

Is brand storytelling telling the whole story?

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While the status and stats of content marketing continue to shift, an overview of the year in B2B publishing may help to further clarify its context and potential.



In this, the second pandemic year, the dedication and talent within SA's business marketing communications industry seems to have doubled down on purpose-led excellence, with perhaps a renewed sense of belief in the air that the SA advertising, media and marketing sector is poised for renaissance as a key economic driver and potential creator of jobs in our region.

One of the reasons for this is the unabated demand for omni-channel content. Research is showing that for younger audiences entertaining and empowering topics are often taking the edge over the traditional diet of political and business news. The blanket term for much of this type of content, which has not gone away, is 'storytelling'. While the definitions and scope of this are continually shifting, new opportunities for content creators and communicators are opening up at every scale.

SA ad industry the arbiters of storytelling they have always been

For clients and brands, branded content these days can do a job not only for telling their own stories, but of creating perceptions of whole regions on a world stage, with brands often becoming champions not only of their own products and brands but greater regional narratives.

This environment is showing the SA advertising, media and marketing sector as the arbiters of storytelling they have always been, now with potentially even more influence.

South African stories on a global stage

Over and above its basic brand messages, a recent award-winning campaign by King James Group on behalf of client Sanlam, in which SA gymnast Caitlin Rooskrantz was the only athlete the world saw perform, despite the cancelled Tokyo Olympics 2020, told a bigger story to the world about the resilience of South African sport, business and creative excellence. By their investment, the brands created not only opportunities for more players, but also a valuable legacy.

The cleverness of the recent award-winning commercial for Kreepy Krauly, which parodied the 2021 Oscar-winning documentary *My Octopus Teacher*, could be said to have tapped into an even bigger insight, that storytelling is an area where South Africans have always had an edge and that this wave is there to ride for African content makers, storytellers and brand collaborators, on a world stage.

Pick a narrative

With the right creative collaboration, brand content and storytelling allows companies to get to the essence of what they stand for. Insights are often staring us in the face. A hypothetical idea could be Unilever's Sunlight Liquid, deciding to collaborate with solar energy providers to breathe relevance into their brand name, over and above mere detergent, in fact to counter any negative environmental associations with the category, and in so doing take a whole generation of new users along with them via a key insight into their brand name.

Is regional reputation one of the *raison d'etres* of brand marketing now?

The fragmentation of communication channels is no longer a limit for advertisers or brands, as commercial messages can open up to any format, from long form branded communications such as music videos, documentaries and explainers, to short form social media bits, bites and bait. This 'no one format fits all' could be said to be opening up new 'horses for courses' content at scale and new opportunities for brands and marketers to be conscious of how their communications and activations are consumed and how they fit into the bigger pictures of consumer needs and even regional reputation.

In fact, business and brands can even play a part in countering the negative political reputations of regions and are increasingly being seen as more trustworthy institutions than governments.

The many new kinds of storytelling that have emerged play to the strengths and wealth of talent within the South African and African creative industries as well as providing a new *raison d'etre* for African business-to-business communications to tell these stories on local and global platforms.

As this, Bizcommunity's 20th year, draws to a close, we are grateful to have been able to publish corporate news and to have been along on so many brand journeys with hundreds of SA's corporates and organisations. We thank our loyal readers, subscribers, contributors, corporate publishers, sponsors, advertisers and those who come to our site to look for job opportunities, as well as the amazing Biz team for continuing to set benchmarks in the corporate publishing domain. We are excited by the new possibilities and trends that have opened up, and the opportunity to be a daily mirror of excellence for content communications across 18 business sectors in Africa.

We look forward to taking your industries along with us into 2022 and to sharing the ingenuity of our region. For advice on strategic B2B content and publishing, contact our account managers at sales@bizcommunity.com.

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