

Reduce media costs and increase sales through creativity-led marketing

By Katherine Madley

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One day, in the early 2000s I drove to work in downtown Johannesburg and was confronted by billboard after billboard advertising a digital bank called 20Twenty, a subsidiary of the then Saambou.



Source © Francesco Dibartolo [123rf](#) Katherine Madley Vice President of Group Marketing at Massmart says creativity-led marketing can reduce media costs and increase sales

It was so ahead of its time and we could not stop talking about it at work, several colleagues signed up and opened accounts.

As a junior marketer in my early 20s I was more fascinated by the question: 'The media strategy and the creative is so powerful. Who is the advertising agency behind this bank?'

In those days we didn't have Google so I had to wait for my monthly edition of *Advantage* magazine (a brilliant marketing and advertising magazine, I still miss it) to see if anyone had written an article about this bank and its agency who broke through the market.

This set me off on a lifelong obsession of following agencies, award shows, adverts and research to prove that my instinct was true.

If the product is equal or better than the competition and or if is the first of its kind, creativity used to promote said product is the number one force to produce sales. Yes, creativity, not media reach.

Creativity - not media reach

And so began my battle in the boardrooms to justify the expense in partnering with the best agency you can afford. I crusaded passionately with some success but more often, failure.

Sadly, the agencies never had the skill to prove their worth on the balance sheet, as they were not skilled in explaining return on investment (ROI).

This is why agencies' selling model is forever flawed. They also are too afraid to sell on risk for a percentage of profit, as they know their work does not operate in a vacuum.

The other reality on the maths of creativity was that it is missing in the universities so the marketers don't know how to explain it either.

I devoured every marketing article, book, column and watched Cannes every year on social media searching for an expert to explain.

Years passed and nothing was there.

Then 13 years ago Prof Byron Sharp wrote *How Brands Grow* this flickered the case for creativity and reach into light.

Then the masterpiece, *The long and the short of it* came out by Les Binet and Peter Field.

This cemented the truth that highly creative work yields long-term sustainable business results.

Coupled with this was the intrepid Prof Mark Ritson, hammering out expert articles to confirm and concur with these thinkers.

I knew in my own small way I could apply this thinking and get superb results. I have and I do.



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The other side

But there is another side to this... media costs.

They are high and reach costs a lot. It's an even playing field (mostly, as a platform is a platform) so how do you break out the pack here?

Creative again.

Over the past four years working with the retail brand I look after, my costs of media have dropped significantly but my reach, ROMI and ROAS have risen, sharply.

Yes, the products and prices in my content are much improved and those two Ps are 80% of my focus, so I can write much more about them than I can on creativity, promotion and distribution.

But if you have a world-class creative partner, your media costs will go down, saving you a fortune.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katherine Madley is the vice president of group marketing at Massmart (Builders, Makro, Game and Cash and Carry brands)

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