

Metamorphosis of marketing

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I woke up one morning and realised that my whole world had changed. The dawn of the new digital era was upon us as we shifted overnight into a new trajectory. It meant that old rules didn't apply anymore and a new course of action had to be considered and applied. The future used to be more of the same, but now we can expect something different every day. And then it hit me: we are not equipped for this change. While online advertising has become smarter, intuitive and more personal, many brands are lagging behind, quite oblivious to this visible modification.



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There is a huge need to understand the impact digital already has on marketing and the broader business to increase revenue, decrease costs and provide the customer with an enhanced experience.

Some big trends which are contributing to this change:

1. **Machine learning** – imagine you're in a crowd and a brand knows you are in the market to buy new shoes and sends you a relevant personalised message? Machine learning and AI are forcing a marketing paradigm shift, driving personalised messaging, in real time to the right customer at a lower cost. Machine learning is also taking over media buying and automated optimisation solutions.
2. **Big data – becoming more dynamic and fluid** – Marketing has always been regarded as an art form. But now we need to fully grasp the science of marketing where data drives the agenda. 1st party and 3rd party data are interwoven to deliver superior results for brands. Marketing should be driving the data conversation and be the key facilitator between 1st party and 3rd party data. One needs to consider the data privacy debate between the offline and online worlds.
3. **Analytics** – without visibility, your efforts are wasted. Marketers should be asking the why question and understanding the KPIs that drive the effort. Investing in sound analytical tools is an imperative. Tools such as Google Analytics or Adobe allow one to view progress and track and refine your strategy. Every marketer should be thinking about return on investment (ROI). For every R1 marketing spend, what is the ROI derived? Essentially marketers should be wearing their business hats when managing campaigns.
4. **Creative licence** – Thank you to banner ads for your contribution to digital advertising. It's time for you to step down and allow creativity to take your place. I am baffled as to why creative agencies limit themselves with regard to digital creative. Customers move across devices and platforms at any given time and have no idea that they are part of your campaign. There is a huge opportunity to use technology as an enabler to creativity.

5. **Path to performance** – marketing can attribute dollar investment to ROI with digital. Marketers have front row seats to performance on digital. It's a journey but it can be done. Important factors to consider here are: What value does business attach to an event/trigger? Is the journey to sale a linear one? Is the customer's online experience a seamless one? Is your online fulfilment process up to scratch?
6. **Inter-colabs**: the digital marketing agenda cannot be achieved by marketers alone. Building and sustaining multi-dimensional co-labs within organisations and partners like the agencies can contribute to value creation for all. For me the biggest gap currently is around skillset and expanded knowledge on the new digital world – hence it becomes viable to introduce co-labs to close the skills gap.
7. **Right-fit agency models** – There are very few good digital media or creative agencies in South Africa. Many are still operating in the traditional zone and are not equipped to tackle digital from a capability and strategic view. For digital to be successful, a new agency model needs to be considered where both traditional and digital media reside in one house. Taking it further! Where there is a fusion of offline into online, where capability is exceptional including tech, analytics, strategy and business acumen. Okay, I am obviously referring to the Holy Grail of Digital Competencies. Wishful thinking!

The opportunities are endless and we need to understand that it's a journey not a destination. I hope that I have provided you with thought starters to ignite your digital marketing transformation. The idea is to start the process and identify the framework to enable the transition. It's important to note that in order for this shift to happen, we need radical changes to happen to re-engineer marketing for the future.

ABOUT AUDREY NAIDOO

I am a professional marketer working with full experience in both traditional and digital marketing. In my current role within Absa, I am responsible for all things digital including influencing and managing the group digital media investment. Focus areas include optimisation of all campaigns, insights driven marketing, innovation and thought leadership. I am a publisher and really passionate about marketing in the future and enabling marketers to upskill and understand the environment we operate in. I freelance on a part-time basis.

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