

Global companies are turning to SA for media and marketing expertise

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While Covid-19 and its associated lockdowns have dealt severe blows to most economies around the world, there are some unexpected silver linings. As a result, local marketing and communications companies have found their services are in demand by global brands.



Adam Hunter, Head Honcho at Hook Line & Sinker

In the past 18 months, businesses have recognised that survival and resilience during lockdown and in a post-Covid landscape requires a new strategy, with digital being the preferred channel to meet consumers where they are at. In turn, digital-first communications means that it no longer matters much where workers or vendors are based – putting local professional services companies in a uniquely advantageous position.

South Africa has long been recognised as a call centre destination, thanks to the country having similar time zones as Europe, a high degree of English proficiency, a skilled workforce, digital infrastructure, and attractive exchange rates. South Africa is now the most favoured location for offshore customer experience delivery worldwide, according to the [2021 Front Office BPO Omnibus Survey](#).

This outsourcing trend has now broadened to include content production, marketing and communications support as corporates manage Covid-disruption and become increasingly comfortable working across time zones and countries. For instance, employees at global companies with centralised IT systems are used to receiving remote support from India and the Philippines. India has also emerged as a major destination for design and video services. Brands are now able to pick the best talent, at the best price, regardless of location.

“Global powerhouses are realising that they can secure internationally competitive services, at competitive costs, by working across borders,” says Adam Hunter, Head Honcho at integrated communications agency Hook, Line & Sinker (HLS). HLS is responsible for global employee advocacy and awareness campaigns for SAP America, EU media relations, social media and video production for Meet and Code Europe, as well as writing and content development for Concur UAE.

The nature of content and communications has fundamentally changed over the past two decades. Streaming services now make big budget TV series available at the same time to audiences across the world – a key determinant of popular culture – and social media influencers can reach consumers across multiple markets, making brand partnerships particularly sought after.

The rise of social media has also meant while brands may prefer to target a single market, differing cultural norms regarding race, gender or other social issues can result in advertising campaigns causing offense, impacting reputation on a global scale.

Local brands benefit indirectly, as communications agencies can call on international best practice in their work with South African companies, thus raising the standard of practice across the board.

“Local agencies will now also be able to enter global marketing and PR industry awards, which means that they are judged against their (often larger and better-resourced) peers, receiving feedback to improve and celebrated for their success,”

adds Hunter.

South African businesses are also well positioned to service international companies looking to expand into Africa. The continent has a fast-growing population of around one billion people and rapid urbanisation – presenting an attractive prospect for global brands where economic growth has slowed around the world. Although other markets in Africa have continued to develop, South Africa remains the business hub for Sub-Saharan Africa. It represents the continent's second-largest economy and the most industrialised and technology-enhanced country in Africa.

“South Africa's complex business landscape and multicultural society provides an excellent training ground for media and marketing specialists, who have to work with sophisticated audiences and multiple viewpoints. In an increasingly globalised world, South African experience is coming to the fore,” concludes Hunter.

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