

# The media industry remains dynamic, says Chris Botha

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Chris Botha, Park Advertising's group MD, and recently voted as the most admired media agency professional in the Scopen's latest *Agency Scope South Africa 2021/22*, shares his experience of the industry and looks forward to its future.



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## ■ ***What are the three things that you believe have had the biggest impact on the media industry since you joined in 1999?***

Well, it's been an exciting 23 years, with not a dull moment in sight. The advent of digital media drastically changed the media industry, as it has changed the world. I would also say the influence of governance and procurement, in the relationship between marketing and media. Lastly our trading model has changed. The modern media trading model is more focused on packaged audiences – regardless of platform. This is very different from the way we bought 20 years ago.

## ■ ***Has this impacted on the skills needed by a media agency and if so, in what ways?***

It has and it hasn't. The skills that the industry has long relied on are still required, and that is people who are strong left and right brain thinkers, who are creative but also understand maths and data.

Broadly speaking this remains true, however we have moved towards employing more specialist people for specialist functions and generalists for generalist functions.

Twenty years ago, I would say the industry was more generalist - basically you did everything - but now it is more hyper-specialist especially in the areas such as Out of Home (OOH), search, and programmatic.

## ■ ***The changes that have taken place in the industry, have they left the industry better or worse off?***

I believe that change is a good thing and that the market should always stay dynamic, so I see the change as good. We have moved from a few monolith agencies 20 years ago to seeing numerous smaller, nimble players in the market. I believe this is something that will continue into the future.

## ■ ***So where is the industry headed?***

It will become even more specialised with a hyper focus, for example on strategy and business analytics. There are already agencies specialising in areas such as example, social and programmatic, but I believe this will become even bigger. Eventually you will find a mix between specialist functions that work together.

▣ ***How have you been able to keep the agency fresh and ahead of the curve?***

Anyone can look at a trend but it's the implication of that trend and what you do with it that counts. Trends do not change quickly; they change slowly and remain static for longer than we think. But how they're applied is always changing. When I look at trends, I don't see what the next big thing is, I examine how we could apply it to our business and our clients' business.

Take the metaverse as an example, and the trend to hold virtual meta meetings. What does this mean for our business and for my work today? The trend must add value to your business and be made as locally relevant as possible.

▣ ***What has been your secret to success in the industry?***

I am not sure, but I have been persistent. I believe you must look after your agency profile and work with great people, and I have been able to do that. We have great staff and great clients as well as great media partners that all make us look good.

▣ ***What's the next step for you?***

The South African media industry still has so much to offer. There is so much talent in this industry and I want to see that grow onto the global stage. I am looking at how we can do this.

I also see us returning to some sense of normality as we come back to the office. This is good for our industry. We are a people industry and I do not see a future where everyone works from home. Being fully virtual is dangerous for our industry; we need to be face-to-face. If not our agency brand and culture will disappear very quickly.

As an agency we have been working with a hybrid model with some days in the office and some working remotely for a number of months already.



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▣ ***How do you view the transformation of the industry and the pace of transformation?***

I think it is happening very late but very fast. As an industry we were slack for many years, but now the change is rapid.

Almost all agencies are run by black leaders. On the ground – we have 70% of our staff that are black. So, I think we are playing a very quick game of catch up.

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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