

The rise of purpose, engaging where it matters

 By [Stuart Innell](#)

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'Branding for good' or 'purpose-driven marketing' is no longer a wallflower in the global advertising sector. Instead, it's the person in the room that everyone else wants to dance with, fulfilling a vital role in many leading brands' strategies.



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So much so that the prestigious global advertising award competitions include categories for rewarding brands with purpose.

For example, Cannes Lions has the Glass Lion: The Lion for Change, which celebrates culture-shifting creativity. In fact, its 2020/2021 edition included two South African entries on its shortlist.

Cannes Lions also expanded its Culture & Context section with two separate categories for Social Behaviour and Cultural Insight, and also replaced the CSR sector category with Corporate Purpose & Social Responsibility.

Further adding impetus to the adoption of purpose-driven marketing is the acceptance that it significantly contributes to a brand's financial health.

Insights 2020, led by research firm Kantar Millward Brown, found that, for companies and brands which outperformed others, traditional value drivers such as product quality, or packaging, or distribution reach were, of course, important, but no longer provided competitive advantage, because multiple competitors have the capability to provide these to consumers.

What really led to outperformance and rapid business growth were a few critical drivers that are relevant for our markets here at home. And the first of these drivers were being purpose-led. The study found that when companies or brands were clearly linked to a purpose, 80% of them outperformed the market. Only 32% of non-purpose brands managed to perform better than the market.

Until recently, few brands in South Africa seemed prepared to as readily invest in purpose-driven marketing but a number of Boomtown's clients have, over the past two years, extended their brand positioning exercises into purpose-driven expressions.

And, we predict this will gain impetus during 2022, especially for small- to medium-sized and homegrown brands as well as local businesses.

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- [Rain](#)
- [Woodlands Dairy](#)
- [The Wilderness Foundation](#)
- [Sovereign](#)
- [African Health Placement](#)
- [Nestlé Ricoffy](#)
- [National Glass](#)

We've learnt that campaigns for local brands and businesses do not need to be as extensive or expensive as those devised by the global brands. But there are four guiding principles we adhere to:

1. Immersed and on the ground

It is important to engage with consumers on the ground, in their areas and on their terms. Through the use of memorable campaigns, experiential events and activations it is critical to engage with our consumers on their home turf.

2. Be truthful and authentic

Consumers can see a hoax a mile away, especially when it's coming from a brand. This forces brands to strive for authenticity in everything they do, especially when it comes to their marketing. It is important to build values and principle-based attributes into your brand to act as a guiding tool.

3. Helping consumers commit

Attaching yourself to a brand with a purpose helps consumers personally commit to a cause that they consider important in their own lives. When a consumer is personally invested, the link between the brand, product or service deepens greatly.

4. Balancing heritage and modern relevance

There is a continuous tussle in balancing the traditional market, transitional market and the new consumer's brands are trying to attract. Keeping the heritage and roots of the brand true to itself while creating relevance for the new market is a battle marketers are still fighting.

ABOUT STUART INNELL

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