

What will shape digital storytelling in South Africa in 2021

 By [Mongezi Mtati](#)

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In 2021, brands will see increased digital marketing and social media strategy adjustments, most of which saw growth in 2020. Some of the most industry-altering conversations ranged from inclusivity, representation and the ability to utilise data to empower communities. These discussions are likely to increase and influence strategy among brands.



Mongezi Mtati, managing director of WordStart

1. Community influence on brand strategy

Brands have been called out across platforms from as far back as humanity had access to media. In recent years though, social media has highlighted the lack of inclusivity within brands. Professionals and industry leaders are weighing in on these inconsistencies, especially where it negatively represents people of colour. We will see an increase in this trend.

In 2021, smart brands will have increased digital media platform alternatives to engage with communities across social media rather than only interacting with influencers.

2. Smarter digital strategy in politics

Politicians and government went more digital during lockdown with media briefings taking place on social media, sometimes without resorting to traditional broadcast.

With 2021 being an election year in South Africa and social distancing still in place, we may see more political parties improve their digital marketing to engage their followers.

Political party leaders are able to rally more followers on social media using their personal accounts and, in some instances, more than their party formations. This has the ability to outperform some media outlets in reaching audiences and may result in more of their strategies leaning towards digital.

3. The township economy ramps up digital

Lockdown due to Covid-19 saw township businesses increase their digital marketing and social media usage to stimulate the local economy. This ranged from bicycle deliveries using WhatsApp orders in the likes of Soweto, Kattlehong and other areas. Yebo Fresh, a food-based delivery service that caters for townships in Cape Town grew rapidly during lockdown.

This trend will grow exponentially in 2021 as more people seek convenience in local communities that are outside of city centres, which also creates access for people who do not use online shopping platforms. There will be increased localisation in both campaigns and the brand solutions that target various communities.

4. Increased long-form live video

The pandemic led to unprecedented growth in video consumption across the social web, where Facebook reported over 1.25 billion users each month on their streaming platform. This video content ranges from brand to government messaging, and it will increase in 2021 as brands experiment with more long-form video content.

There will be increased opportunities for longer video and streaming content that brands can take advantage of, which contributes to engaging audiences across social media platforms. Content creators have also begun taking advantage of this trend as we head into 2021 and beyond.

5. Growth of podcasts

It is reported that in October 2020, there were 34 million podcast episodes with 2020 contributing significantly to this growth. A survey by Edison Research found that 10% of metropolitan South Africans listen to any podcasts in a typical month. With increased connectivity and urban dwellers going online for their media consumption, more brands will start looking online for collaboration as well as alternative media outlets.

South African brands have also begun building their platforms with content that meets their customers' needs. Content creators in South Africa are building more niche outlets and forums of expression.

In 2021 brands should look to include more digital news and media outlets for their messaging. We will be seeing more alternative media platforms emerging from outside the traditional outlets and media houses. This will give rise to more options for brand storytelling and increased engagement with customers, which includes an opportunity for political formations to focus on their digital platforms.

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. Mati is also digital analyst, a speaker and a contributor on some of South Africa's leading platforms.

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