

More ads. More extremist thinking

 By [Stu Stobbs](#)

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For the past three years, advertising spend in Mzansi has gone up. I know that thanks to a chat I had with my smart mate [Chris Botha](#), group managing director of The MediaShop. It went up roughly R2billion last year and this year it's likely to grow even more.



Stu Stobbs, chief creative officer at 1886 agency.

But how will this money be spent in 2019? By that I don't mean in which mediums (Botha can tell that story much better than I), but rather what will the approach be to the creation of the advertising itself?

The efficacy of brand advertising versus retail advertising has been long debated. But now, with the sophistication of social media increasing and influence of the data giants on the rise, the debate is shifting somewhat.

In 2019 and beyond we will see the argument rage between data-driven advertising and emotive advertising, *and* we will see an increase in both forms. Both sides will have high priests and acolytes expounding the virtues of their way of thinking and of course proselytising agencies, brands and clients to their beliefs.

Side A: Data-driven, AI-created

So, on the one side we have 'data-driven, AI-created' advertising.

This school of thought places huge importance on delivering a highly relevant message to the right consumers. Using the might of big data, audiences are clearly identified, and slightly different iterations of an advert are created and delivered by bots to these different audiences.

There is little emphasis on conceptual thinking or creativity in the messaging, because it's believed that if you can deliver a clear and relevant message to the right person (possibly at the right time, too), then they will automatically be interested and wildly open to buying your product.

Multiple ads are able to be delivered quickly to people's (mostly) mobile devices, which then link through to M-commerce platforms, making fulfilment of the sale seamless. ***Insert robotic laughter**

Side B: Emotion, story-telling and creativity

On the other side are emotion, story-telling and creativity. Recent studies of the brain and how we think have shown that humans are not rational beings at all. In fact, 95% of the decisions we make are based on what *feels* right, and that if you can make someone *feel* something, then you can make them *do* anything.

“ Great storytelling, it is known, makes us place ourselves into the story, which in turn fires more neurons together, etching the emotional experience onto our wet hard-drive. ”

So, proponents of this side of the argument believe that if you want to get a consumer to (a) notice your brand, and (b) to remember and consider it, you have to make them feel it first.

There will be a rise of more brand advertising, more stories told and more brands that play glorious symphonies on consumers' heart strings.

Mix side A with side B...

Now, I am aware that I am oversimplifying the issue somewhat, as there will be much advertising created that's a mix of the two schools.

But, with radicalisation and tribalism rampant across global politics and world views, I believe that the extremes will also flourish in advertising – especially as the amount of advertising being created increases. As with most things, it's my view that a balanced road will probably yield the best results in the long run.

So, mine your data and truly understand your target markets. Then feed that data to your creative people. Then give them the space to create insightful and meaningful stories that will make your customers fall in love with you.

ABOUT STU STOBBS

Stu Stobbs is COO at 1886. Stobbs started in advertising in the 90s after a failed drag queen career. Worked above, below and all around the line - but never quite understood why it was there in the first place. Has won numerous local and international awards including Cannes, Caples and Loeries and has judged extensively, both locally and abroad.

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