

# Don't think out of the marketing box - just get rid of the whole damn box

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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Many South African marketing and media people are still in denial. To about the same extent as Thabo Mbeki and Co were over HIV/Aids...

They are hoping that all the new challenges everyone is telling them about will go away and that sanity will return to the mass media and marketing industries, particularly advertising.

Well, it won't. Things will never be the same again. Ever.

But, good luck to those marketers and ad agencies still doing such a magnificent job selling 30-second TV commercials to their clients in spite of the fact that the vast majority of consumers in the upper economic bracket don't actually watch commercial breaks any more. Fortunately, or unfortunately, there are still many gullible clients and massive corporate egos around wanting to see their brands on TV.

Of course, there is an exception, and that is among consumers in the lower income groups who do actually still watch commercial breaks with almost religious fervour. Which is why TV is still working well for retailers and brands aimed at these target markets.

However, as one moves up the good old LSM scale, fewer and fewer consumers watch those 30-second commercials.

## Zapping ads

Mainly because they are recording programmes and zapping ads or because they simply don't have the time nor inclination to sit through them. Or even because they have Explora decoders that allow them to catch-up without having anything interrupted by advertising.

But TV advertising is just one of many marketing a media paradigms that is being shifted and once South Africa starts getting cheaper and faster internet, the rate of change in the way brands communicate with consumers will speed up exponentially.

Already, in countries where cheap, fast internet is becoming the norm, the percentage of consumers searching for brands and bargains via mobile particularly, has grown like Topsy. In their millions, more and more consumers are no longer relying on advertising to alert them to products and services, bargains, discounts and first-class service delivery. They are

looking for all these things themselves.

And, as has been demonstrated by DStv's Catch Up and Catch Up Plus, this is the way TV content is going to be delivered or rather accessed on demand in future. Times Media Group's VIDI is demonstrating the same thing. You want quality content, pay for it without having to suffer through commercial breaks.

## **So just which marketing and media are in denial?**

\* Retailers who still insist of getting suppliers to pay for traditional TV campaigns (except those targeting lower income groups) instead of using that money more efficiently

\*High-ticket brands are wasting their time and money on traditional TV advertising because no one in their target market is watching.

\* Consumer newspapers and magazines that think they can continue trying to sell traditional advertising campaigns as a one-stop solution. Newspaper groups need to look closely at Naspers and TMG for clues as to which way things are going.

\* While commercial radio remains one of the most powerful communications media on earth, they need to stop continuing to broadcast badly conceived and produced radio commercials that more and more listeners are finding beyond irritating. The quality of content for radio stations includes advertising. Station managers will be doing themselves and ultimately their clients a favour by having the balls to refuse to broadcast those hundreds of really bad and ill-conceived commercials.

\*Online websites, both B2B and B2C, need to wake up to the fact that business models based on selling "ads" are never ever going to make them rich or even sustainable. And that their biggest asset is not the space they have available to place ads but their subscribers.

They need to understand that the trick is to use quality content to get subscribers and then to sell the subscribers something relevant. After all, they know their names, addresses and income levels. It's one on one marketing and precision targeting at its best.

\*Advertising agencies have been in denial for years and while one can understand why they are making hay while the sun shines by selling naive clients expensive traditional ad campaigns, this is not going to last as more and more boards of directors are insisting that their marketing and ad managers provide them with measurable return on investment.

\*The same applies to all those brand, product and marketing managers who are still living in the past, thinking that bombarding the consumer with advertising is the only way to go. Consumers are turning in droves to information on demand. Consumer marketing is now focussed firmly and logically in-store. Online purchasing is gaining ground by leaps and bounds. Good customer service creates more demand than advertising ever will and bad customer service loses more customers than one can imagine.

## **Get rid of that damned box**

In a nutshell, anyone who is in the media or marketing business today had better start thinking very quickly about not only getting outside of the box but getting rid of the box altogether.

My marketing audits these past few years have shown conclusively that the big retailers are wasting at least 30% of their marketing budgets through inefficiency and obsolete strategies while major brands are wasting as much as 40% of their marketing spend for the same reasons.

In my opinion, most big retail brands in South Africa are still bogged down in 1980s marketing thinking.

Every year, South African marketers waste R50bn through out-dated and inefficient strategies with a considerable portion

of that being the consequence of pointless advertising.

The facts of marketing and media life today are telling the story loud and clear.

But, the denialists just seem to keep on denying.

## ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on [moerdykc@gmail.com](mailto:moerdykc@gmail.com) and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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