

The trend of trends



By Jacques du Bruyn

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As with most industries, the marketing, communications and advertising industry loves a good trend. At the beginning of the year, we see a glut of articles sprinkled across media about the 'trends to look out for this year'. What we end up finding is that listing trends becomes a trend. Every newsletter, publication and online media outlet has a handful of trends pieces, most of these pieces speculating what might be.



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My question is this; what is the point of talking about trends? Do they assist our decision-making or are they a badge that we wear to help us feel like we're in the know? It's the same as reading a self-help book. We learn about a lot of cute ideas, but do we ever implement them, and does it inherently change our businesses?

The definition of a trend is 'the general direction in which something is developing'. Inherently a trend is noticed gradually, whereas a fad is spontaneous and short-lived. Fads spring about without notice. However, we can only discern a trend because of historical data, and a lot of it.

Look at the historical data

Therefore, I'd like to propose that we pay less attention to the trends that we predict into the future and the '10 trends for marketing in 2019' model, rather focusing more on what historical data is telling us. There is so much more we can learn as marketers and business owners by looking at historical data in our businesses.

If we take a media buying client as an example, we could focus on the speculative trends that suggest that this year video in online advertising will be king.

Or we could look at the data we've gathered over the last three years on user behaviour and notice not only that users still respond to static images in performance campaigns but the ebbs and flows of when, how and why they respond, and at which time of the year. The power of overlaying current data over historical data shouldn't be underestimated.

By all means, read the trends piece on what will happen in your industry in 2019. But don't forget to pay attention to trends that are lying right under your nose in your owned data.

ABOUT JACQUES DU BRUYN

Jacques Du Bruyn is the Managing Director of Flume, a full-service Digital & PR Marketing Agency based in Johannesburg and Cape Town. He is a UJ and Vega School graduate with an honours degree in Brand Strategy.

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