

Making your business recession-proof

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It's no surprise to any South African in both the public and private sectors, that the economy is contracting and that as a country we are in a technical recession. This coupled with the recent petrol and energy tariff hikes, has left the nation stunned.

It is also a truism that the first budgets that are cut in a recession are marketing budgets – at least in our experience. However, this may not be the wisest route for businesses to take, given that consumers don't **stop** spending, they simply are more circumspect on **what** they spend on. A very real example of this is what has become known as the "Lipstick Effect". Essentially, the lipstick effect is when consumers continue to purchase small indulgences during economic downturns, or when they have little cash. They do not have the disposable income to purchase big-ticket luxury items. However, most find the cash for purchase for small luxury items, such as premium lipstick.

It is with this said, that businesses need to be equally savvy when choosing **where** to spend their marketing budgets to continue to attract new consumers, whilst retaining their existing clients. The costs associated with traditional mediums such as television, radio and print have become prohibitive for many businesses, not to mention the wastage experienced. More importantly, consumers are not engaging with these mediums as they previously did, choosing instead to engage with brands in the digital space.

It is here that digital marketing strategies and platforms have revolutionised the marketing landscape. Digital campaigns can be targeted not only by demographics, but also geographically and by consumer interests. Further to this, digital campaigns are leading the way in terms of active engagement with consumers and driving cost-effective, measurable lead generation which actively contributes to the business' bottom line.

Says Leon Marinus, Managing Director of leading digital agency, ATKASA SA, "We have delivered incredible results to our clients, as we base all our campaigns on solid, data-driven insights. Despite the economic slow-down, our clients continue to see growth within their businesses quite simply because of our targeted, consistent marketing approach."

Given that consumers are becoming increasingly marketing-savvy and are more discerning of the brands with which they interact, organisations need to establish two-way dialogues with their audiences. Consumers want to have a "conversation" with a brand – they demand to be spoken **with**, instead of **to**. Via digital platforms consumers are far more open to marketing messaging, more so if an organisation has been recommended by one of their peers. Never before have word-of-mouth endorsements and reviews been so important to a brands sustainability and growth.

"Our young team at ATKASA SA fully understand this digitally wired generation - what drives interaction, what motivates these consumers. In fact, these **are** your consumers. And they are not swayed by companies throwing massive budgets behind a brand – they require a level of authenticity in how they are addressed. Question is: are you speaking their language?" concludes Marinus.

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