adopt sustainable practices, and filtering out those who don't. Simply put, work with companies who do, or are willing to, review, report, and reduce their GHG emissions. If everyone at each step of the supply chain takes accountability, we all win.

Free resources like The Sustainable Business Book by Kevin and Sarah Duncan provide an environmental, social and governance (ESG) audit framework, a basic checklist on a company's impact and commitment to change.

Institutions like the Science-Based Targets initiative offer a range of target-setting resources and guidance for corporations.

## 2. Streamline your value chain

Technologies used to support digital media campaigns require energy, producing heat and generating greenhouse gases.

The IAB Tech Lab provides detailed steps to reduce this.

According to their Sustainability Starter Guide about programmatic media: “Reducing the number of transactions in the bid stream has a direct impact on lowering energy consumption and a straightforward way to decrease transactions is to minimise duplication of requests. Fewer transactions, especially those that result from duplication in the bid stream, means less energy gets used.” Review your media supply chain from advertiser to consumer – focusing on digital channels – and identify areas of poor quality, overlap, duplication, and redundancy.

## 3. Drive asset sufficiency

In short, this step involves ways to reduce, reuse and recycle your creative assets. Using fewer versions of assets for a longer time reduces ‘digital waste’ – resources used to create, store, and display assets that may not be needed to still run an effective campaign.

Even considering using darker colour schemes can reduce the energy needed. This also extends beyond digital of course, as printing less reduces waste. It may seem like changing things for a single campaign isn’t much, but over time it significantly adds up.

## 4. Compress digital creative formats

Another relatively simple step: where possible, compressing and shortening creative elements literally reduces the energy used. Larger files and longer assets all add up to increased energy and GHG emissions.

High-resolution creative assets are not always necessary, as most material is viewed on laptops or phones and don’t need long runtimes.

A middle ground can be reached between creative and campaign effectiveness and sustainable assets.

## 5. Stream, don’t preload

Preloaded creative content requires full loading of the asset whether the consumer views it to 10% or 100%, leading to lots of data wastage. It’s an easily overlooked aspect of advertising or displaying content online, but with advancing technology, we can move beyond legacy methods. One company championing adaptive streaming in the interest of sustainability is SeenThis; their technology streams digital creative, rather than using conventional download technology.

Other steps include not using auto-play as a default setting, and working with your web development team on landing pages to enable streaming of content.

## 6. Optimise lighting

Electricity usage varies during the day, and in different days of the week, especially in markets that are powered by more renewable energy. Optimising this, by testing and researching on and off-peak times for lighting strategies, can reduce the strain on grids – without sacrificing reach and impact.

Media buying during off-peak times lessens the use of fossil fuels, but as this is still an area of ongoing testing, more experimentation and use-cases are needed. That said, dentsu is one agency group that’s pioneering in this space locally, with their Nightvision product.

## 7. Outdoor options

By its nature, many outdoor campaigns and media are in public spaces, using public structures. Structural materials, lighting, energy supply, campaign materials, installation, cleaning and end-of-campaign recycling all contribute to the footprint. Try to work with suppliers who use sustainable practices, not only in physical materials and infrastructure, but also in their campaign and media delivery. Some examples include using recycled paper and biodegradable materials; recycled aluminium or steel; eliminating virgin plastic, vinyl and PVC; energy-efficient digital displays and solar-powered roofs, limiting water consumption through rainwater capture, LED lighting alternatives and using electric vehicles.

## 8. Perspectives in print

Sustainable printing practices is contributing to a growing industry, with the increasing use of recycled and biodegradable paper and supporting materials – binding materials, plastics, transport, and packaging – as well as their disposal or reuse at the end of a campaign.

As there is still no global standard for paper recycling, implementing this as much as possible will go a long way in setting a standard for others.

## 9. Standardise emissions data

GHG emissions data can be done in conjunction with media buying and campaign performance measurements, by overlaying additional metrics like media quality and GHG emissions data, side by side with performance data.

Requesting GHG emission data from supply chain vendors and partners and tracking this measurement will, over time, lead to standardisation, and the expectation that it becomes part of the process.

## 10. Optimise data usage

More data use puts more strain on servers and systems, and use more power. This step is harder to fully implement in developing countries, where roaming data may be more expensive, or networks not fully supported.

However, there are some ways in which data usage can be limited or streamlined, targeting essential audiences, weighing the business imperative for each layer of targeting, reducing overlapping services, and sustainable targeting, like wi-fi over mobile, where available.

## Collaboration is key

Collaboration is essential in achieving any of these goals. Like the vital work GARM is doing, media professionals can join industry-wide initiatives or form partnerships to collectively address environmental challenges. Sharing best practices and knowledge can lead to innovative solutions and a more sustainable future for our industry. ■

IT MAY SEEM LIKE CHANGING THINGS FOR A SINGLE CAMPAIGN ISN’T MUCH, BUT OVER TIME IT SIGNIFICANTLY ADDS UP.

Joe Steyn-Begley is managing director of Carbon1, a marketing technology advisory. Carbon 1 is a comprehensive consultative assessment and strategic service that gives independent advice on the selection and use of marketing technologies tailored to, and aligned, with an organisation’s digital transformation goals and objectives.



Cheryl Reddy

# EMBRACING genAI: REVOLUTIONISING THE MEDIA LANDSCAP

**CHERYL REDDY** believes that it is crucial to dissect the facets of genAI to harness its full potential while mitigating its challenges.

It is crucial to dissect the facets of genAI to harness its full potential, while mitigating challenges, as genAI presents many opportunities for media professionals to revolutionise content creation, distribution and audience engagement.

From automated content generation to personalised recommendations, genAI algorithms empower media organisations to effectively cater to diverse consumer preferences.

More so, genAI-driven predictive analytics enhance audience targeting and content optimisation, enabling media outlets to deliver a tailored experience.

This increases viewer engagement and makes it easier to implement revenue tactics, like subscription services and targeted advertising.

Furthermore, genAI-powered virtual reality and augmented reality experiences provide new opportunities for immersive storytelling and are revolutionising narrative formats in a variety of media.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR JOBS AND CONTROL

While genAI augments efficiency and creativity in media production, it also raises concerns about job displacements and editorial control. Automation of

routine tasks such as transportation, data analysis and content curation may lead to the restructuring of traditional media roles.

This shift necessitates a paradigmatic change rather than outright job loss. Media professionals will need to adapt by honing skills in data interpretation, algorithmic management and creative direction to collaborate with genAI systems.

The democratisation of content creation facilitated by genAI challenges traditional gatekeeping mechanisms, changing information access and elevating the voices of diversity.

This accentuates the need for robust editorial oversight to uphold journalistic integrity and to manage a potential spread of misinformation. Striking a balance between algorithmic autonomy with human oversight is paramount to maintaining ethical standards and foster trust in media institutions.

## UPSKILLING WORKFORCES FOR THE genAI ERA

To successfully navigate this genAI revolution, media organisations must prioritise workforce upskilling initiatives.

Consider training your team in data literacy, algorithmic understanding and ethical decision-making. This will empower employees to leverage genAI tools to avoid ethical dilemmas. Also, fostering a culture of continuous learning and experimentation cultivates resilience and adaptability within media teams.

Collaborative partnerships between industry and government entities play a pivotal role in facilitating skill

**T**he emergence of generative artificial intelligence (genAI) signals a new wave of creativity and change in the ever-evolving media landscape.

It is crucial that we investigate how genAI is changing the media industry, how it affects employment and control, how to upskill the workforce and the ethical issues associated with this paradigm change, as we progress through this technological revolution.

**BY INVESTING IN HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT, MEDIA ORGANISATIONS CAN FUTURE-PROOF THEIR WORKFORCE AND DRIVE SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION IN THE GENAI SPACE.**



development initiatives tailored to the evolving needs of the media sector.

By investing in human capital development, media organisations can future-proof their workforce and drive sustainable innovation in the genAI space.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN genAI IMPLEMENTATION

It is crucial to address the ethical issues as we integrate genAI into the media ecosystem to guarantee responsible innovation and societal gain. For genAI systems to reduce biases and advance algorithmic fairness, transparency and accountability are essential components.

User privacy is protected and ethical standards are upheld in the development and distribution of content via ethical frameworks that govern data collection, usage, and permission.

Media companies also need to manage the complicated ethical issues related to automated content creation, synthetic media, and deepfakes.

Strong authentication protocols and digital literacy programmes enable viewers to distinguish between real and fake content, reducing the spread of false information and maintaining public confidence in media sources.

In the genAI era, regulators, industry stakeholders, and civil society must work together to create regulatory frameworks that strike a balance between innovation and moral obligations.

## NAVIGATING REGULATORY CHALLENGES

The genAI revolution requires a reassessment of legislative frameworks to address new concerns in combination with technical improvements. In the digital age, regulatory agencies need to move quickly to protect consumer rights, privacy, and intellectual property.

In addition to empowering customers, clear policies on data ownership, algorithmic responsibility and transparency reduce the possibility that digital companies may take advantage of them. Proactive regulation also creates fair conditions for a variety of media companies, promoting competition and creativity while preserving democratic values.

## genAI-POWERED VIRTUAL REALITY AND AUGMENTED REALITY EXPERIENCES PROVIDE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMMERSIVE STORYTELLING AND ARE REVOLUTIONISING NARRATIVE FORMATS IN A VARIETY OF MEDIA.

## FOSTERING COLLABORATIVE ECOSYSTEMS

Building collaborative ecosystems is essential to achieving genAI's disruptive promise in the media industry. Knowledge sharing and innovation are accelerated by strategic alliances between government agencies, tech startups, media companies and research institutes.

Incubation hubs and accelerators offer a conducive environment for interdisciplinary cooperation, facilitating the exchange of ideas and cultivating a thriving ecosystem for general artificial intelligence.

Stakeholders may work together to manage the intricacies of the genAI era and fully realise the potential benefits of this technology for society by cultivating a culture of collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Bridging the digital divide through inclusive policy interventions and community-driven initiatives is essential to harness the transformative potential of genAI in South Africa's media ecosystem.

Collaborative initiatives between local media entities and global tech innovators facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity-building, driving innovation and competitiveness in the local media sector.

It is imperative to ensure that such partnerships prioritise local content production, cultural sensitivities and ethical standards to safeguard the integrity of the South African media narrative in the global arena.

What this shows is that genAI represents a paradigm shift in the media landscape, offering unprecedented opportunities for innovation, efficiency, and audience engagement.

Realising the full potential of genAI requires a holistic approach encompassing workforce upskilling, ethical considerations, and inclusive development strategies.

By fostering a culture of responsible innovation and collaboration, media organisations can navigate the complexities of the genAI era while driving positive societal impact in the South African space and beyond. ■

## ...FOSTERING A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND EXPERIMENTATION CULTIVATES RESILIENCE AND ADAPTABILITY WITHIN MEDIA TEAMS.

## SA'S MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

In South Africa, genAI presents both opportunities and challenges shaped by unique socio-economic dynamics. While genAI technologies hold promise in enhancing media accessibility, fostering digital inclusion, and amplifying marginalised voices, they also exacerbate existing inequalities in access to technology and digital literacy.

**Cheryl Reddy** is the multi-skilled CEO of [Eclipse Communications](#). Her experience in journalism (as writer and editor), corporate communications and agency has shaped her into a strategic consultant that understands the way news is consumed, and the effective support required of agencies today.

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A portrait of Mali Motsumi-Garrido, a woman with short dark hair, wearing a dark blazer over a white top, with her arms crossed. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera.

# RE: OUTDOOR MEDIA

We survived the 'Uncertain Times' – and South Africa's outdoor sector is now fully geared to leverage its post-Covid renaissance, writes MALI MOTSUMI-GARRIDO.

In the world of media – or more specifically, out of home (OOH) media – I would consider the past few years to be our RE Era.

REact. REflect. RENew. RElearn. REvive. REbirth

2020 provided a clean slate. All our collective industry experience; the progress we had made and the wisdom we had gained along the way helped, of course – but the volatility of the Covid-19

pandemic required a great deal of courage, risk-taking and being okay-ish with the unknown.

For a sector defined as out of home, what were we to do at a time when people were expressly told to stay home? We had to RElook our sales strategies and RE-establish and strengthen our client relationships; we had to unlearn and RElearn; we were called to

RE-examine how we had always done things, pivot – then pivot again.

Not all businesses survived what was dubbed as those "Uncertain Times" but – at the risk of sounding unduly dramatic – those that did, saw a REbirth.

Mali Motsumi-Garrido

**THE MARKETING INDUSTRY, AS A WHOLE, HAS NEVER BEEN BETTER EQUIPPED TO DELIVER A UNIFIED AND CONSISTENT BRAND EXPERIENCE TO CONSUMERS ACROSS DIFFERENT TOUCHPOINTS.**

## REcalibrating

Static outdoor media proves a great example. So enamoured were advertisers with the flexibility that dynamic digital out of home (DOOH) offered, that sales had, for years, far surpassed that of static. Then Covid-19 hit. And with it, went any expectations that the growth of digital would skyrocket, leaving static outdoor media to stagnate. Because it didn't.

Counter-intuitively, we saw the demand for static expand, leading to a RENaissance of the iconic big billboard. It seemed that with all Covid-19's uncertainty, marketers were seeking a little more solidity or permanency in their outdoor media.

Static and digital have always been a perfect pairing. While DOOH will continue to thrive with the attention and investment poured into this arena, forward-thinking marketers will continue to see the benefits of leveraging both as part of their media mix.

## REloading

Load shedding is another crisis that tested our resilience – and became a catalyst for innovation. Confidence in DOOH started levelling down with each increase in load shedding levels, and once again the outdoor media industry pivoted. No power, no problem!

A silver lining in the load shedding saga is that it is expected to leapfrog South Africa towards our Just Energy transition – and DOOH has experienced this firsthand: the industry has made significant investments in back-up power, in our life-or-death quest to keep our screens on.

Tractor has embarked on a full-scale rollout of solar-powered solutions and alternative energy sources across all key sites, with the aim of becoming net zero by the end of the year.

This has allowed us to deliver on our client campaigns without interruption, while

our programmatic capabilities mean that ad serves are never lost. With this, our digital sales REmain consistent, as advertisers increasingly REgain confidence in the medium.

## REfocusing

OOH is one of the most exciting media verticals available. Of all offline channels, OOH is most engaging, according to a 2024 local media survey by Kantar; it also came tops in the agency's recommendations as a highly promising channel that should take a greater slice of the media budget pie.

A PwC South Africa report states that the OOH advertising market is projected to grow steadily at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 2.4% from 2021 to 2025. It has demonstrated its power and impact as a stand-alone, as well as its ability to elevate broad-scale brand awareness when part of an omnichannel campaign.

This is in part due to the fact that OOH and DOOH media are not invasive (as with online advertising) and also because outdoor, by its very nature, requires people to be out of their homes. The data is showing that at the moment, consumers want to be out and above and not stuck at home – as they were during the pandemic.

From an audience perspective, we've seen a huge increase in the amount of traffic on the roads – while admittedly not great for commuters, for marketers this means more dwell time, and a captive audience. Added to this is the increased peak hour traffic window on weekdays: 6h00 till 8h00 now extends until 11h00, while afternoon rush hour now starts at 15h30 instead of 17h00.

Technology has also unlocked a world of opportunity for marketers. With dynamic triggers, marketers can serve contextually relevant ads (hot chocolate on an ice-cold day, anyone?) while the sophistication

of content management systems and programmatic allows campaigns to be optimised on the fly, as real-time campaign data pours in.

Our DOOH metrics are now aligned with traditional media advertising, making reporting and demonstrating ROI far simpler and more compelling and, in some ways, more advanced, with many media owners now including attention metrics.

REgardless of economic pressures, advertisers are willing to invest in mediums that reach large audiences while minimising wastage, are cost-effective, measurable, tech-driven and will continue to deliver growth for their brands.

## REvealing the future

We live in a truly omnichannel world and any marketer worthy of the title is thinking customer before channel. The marketing industry, as a whole, has never been better equipped to deliver a unified and consistent brand experience to consumers across different touchpoints.

In OOH, we now have anamorphic, facial recognition, contextual triggering, geo-fencing and remarketing capabilities.

**(OOH) HAS DEMONSTRATED ITS POWER AND IMPACT AS A STAND-ALONE, AS WELL AS ITS ABILITY TO ELEVATE BROAD-SCALE BRAND AWARENESS WHEN PART OF AN OMNICHANNEL CAMPAIGN.**

Our DOOH measurement tools are advancing at the speed of sound, and we also can now do attribution and measure campaign performance through brand and footfall studies, on the same level as online digital.

We're also able to be more competitive in pricing, and can navigate media inflation well, as we don't have the massive resource and content acquisition costs associated with ATL media.

To future-proof successfully, sales teams will need to fast-track their digital knowledge and get into the business of educating, not only themselves, but also their clients and agency partners, who may not be as familiar with the shifts that are occurring. A curiosity and knowledge of digital will define the sales stars of the future.

There's still more room for better integration with other disciplines, and a lot more education is needed on OOH and DOOH.

Many media planners are not sufficiently versed in the value it can bring to a campaign, or cannot articulate it compellingly for their clients.

We've been saying it for years, but we do need to do more to break down the silos between the various marketing disciplines and mediums, and to keep our customers firmly front and centre when designing campaigns for maximum impact.

As an industry, our job is to keep our ear to the ground, remain connected and solve client's problems with all the knowledge, expertise and innovation we can muster.

The local landscape will continue to pressurise budgets and test the creativity of marketers. But we shouldn't be frightened; our economic rollercoaster has never been a smooth ride.

We're a REsilient society, and it's during these tough times that we truly shine; we innovate, find new opportunities to grow, problem-solve and come together to create a brighter future.

Finally, it's our time to reap the fruits of the last few years' efforts and learnings. ■

**REGARDLESS OF ECONOMIC PRESSURES, ADVERTISERS ARE WILLING TO INVEST IN MEDIUMS THAT REACH LARGE AUDIENCES WHILE MINIMISING WASTAGE, ARE COST-EFFECTIVE, MEASURABLE, TECH-DRIVEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO DELIVER GROWTH FOR THEIR BRANDS.**

**Mali Motsumi-Garrido** is the Sales Director and a board member at [Tractor Outdoor](#). She has occupied several senior roles in the media industry, including stints at Caxton Magazines, Mediamark, Primedia Broadcasting and DSTV.

# PREPARING FOR AN OMNICHANNEL WORLD

**A future of seamless integration awaits those willing to take the leap, collaborate and scale for growth, reckons REMI DU PREEZ.**

**W**hen I was invited to speak at the World Out of Home Organisation's (WOO) first Regional Forum in Africa, in Cape Town in early March, I decided to help the various players across our continent understand the critical juncture the digital out of home (DOOH) industry has arrived at, and the immense opportunity that technology has afforded us.

**COLLECTIVELY, WE HAVE THOUSANDS OF DIGITAL SCREENS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, BUT OUR THINKING REMAINS TOO TERRITORIAL AND SILOED. WE NEED TO EXAMINE HOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR CATEGORY AS A WHOLE.**

We're on the precipice of exponential expansion – but we need to take the leap.

I believe that this juncture is not completely removed from the one we saw with domestic internet penetration a quarter of a century ago. In the 1980s, the internet was mainly the domain of government bodies, major corporations and universities.

It is almost unbelievable to think that, at the beginning of the '90s, Joe Public (not the ad agency) had no real idea what the internet was or what it could do. By 1994, companies were starting to cotton on, and new online websites and commerce platforms were launched.

Within a year, new technologies were introduced, which expanded the internet's capabilities, and the rest, as they say, is history. It boomed.

As we prepare for an omnichannel world characterised by multiple media channels, formats and touchpoints, we need to tap into this benefit of foresight, to take the best of the online world while avoiding its dark underbelly – and apply these lessons strategically.

There are three key things that the digital out of home industry can take from the rapid expansion of the internet.

## **LEVERAGING THE POWER OF THE NETWORK**

In 2000, the internet had 361 million users. Within a decade, this number had increased five-fold – but fast forward another 10 years and we hit 4.5 billion in 2020.

Today, 5.35 billion people use the internet, which amounts to 66.2% of the worldwide population. The reason it was able to expand so fast? A powerful network.

A [research paper](#) that set out to study the scaling phenomenon of the internet says: "Today's internet is a prime example of a large-scale, highly engineered,

**Remi Du Preez**



**SOMETIMES I'LL SEE A BILLBOARD WITH ONE SET OF FIGURES NEXT TO ANOTHER WITH A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SET OF NUMBERS, SCRATCH MY HEAD AND THINK: HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT WE HAVEN'T GOT THIS RIGHT YET?**

yet highly complex system. It is characterised by an enormous degree of heterogeneity any way one looks and continues to undergo significant changes over time."

What can DOOH learn from this? We need to tear down the walls between us – and scale.

Collectively, we have thousands of digital screens across the country, but our thinking remains too territorial and siloed. We need to examine how we can work together for the benefit of our category as a whole.

If media owners were to come together in partnership, aggregating their networks, we could establish a mega network that would extend our advertisers' reach throughout the continent. This would create a powerful opportunity for brands to target consumers across the entire customer journey – with demonstrable results.

This is the premise on which Polygon was built. We partner with media owners to make up a network of thousands of screens, specifically

designed to maximise omnichannel advertising campaigns while integrating accredited audience data using world-class technology.

We need to create a seamless experience for sophisticated digital marketers and a platform that allows us to compare apples with apples. This will remove the current ringfencing while creating consistency in audience data methodology.

### **SIMPLIFY AND STANDARDISE**

If you're designing a banner or advertisement for an online platform, you have limited size and spec options, which are generally standardised across media owners. Yet when it comes to DOOH, we have multiple different specs and size formats, creating enormous headaches for the industry.

Why do this to ourselves? They don't do it in Germany, Australia or most of Europe, where there are typically five different artwork sizes that fit 90% of billboards.

There's also a misguided consensus that bigger is always better. When designing for a digital billboard, our advertisers tend to push the size of the creative as far as it will go – sometimes at the expense of the resolution. We should be thinking pixels, not meters.

If we want to scale, we need to standardise.

### **TRANSPARENCY CREATES TRUST**

In an advertising context and across all advertising mediums, measurement is our very bread and butter, demonstrating return on our clients' spend.

In the world of digital, measurement is fairly uniform across the board.

Conversely, in our world of DOOH, it is also an area that sees a great deal of debate and contention around

measurement methodologies applied, what data is measured, and how we represent these insights to our clients.

Sometimes I'll see a billboard with one set of figures next to another with a completely different set of numbers, scratch my head and think: how is it possible that we haven't got this right yet?

This is where we need to use the technology available to us and, as an industry, agree on our measurement methodology, data collection methods and the interpretation of that data – then do this uniformly and consistently.

We also need to be fully transparent in showing our methodologies and figures. Right now, have some good standards. However, subscription to these benchmarks is limited to members of certain industry bodies and owners of traditional roadside billboards.

There are still myriad of screen venues that do not have any audience data attached to them at all.

Currently, the main problem with our existing measurement methodologies is how media owners are using and interpreting the data at their disposal. As media owners need to commercialise this data, this makes the whole process open to bias – at best – and fraud, at worst.

We need to step back and let the tools at our disposal automate this process for us, removing the risk of human error – and focusing instead on where we can add the most value: building strong client relationships.

The future is omnichannel. Not as we know it now, with poor integration between channels in creative campaign roll-out; rather, a seamless omnichannel experience, for increasingly sophisticated consumers who want the world at a touch of a button.

As an industry, let's reflect on the lessons of the past few years to guide our journey into the future. ■

**THE FUTURE IS OMNICHANNEL. NOT AS WE KNOW IT NOW, WITH POOR INTEGRATION BETWEEN CHANNELS IN CREATIVE CAMPAIGN ROLL-OUT; RATHER, A SEAMLESS OMNICHANNEL EXPERIENCE, FOR INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED CONSUMERS WHO WANT THE WORLD AT A TOUCH OF A BUTTON.**

**Remi du Preez** is the Managing Director of Polygon, an aggregated DOOH publisher network, specifically designed to maximise omnichannel advertising campaigns while integrating accredited audience data using world-class technology. Polygon offers advertisers a single point of entry into the continent's largest network of DOOH inventory.

# DATA THAT DELIVERS

**Knowledge is power – and an effective CRM system provides all you need to tap into your customer's changing needs, in real time, writes YAW DWOMOH.**

**A**vital business strategy that helps companies understand, anticipate and manage the needs of customers, customer relationship management (CRM) improves customer loyalty, enhances and promotes streamlined communication processes, increases sales and efficiency, and helps businesses make better decisions.

By understanding and meeting the needs of customers, businesses can build trust and loyalty, which leads to increased customer retention and repeat business.

And, as the cost of acquiring new customers has increased, businesses are left with no choice but to foster strong relationships with their clients.

Of course, increasing changes in buyer behaviour, and the impact of technological advances also contribute enormously to business growth. This shift is not just about agencies and their clients having to make technical adjustments, but also signifies how they approach marketing, the sharing of information and data, and consumer engagement.

Knowing this is important as the world moves towards a strategic communication approach in the advertising and marketing space.

## AI IN THE MIX

Adaptability and creativity are critical success factors in today's quickly changing business environment and, given that sales and marketing efforts thrive on data-driven insights, a CRM tool is an essential aid in converting unprocessed data into knowledge that may be used in easily identifying areas for development, streamlining the sales pipeline, and pinpoint high-value leads.

At Idea Hive, we always advise our clients on the importance of keeping ahead of industry trends, predicting consumer wants, and adjusting their strategy in reaction to shifting market conditions by using real-time data and analytics from CRM systems.

By using an AI tool, we can deliver content that speaks to the interests



Yaw Dwomoh

**EMPLOYING CRM AS THE CENTRAL HUB FOR DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING, WE CAN FOSTER A CULTURE OF INNOVATION, FLEXIBILITY, AND CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT THAT PROPELS LONG-TERM BUSINESS GROWTH AND VALUE CREATION FOR OUR CLIENTS.**

of the consumer, helping us tailor communications for them. This has improved the effectiveness of our creative work, streamlined the flow of consumer data, and enabled the business to create consumer-focused marketing campaigns that drive efficiency throughout the customer lifecycle.

Employing CRM as the central hub for data-driven decision-making, we can foster a culture of innovation, flexibility, and continuous development that propels long-term business growth and value creation for our clients.

## START WITH CLEAN DATA

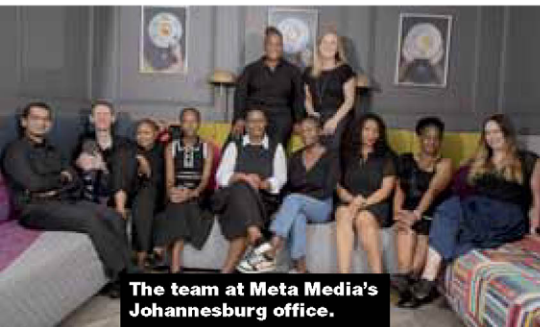
A CRM tool that is successful must handle data efficiently. Businesses can customise experiences, target marketing campaigns more precisely, offer better customer service, enhance forecasts, cut expenses, and improve customer service by managing consumer data.

Effective data management requires clients to start with clean data, make the appropriate technology investments, review and update data frequently, use data to inform decisions and provide best practices training to staff members. Businesses may maximise the use of their CRM data and get better business results by adhering to these best practices. ■

Yaw Dwomoh is CEO of [Idea Hive](#).

# THE FORMULA TO BUILDING A POWERHOUSE

Meta Media group managing director Kagiso Musi articulates the ethos of the power of five as the pillars of the organisation.



The team at Meta Media's Johannesburg office.

As Meta Media marks its fifth anniversary, we delve into the core pillars of our business: the power of five – our culture, people, environment, innovation and clients. Coupled with the data capability built over the past five years, these have underpinned the company's philosophy of "the power of data behind the data".

This milestone isn't just a celebration of years past; it is a testament to the quintessential forces that drive Meta Media's success.

## OUR PILLARS OF SUCCESS

**The power of culture.** Meta Media believes in the strength of a cultivated environment where creativity, partnership and fun thrive. Our culture is the bedrock upon which we've built our success. It is about fostering a space where people can see themselves contributing meaningfully and, because of that, thriving in their careers and personal lives. This ethos has been instrumental in shaping a well-grounded, high-quality, fun and adaptive organisation.

**The power of people.** The success of Meta Media is undeniably tied to the talents and dedication of its team. I have been at the helm of a few super teams and results-driven

work in our vast industry over the years. However, at Meta Media, our people shine as our most treasured asset. Their passion, creativity and relentless pursuit of results have been a driving force behind our growth. For our business, investing in people has led to their professional growth, strong loyalty, and a shared future vision.

### The power of the environment.

Understanding and respecting the broader context in which we operate is an important factor for us. Meta Media is committed to sustainable practices and contributing positively to our environment and landscape. We are part of a larger ecosystem and our actions must nourish this system, not deplete it. Our love for our country and continent has cemented an awareness in our work, mindful of how it impacts the societies where we operate.

**The power of innovation.** In a rapidly changing world, innovation is the currency of relevance. Meta Media has embraced this, continuously pushing the boundaries of what's possible. Innovation is the engine of our growth. It challenges us to think bigger, act bolder and aim higher. We intentionally

cultivate innovative thinking in our teams and therefore expect it in our work. This relentless pursuit of innovation ensures Meta Media remains at the forefront of the industry, marcoms and martech.

### The power of partnerships.

Ultimately, the measure of Meta Media's success lies in the value delivered to its clients through our relationships with our media owner partners. We operate a triad relationship system of agency, client and media owner – one doesn't work without the other. Our clients and media owners are our partners in this journey. Our clients' trust and feedback fuels our drive to exceed expectations and deliver unparalleled value, while our strong bonds with the media owner community allow us to explore solutions that deliver value to our brands. This partner-centric approach has cultivated lasting relationships and a reputation for high performance and quality.

These are proven elements in the blueprint for our success. These five years have been a journey of growth, challenges and triumphs. We are grateful to everyone who has been part of our journey and excited for the opportunities being presented.

## EXPLORE THE POWER OF FIVE

Meta Media invites you to discover how using data to tell a story can benefit your business. Visit our website or contact us at [www.metamedia.co.za](http://www.metamedia.co.za) to learn how we can work together to succeed in a constantly changing digital world. Let's collaborate to drive progress towards a brighter and more inspired future.

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Meta Media's Cape Town team.





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