

Does creativity work?

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Is 'creativity' a buzzword or a real marketing commodity? We posed some 'creative' questions to three top heavyweights - all of whom are speakers at the Nedbank IMC 2020 happening at the Galleria in Sandton on 19 March, next year.



Suhana Gordhan, ECD for FCB Africa

Define creativity?

Pepe Marais, Nedbank IMC 2020 Master of Ceremonies and Group CCO of Joe Public United, believes that creativity is simply the ability to think. "It's the ability to think beyond our societal restrictions. Creating new ways and means in which to take the world forward and the ability to think conversely to the norm."

Alistair King, co-founder and CCO of the King James Group, adds that creativity is the simple reminder that we are not robots or drones. "Creativity means that it's as important to feel, as it is to think."

Suhana Gordhan, ECD for FCB Africa, believes that creativity is about feverish curiosity and an innate ability to see beyond what others see. "What sets creative people apart is the way in which they can wear their skin inside-out. Only by being a constant and keen observer of people, can you find the extraordinary in the ordinary."

Is creativity what makes marketing work?

Alistair believes that creativity is to marketing, what flavour is to food. "It's not essential, but it is absolutely preferable if you want a campaign to be palatable, or even enjoyable."

To Pepe, there's more to making marketing work. "There are many more ingredients to this very complex pot called marketing. Like product quality, distribution and price, as well as brand purpose and strategy. Simplistically, what makes marketing work best is when all of these aspects work together."

Suhana adds that creativity and marketing need each other. "But we need to do more than just make them work. These days, if marketing just works, it's not good enough. I think that great creativity starts with great marketing. It starts with knowing the right problem to solve and finding ingenious ways of solving it," she explains.

Have marketers and advertisers lost the ability to be creative, or is it just being done differently?

"I don't think creatives have lost the ability to be creative. But I think that creativity is being hampered by a hyper focus on science and systems. We're a little too obsessed with the science of marketing and we've forgotten that a significant part of what we do is not scientific. In our pursuit of methodology and models of understanding the mind of the consumer, we're in danger of losing their hearts," believes Suhana.

Pepe adds, "in our agency we push for more time and focus on creative purity (without any deviation from the brand's strategy), and less focus on ticking boxes and laborious processes. Pretty much the way advertising used to be done before we went and complicated it."

Does creativity work?

“People are in search of meaning. If brands can find greater purpose, it can help shape a better world. The largest media expenditure available to mankind backs the tsunami of negative news that drowns us every day. The only money available to us to counter all this negativity, resides within the hands of our marketing fraternity. Now if only we could use it to inspire!” says Pepe.

Alistair believes that it's only through the pursuit of new ideas that we advance and grow as a species. “We are essentially moved by creativity, including brands. Most marketers I've ever met wish to be associated with innovative marketing, but that intent gets derailed. I have a theory on what's holding us back, which I will be talking about at the Nedbank IMC 2020.”

The Nedbank IMC Conference takes place on 19 March at The Galleria in Sandton, where a stellar line-up of 18 speakers will be giving attendees insights into concepts including creativity in marketing.

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