

The science of how brands grow

 By Jessica Tennant

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A popular track at this year's IMC (Integrated Marketing Communication) Conference on Thursday, 8 February was that of creative and big idea creation, and a talk that really struck a cord, so to speak, was BBDO South Africa's CEO Boniswa Pezisa's on the power of breakthrough creativity and the role it plays in triggering emotions to communicate effectively.

Pezisa first explained that at BBDO, they believe in work that works. "We believe in the science of how brands grow and how big ideas help them grow and drive salience.

"For many years, marketing has been the poor cousin of all sciences," she adds. What she means by this is that, while it's a science, you can't scientifically prove its necessity and effectiveness.

"In the old days, there was this outrageous claim that we all made. We said, 'Ahh, creativity is the weapon to basically move your business forward.'" But the science wasn't behind it, so clients questioned whether this was true.

She referred to Peter Field, an analyst from London – also known as one of the godfathers of advertising effectiveness – who has spent the last 10 years looking at IPA and Cannes case studies in search of the correlation between creativity and effectiveness.



Boniswa Pezisa

As a result, the claim that we were making is now validated.

According to his report, [ads that win awards are 11 times more effective](#) than those that don't or aren't actually creative.

So, if your work isn't breaking through, you may as well burn the money that you put behind it, believes Pezisa. In other words, work that doesn't creatively resonate with your target market is pointless.



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Salience at scale

"The path to growth for any brand is to get people to pay more, buy more and get more people to buy your brand," she says, and in order for this to happen, "brands have to shout louder for us to connect with them, but it's not just about connecting, it's about exciting feelings at the end of the day."

Creative communications are about changing consumer behaviour and certain behaviours are triggered by certain emotions. Look at it this way:



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Sainsbury's Christmas is for Sharing, to Cesar's Love Them Back and the South Africa Alive With Possibilities campaign to name a few that get this right.

“ There's this feeling that we're all like [Spock](#), especially at work, but no, we're not like that, we're all like Homer Simpson, and I know it feels like an insult, but inside, I have feelings, emotions, I eat donuts, like all of you, I eat chocolate, and I do all of those things, and you know what, every now and then I want to have a beer!” ”

Thinking like Homer, she says, “I've lost a bit of weight and I'm dying for a chocolate, I'm going to go for that, but there's a reason I've selected Cadbury... It's because I've built an affinity with Cadbury, I have an emotional connection with Cadbury, and that was built by some communication that resonated with me.”

So, what triggers emotions and what is the role of creativity? The answer is dopamine and oxytocin, and using these by creating an element of surprise, a plot twist, discovery, climax, awe, humour, reciprocity or empathy, etc., and leveraging feelings of falling in love or a sense of safety, etc. for communication.

She ran through a number of examples that demonstrate this, from

"So we have to use these sentiment triggers, we have to arouse, we have to get under the skin of the consumer and get the right message across because you can do great creative work, but if the message is wrong and doesn't move the needle in terms of market share and sales, we're in the wrong business."

In the words of Maya Angelou:

“ I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” ”

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