

Marketing in meltdowns must be mobile



By [Devon Meerholz](#)

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While no informed person is suggesting that the South African economy is in actual meltdown, it certainly feels like it. Those in the know have been telling us to prepare for challenging times for several years now and things really do feel like they are getting positively tricky. No sooner had 'Ramaphoria' evaporated than we received the news that the economy is not in bad shape, it's in terrible shape.



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Forget that magical 1.5% GDP increase we had all hoped for this year - it turns out the economy is actually shrinking! And by a whopping 3.2% in the first quarter of 2019. Add that to the Rand heading to twenty ZARs to the British unit and the news from South of the Limpopo looks gloomy indeed. Except, we've been here before.

Millennials in the media and marketing industry haven't been around the water cooler long enough to remember that our currency has, in fact, headed towards the R25 to the pound mark before, and our economy has historically seen the odd quarterly contraction before finishing the year in positive territory.

Still, the current signs are not encouraging by any stretch of the imagination and we've only survived our past challenges because we batted down the hatches. So, in marketing, what does the latter entail? Preparing the decks for action (or rather, for a lack of action) in the marketing world used to mean only one thing: cost-cutting in pursuit of lean agencies better able to weather challenging times.

Today, while revisiting cost centres remains the go-to coping mechanism for marketers when things go off the boil, there are so many different marketing platforms today that the marketers' ability to shuffle spend between mobile, outdoor, direct, radio, TV, and others, becomes a real tool in beating downturns.

I see the CMO or agency head as a modern-day corporate alchemist throwing in a bit of this media platform and that audience segment into an enormous bubbling marketing mix pot while thunder crashes and lightning flashes directly overhead.

In the picture above, I see the CMO adding a huge amount of mobile to the pot, quieting the crashes and flashes. So why exactly does the mobile medium have the potential to help media and marketing agencies and their clients survive the kind of challenging times we're currently experiencing? I see three main reasons:

Fewer (costly) humans are needed to manage mobile

Mobile marketing is largely an automated affair. Once the creative is conceptualised, designed and implemented - following strategy determination - the mobile platform lends itself to easy campaign kick-off while detailed reports full of magical data are effortlessly generated by the technology. Economic downturns are usually accompanied by some thinning out of the human capital so it's comforting to know that mobile campaigns can still be effectively executed with less talent.

Rich reporting adds to nimbleness

The reason why lean organisations are better able to survive periods of negative growth is because they're able to react faster to survival-threatening events on the horizon. The nature of the technology means that mobile marketing campaigns generate rich reports full of detailed data that can boost responsiveness. If any element of the mobile campaign is not working and generating actual rands and cents, it can be rapidly identified and easily tweaked until results are forthcoming.

When the chips are down, do what works

Do mobile for the same reason investors flock to gold when times get tough. Far from an emerging digital technology, mobile marketing is today a proven discipline with the data to back it up. It's as reliable as the 'luxury German sedan' our traditional marketing colleagues punted in the heyday of radio and television.

When growth is negative, the currency in free-fall, and politicians reckless, stick to what works to survive to be experimental when things pick up - and they will.

ABOUT DEVON MEERHOLZ

Devon Meerholz is Chief Creative Officer at IMmobile, a global software and solutions group with a presence in over 60 countries worldwide. Devon's unique approach to creativity is put to good use at IMmobile's Johannesburg office. Here he works with a multidisciplinary team to develop SA-specific mobile initiatives from bank statements to cross-platform personalised marketing videos that enable the company's clients to speak to current and potential customers in more visual, appealing and creative ways.

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