

The year of making love

 By [Pepe Marais](#)

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One of the most sobering marketing tweets of 2018 was by Chris Botha, CEO of The Media Shop.



Pepe Marais, founding partner and group chief creative officer of Joe Public United.

According to his data, a total of 529,065 spots flighted across all television stations during the month of March alone. Including station promos, 938 advertisers spent nearly R3,2 billion (excluding production fees) on this one media channel alone.

And while Chris highlighted the issue as “clutter”, there is a far greater issue behind these numbers that doesn’t quite add up.

“ TV Clutter? A total of 529,065 spots flighted across all TV stations in March 2018. Including station promos, 938 advertisers spent R3,144,793,607 all vying for our attention & hard earned rand. Highest ARs for an advertiser - Assupol at 2,215.5 (All adults).— The MediaShop (@MediaShopZA) [April 11, 2018](#) ”

Consider this: of all those spots that flighted in one month alone, how many made an actual impact? Stirred up conversation? Moved people to such a degree that it may just have moved them to purchase? One? Two, maybe? Resulting in only 0,2% of the total media spend on television in the month of March 2018, to be used to maximum effect.

That's R3,193,409,000 down the drain, in a country where 30-million people can barely afford to eat.

But most concerning of all is that not one creative director, business director, financial director or marketing director within our market seems to be concerned. That's the same as a car manufacturer selling reliability, with 99,8% of their cars continually breaking down, and not a single captain of industry blinking an eye.

So why are the captains of our industry – creative leaders and business leaders alike – mute on the issue? Why are there hardly any calibre campaigns seen in our market?

My assumption is that since the late nineties, locally owned agencies started selling off to global conglomerations at an increasing pace. In one year alone, one international giant gobbled up 11 Davids in our market. And with this ever-increasing trend came a change in the focus of what was once a highly creative industry.

Bottom line focus. Delivery of endless margins that slowly marginalised what we actually should be focusing on.

Our product.

“ As we started to care more and more about the pennies, we stopped pushing back on market-share motivated, fear-based client demands. Because we had our own market-share motivated, fear-based demands. We now needed to hang onto every single cent in order to feed the international king at the top of a pyramid scheme our hard-earned South African rands. ”

And the poorer our product became, the less value we started to add to our clients. And the less we added creative value, the less we had evidence to justify our fees, these days squeezed like the last little drop of blood from the proverbial stone.

Slowly but surely, every inch of love for the craft of advertising has been destroyed by a globalised system that simply does not allow us to express the passion for what we do.

So, how do we begin to fix this?

1. Creatives. Take ownership in 2019. Step up to creative leadership and reclaim the lead

It is not the strategist, the business unit director or the marketing manager's job to govern our thinking on what a great idea should be, what will drive talkability or what would ultimately create fame for the brand.

And while I'm on fame, put your ego in your pocket and put the fame of the brand above that of yourself. This award thing has become silly. I know we all had to do this scam game to feed our creative souls, God knows, without it I would have exited my beloved industry years ago.



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But it's time to put that energy into adding value to the world we live in today.

A world desperate for creativity.

Over the past two years, we have proven time and time again that the more autonomy in the manufacturing of our ideas remains within the hands of the creative department, the more we end up with a product that truly connects to the market.

The only work that really works.

2. Business partners. You're not in business, you are in the business of creativity

This is not a service industry, this is a product industry. Yes, service may be one of the most important factors of a restaurant, but it remains a hygiene factor. Because the customer is there for the food, not for the waiter.

“ I love the personalised service of Mercedes-Benz, but I don't walk out the showroom with the salesman under my arm. ”

I have empathy for you, because you have been conditioned by a world that has made the bottom line its top priority.

But maybe 2019 is the year to start standing for something new: your product.

Yes, your product. Start speaking for the power of creativity.

Why are there almost no thought leadership pieces on the importance of creativity from the pens of the business camp of our industry? Your pens are not just there to sign cheques. They are there to lend credibility to our creative product. To write history.

Standing for your product (just as Steve Jobs as the CEO of Apple, the most valuable company on the planet, stood for his product) is how you create healthy internal and external relationships and, dare I say, better margins. It's how you create true value for your clients.

3. Clients. I love you, I am grateful for your business. But loving honesty is the only path to greatness, so hear me when I say:

These over-governed, over-processed, lacklustre ideas by committee that adorn every inch of the media spaces available to us, both traditionally and digitally, are not only a waste of our collective sweat and the cause of many tears – not to mention the billions of rands of your shareholders – but they simply don't work.

If you truly are in marketing to gain market share, and you want to make 2019 the most spectacular year of your career, then start allowing your agency to do what they love to do.

Give them more creative freedom. Empower them with your trust. Show them more love. And you will find that the more you give, the more you get. Much, much more.

Do this, and not only will they be willing to bend over backwards for you, but your brand and product will soar.

2019 is on our doorstep and the time is now. For a creative revolution. To put art back into advertising. To start loving what we do again. Because love will ultimately conquer all.

ABOUT PEPE MARAIS

Pepe Marais is the founding partner and group chief creative officer of brand and communications group Joe Public United. He lives for creativity that deeply connects with people. His passion is to co-create an environment and culture that breed exponential growth, Growthn - the growth of Joe Public United's people, clients and ultimately our country.

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