

What to expect from Agency Scope UK 2018/19

 By Leigh Andrews

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In this exclusive interview, Johanna McDowell, CEO of IAS and partner for Scopen Africa, speaks of the Scopen Agency Scope UK fieldwork currently underway, what she's most interested to find out and potential implications for the next SA study.



Johanna McDowell, CEO of IAS and partner for Scopen Africa.

The UK field work started at the beginning of August, and McDowell says they have two very experienced researchers in the field. It's important that the researchers are experienced in what they do, as it's very difficult to secure time with chief marketing officers (CMOs) – they're even more unavailable in the UK than they are here, so it really is a matter of time and effort.

Fittingly, one of the researchers has done this exact work for Scopen in the UK twice before, for the 2012 and 2015 waves, and the other has done the work for the South African study – she'd just finalising her visa, then will join her husband in the UK, while continuing to do work here in SA.



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The field work is scheduled to be completed at the end of November, with all of the number-crunching to be done in Spain in December, as they don't take a Christmas break. Then in January, McDowell and Cesar Vacchiano, president and global CEO of Scopen, will present results to the agencies, having initially spoken to those who wanted to subscribe back in April.

McDowell shares: "What's important to us is that we make certain we've interviewed a good number of agencies' clients, not just for their client satisfaction results, but actually so that the agencies are properly represented in the study. We like to interview at least seven clients of an agency, across the board, so that it can then be compared properly. Otherwise, imagine if we interviewed 20 clients of one agency and no clients of another – they're not going to be represented properly,

they're not going to get accurate results, the data won't be good. It's a very important part of the study, and takes quite a bit of timing and planning."

Fair representation

To cut out the possibility of bias, McDowell says the agencies share the names of the clients they really want to have included, without telling the clients, as the agencies don't want to bias themselves.

Fairness and fair representation is critical in this type of work, and McDowell says it's a particularly strong point in the British agencies.

When I asked whether Scopen is expecting major differences in the way the British agencies give feedback to the way the SA agencies have done, and also compared to how they've done shared in the previous UK studies, McDowell said that while there are a handful of new questions included, the survey is essentially the same.

Specialisation specifics in the UK and SA

McDowell is expecting another big difference based on the question of integration versus specialisation.

“ A stand-out feature in the UK is that there's a greater number of agencies per advertiser in the UK than there is here, simply because of size of the market, size of budgets – sometimes across Europe – and as a result, the level of specialisation available and required. ”

On the implications for network agencies here in SA, McDowell said she's interested to see is how well the independent agencies in the UK are doing in comparison to the network agencies, and then to look at how the network agencies are doing in the UK versus the same networks agencies in SA.



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Looking at the global statistics, McDowell says we're easily on par with the rest of the world and that Vacchiano compares South Africa to Columbia, as they're an emerging market with very similar GDP and number of agencies.

Greatest agency challenges

On what she's most looking forward to finding out, McDowell says, "It'll be very useful to know what the marketers are

seeing as the greatest challenges for the agencies. In our South African study last year, it was about understanding the consumer, understanding their changing needs and how to adapt to them. It'll be interesting to hear what the UK advertisers have to say, as they haven't been asked for three years."



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Traditionally, the UK is an established market, so the results are important to them as a way to find out what's really going on.

Judging from the reactions of the agencies Scopen has spoken to thus far, there's a real business commitment to Agency Scope UK 2018 as the agencies really want to know how well they are doing in relation to the rest of the market.

"Of course when they get the results they will see how the other agencies are doing, but that's not the driving force," says McDowell.

Current clients and past prospects alike

They want to know how they're seen as an agency, which is why those that participate don't just give a list of their current clients but also their prospects from the past 12 months, for feedback from others they have pitched or presented to but didn't actually win.

That's why the agency positioning aspect of the study is so important.



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Where are they positioned in the market, where do they sit on the axis of creative, digital, strategic, international? Where do they fit, where do they want to be? Based on this, Agency Scope can then also compare them to how their agencies are positioned in the other 11 markets studied by Scopen, which is important for network agencies, as they're wasting their time and marketing efforts if they're not congruent.

McDowell concludes that four months may sound like a long time for field work, but it's really not, because securing those interviews is crucial, and getting in to see those CMOs is critical – and anything could happen in between. With the previous Agency Scope UK study in 2015, roughly 220 CMOs were interviewed.

They're going back to those companies this time around, but it's not just about London. They will interview marketers in Scotland, Wales, and the north of England, as well as across Europe and London, so McDowell says it's going to be an interesting representative sample, their best so far.

Keep an eye peeled for those results and follow Scopen Global on [Twitter](#) for the latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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