

Rise of digital agencies



By [Johanna McDowell](#)

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The digital era is exploding with potential and it cannot be ignored by any advertising agency or client who wants to flourish in the future. In order to build brand space in this new age, agencies need to understand the market behaviour, know what kind of messages are best suited for the digital media and know how to use the digital age to their advantage. It is about predicting the new online marketing trends and ensuring that clients are leveraging them correctly.



At the Adforum Summit, recently held in London, it became apparent that there is a definite emergence and growth of digital agencies.

In France, online advertising is the fourth most popular advertising medium - ahead of outdoor. Digital agencies create advertising campaigns in a digital space where the users have the choice to interact or not, whereas traditional advertising is a more "push at you" approach.

Key selection factor

An increasing amount of agencies are expanding their advertising capabilities and offering clients the digital option of advertising. "Going digital" is a key selection factor for potential clients.

It was highlighted that there is also a new generation of clients who are much more open to change and are eagerly looking for new approaches to advertising - especially options linked to web use.

There is a major paradigm shift and market lines are changing. Interestingly, people who spend their time on the Internet don't like online or 'pop up' advertising because it can be quite intrusive. It is therefore a key element as a digital agency to produce original online advertising campaigns that entice web users, whether it is through online ads, microsites, websites,

interactive content, viral clips, applications and emails.

By confirming that, during the Adforum Summit delegates were introduced through a “speed dating session” to five digital agencies from around the world, some of which have been around for a while others had only been in the market for a few weeks.

Continuously evolving

All five agencies evidenced the ability, to unlock the potential to use the web as an innovative tool to advertise and create an online communication culture. Through the speed dating session between delegates and these five agencies it was highlighted that it is easier for digital agencies to get into an advertising culture than for traditional ad agencies to go digital as the web is continuously evolving.

There are a few pure digital agencies in South Africa however, and when our broadband improves, I suspect there will be a definite boom in the creation of digital agencies - which will unquestionably change the marketing landscape.

If advertising agencies want to build their portfolio and sustain their business in an era of technology, they will be wise to expand their capabilities so that their portfolio of expertise is an attractive offer to savvy clients.

It is not about taking a traditional advertising campaign and making it work as a digital campaign. It is about conceptualising a campaign with the content that is best suited for the digital space and its users.

ABOUT JOHANNA MCDOWELL

Armed with considerable industry knowledge and experience, Johanna McDowell counsels clients and agencies around expectations in the advertising and marketing process. She is MD of the Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS), a division of black-owned marketing services group Mazole Holdings. Affiliated to the AAR Group in the UK, IAS is an independent advisor to both parties during the pitch process. In addition to her duties as MD, Johanna is chief executive and 33.3% shareowner of Mazole Holdings. The group consists of the IAS and HMC Seswa Corporate Communications - where McDowell acts as chairman. Contact Johanna on +27 (0)11 704 6618 or email her at Johanna@agencyselection.co.za.

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