

The platform isn't going to matter

 By [Richard Lord](#)

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Trends for 2021? The honest answer is, "Who knows?" Nobody saw our current 2020 reality coming and every trend that was predicted for 2020 was pretty much thrown out of the window on 27 March when our country went into lockdown.

So, trends for 2021? Well the first thing I am going to say is, don't try to predict what might happen!



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In all honesty, everything is a little all over the place at the moment. Nobody knows what to expect, which is causing a lot of uncertainty across the board, regardless of whether you are a media owner, a client or an agency. With the constant threat of more restrictive lockdown measures ever present, it is very difficult for anyone to make any hard and fast decisions for 2021. Everyone seems to be adopting a wait-and-see approach.

However, there are probably three broad similarities (I hesitate to call them trends) that I am seeing currently and that I suspect will continue to play a role throughout next year, or at least until we have some level of certainty of how the Covid-19 pandemic is going to resolve itself.

1. Back to basics

Agencies and media owners are constantly looking for the next big thing. New, creative and never been done before ways of solving old problems. However, we are seeing that many stakeholders – due to the current Covid situation – have become more and more risk averse.

Marketers, media owners and agencies alike need to make sure that every rand spent is going to give them a return, and so untried, untested ideas and concepts are being looked upon a lot less favourably than they have been before. I believe that 2021 will see an even greater return to things that are known to deliver proven results. That is not to say that agencies, media owners and marketers won't continue to try to find better ways to do things, but everyone is going to be a lot more cautious and circumspect about what they spend their money on.

2. Tighter budgets, greater value

We have recently seen Fitch, Moody's and the other global ratings agencies further downgrade South Africa, which is not good news for anyone. Budgets have been slashed across the board this year, and whilst the easing of lockdown restrictions has seen a welcome return of advertising spend, it certainly is not at the level that we would have liked.

Media owners are taking strain, marketers are tightening their belts and agencies are having to rethink their resourcing. It is tough out there for everyone, and the state of the global economy is not going to improve anytime soon.

As a result, we will see lower levels of spend, harder negotiations and more favours being asked for. Value is going to become key for media owners in attracting spend to their platforms. Advertisers and agencies are going to be looking for every opportunity to get maximum exposure for minimum expenditure.

3. Question, question, question

This ties into both points one and two above, but everything is going to be questioned, and then questioned again! No decisions will be taken lightly. Every last cent will be checked, double-checked, and then checked again for good measure. Data is going to become absolutely critical in helping marketers make the right decisions. Agencies and media owners are going to be under pressure to prove that every recommendation that is made is based on sound, meaningful and accurate information, insights and learnings.

So those are my predictions... Everyone is going to go back to what they know works. We are all going to have to do more with less, and everyone is going to have to justify themselves with sound data before any decisions are made.

“ Every year we see predictions about more digital, the death of print, the rise of addressable content, machines taking over, etc. Next year the platform honestly isn't going to matter. What is going to matter most to advertisers is that they get their message in front of the biggest number of the right people, for as little money and in the most impactful way possible. **”**

Whether that is through programmatic billboards, digital video, or just good old fashioned TV or radio, really isn't going to matter. Just as long as whatever platform is used provides excellent value, is based on sound science and ultimately delivers results.

The media owners and agencies that can deliver this will win big in 2021!

ABOUT RICHARD LORD

Richard Lord is Media & Operations Director at Meta Media, South Africa's newest media agency, and part of the IPG global network and Nahana Communications Group of specialist agencies. At Meta Media we don't just look at the numbers, we dig deeper, we look for the story behind the story. We find the "so what" to give our clients the edge, to provide real solutions based on real insights. We are real, we are authentic. We are curious!

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