

Social brands get even smarter with insightful strategy

By  Mongezi Mti

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If an hour on social media was once a long time, the past year has proven that a single event can transform everything in an instant. Brands had been accustomed to detailed reporting on customer interactions, sourcing useful data to formulate insights that led smart players to serve their customers better content.

The advent of [GDPR](#), which was not easy to predict, led to changes in how third-party platforms source data and the information made available by social media platforms.



Mongezi Mti, founder of WordStart.

These variables, which have led to Facebook and Instagram shrinking the amount of data they make available for use and analysis by third-party platforms, will influence strategy for most brands in 2019. Some of the smartest brands will take advantage of growing trends to reach out to customers and interact more effectively with their audiences.

Ride the brand wave of social media changes and growth:

1. Include IGTV in your arsenal

Instagram user numbers hit a billion in June 2018 and the platform announced the launch of IGTV which allows users to upload long-form video. [TechCrunch reports](#) that IGTV will become a serious rival for long-standing video contender, YouTube, with creators taking on the platform.



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Brands that can master this space early stand to reap great rewards because of the mobile nature of IGTV and the proliferation of mobile in Africa. In the South African context, with YouTube now offering the less data-hungry YouTube Go, video stands to be a highly competitive medium.

2. Influence made to account

Influencer marketing has seen its fair share of growth across the world with Africa making strides in various campaign to ensure that we ride the wave. In 2018 brands and individuals have been demanding more accountability of their chosen influencers.

Floyd Mayweather and DJ Khaled are among the world's leading influencers to be [sued for their involvement](#) with a company that is accused of financial fraud. The stars endorsed cryptocurrency venture, Centra Tech, which raised \$32m. The multi-million-dollar class action lawsuit brought influencer engagement by brands into scrutiny.

The game-changing advertising codes for social media, by South Africa's Advertising Regulatory Board, will cause a shift in how brands, influencers and the individuals who follow influencers engage with sponsored content. Anything of an advertising nature should be openly labelled as such which changes how products are viewed by individuals.

3. Growth of digital storytelling in tandem in advertising

Video consumption is on the rise across the globe with YouTube seeing 300 hours of video uploaded every minute on the platform and Facebook also constantly improving its offering. Brands are moving more of their budgets to digital and the social web which will continue to grow in 2019.



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Mercedes-Benz South Africa led its peers in 2018 with their [Creating Experiences](#) campaign for the X-Class which extends the brand's advertising from traditional media to digital very compellingly. This is where more brands will go in 2019 with video consumption growth and the need for brands to create engaging stories that retain consumer attention.

4. Growth of owned media in digital

Social media platforms show less and less data content to communities which means brands need to develop more content for their owned platforms, and 2019 will be the year of growing this owned content.

5. Bespoke research and insights

Facebook is said to have [inflated video views](#) on the platform by as much as 900-percent, which casts a veil of uncertainty where dwindling views are the order of the day. Brands will and should work towards bespoke data and insights that inform their strategic thinking.

In the absence of this research, most will go with the flow and fall behind the curve.

Digital will see increased content ownership in 2019 with social media platforms getting busier while reducing content visibility in order to prioritise advertising. Smart players will take advantage of this change and grow both social media communities alongside other engaging content.

ABOUT MONGEZI MTATI

Mongezi Mati founded WordStart to help companies generate buzz around their products and services among South African influencers. He is passionate about helping brands to connect the dots from social media, digital data and human interactions outside the web. Mtati is also digital analyst, a speaker and a contributor on some of South Africa's leading platforms.

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