

What the modern consumer really wants: Less choice

Issued by [Provantage](#)

22 Aug 2013

Jacques du Preez, MD of Provantage, unpacks the benefits of focus, quality and simplicity in the media industry in order to add value to consumers in this crazy, complex world we live and work in.

I recently spent quite a bit of time engaging with some of the top leaders in the media industry and realised again that focus and simplicity are becoming more and more important. When we look at consumers, I believe that this most certainly applies. The modern consumer has a desire to collect more things, have more screens and apps and expose themselves to more information. Add to this the fact that there are constantly more choices to be made when it comes to... well, almost everything from shampoos to television channels. Consumer fatigue syndrome is definitely on the up. The reality is that we still have the same amount of time which obviously leads to a feeling of being overloaded and constantly being distracted and this makes time a very rare commodity indeed.

Limiting choice

In this lies a really fantastic opportunity for brands and businesses as, in my opinion, consumers will have an ever growing appetite for products and services that are original, authentic and that consistently deliver results. If you can limit choice but provide the desired outcome as effortlessly as possible your brand or your business will be a winner. So ensure that you simplify your offering and that your engagement with clients is superior and seamless. The new unique selling points of the future now are: simplicity, high quality, specialisation and focus.

Talent is critical

When translating the above into the media industry the same applies. Through my various discussions with media agency executives a number of things became very evident. Firstly the quality and skill set of media buyers and planners has declined and the availability and quality of talent is now becoming critical. Secondly clients are becoming more and more demanding and expect more attention and information from their media agencies, on the one side, while aggressively negotiating media agency fees down on the other. So media agencies are working harder for less money with less skilled employees.

Add to this the fact that there are now well over 300 media owners in South Africa that demand attention and time, and the fact that there are more television and radio stations and OOH media formats and you have a serious situation. Media agency people that were under time pressure a few years ago are now stretched beyond the point of reason. Although this is a ticking time bomb it does present savvy media owners with a tremendous opportunity and that is to really focus on what they offer and be a specialist resource for their stressed out clientele.

Media owners must be on standby to answer every conceivable question regarding their media type and the audience that they offer. They need to supplement the skills set that is often lacking on the agency side and they need to package their media solutions in very focused and simplistic formats that a media agency can effortlessly access, understand and incorporate into their campaign solutions to clients.

Complexity destroys value

We, as media owners and as businesses, love adding complexity to everything we do because we believe that more information, research, activity and stuff will add value. The simple fact is that they don't - they in fact destroy value and confuse everyone.

So it is back to basics in a lot of respects! Media brands must have clear and well defined identities, combined with world class people that are specialists and can add value and do it effortlessly and fast. These will be the media owners who will win the game in the future.

The interesting fact is that this approach will also assist media companies to simplify their organisations and it will assist in offering consumers better media products and services. Collectively this creates a circle of success that will be hard to beat.

So "keep it simple, focused and of high quality, stupid" might be a wise credo to adopt in this fast, more complex, crazy world and industry we are all living in today.

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