

Do you know what it takes to build a 21st-century brand?

By  Carmen Murray

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With the rise of the connected individual, marketers must re-think the way they build a brand to be future fit for the digital savvy consumers. There are many challenges and opportunities as we chase the ideal way for brands to connect with consumers.



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I had a candid conversation with a seasoned and award-winning marketing professional, Benjamin Schoderer who leads Digital for Yum! Brands in Africa on the KFC brand and was recently named “Marketer of the Year 2018” at the IAB Bookmarks in March.

Anna Vaulina, head of the IAB SA Marketing Council adds, "As the IAB SA we are extremely excited to have Benjamin and YUM! recognised for brilliant work in the digital space. As the South African digital advertising industry matures, it is exciting to see individuals like Benjamin championing the way brands use digital to meet their objectives in a way that engages and has a positive impact on their customers."

I spoke with Benjamin about some of the challenges and opportunities for today's brands.



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How would you define a 21st-century brand?

For me, it's a brand that understands the 21st-century consumer and how to engage a connected individual. If you understand the connected consumer you will be a connected brand. You need to understand that behavioural patterns have changed and how this will impact your brand. For example, eating out and movies have evolved into Netflix and Ubereats. In my view, a 21st-century brand is ready for this consumer and their demands, anytime, anywhere, on any device.

What are some of the biggest changes you have seen in the marketing landscape over the past 5 years?

First and foremost, the fact that digital has become a central part of marketing and business planning when it was just an afterthought only a couple of years ago. When I first started at Vodacom in 2007, I joined a digital team of three which was part of the IT team looking after call centre systems. Today they are one of the most successful digital teams in the country and digital is at the heart of what they do, a really amazing journey. We are on a similar journey here at Yum! Brand and thus incredibly excited to have been named Digital Brand of the Year for the second year in a row at the 2018 IAB Bookmarks.



Another big change I've noticed is the change of the digital media landscape. It has become so sophisticated and advanced and you can measure your objectives and what you want to achieve through audience insights, programmatic media buying and so on.

Digital has certainly grown up.

When I attended the IAB Summit in California earlier this year, I was amazed by the sheer amount of ad tech companies that exist as part of the digital ecosystem. In line with this, there seems to be a trend of the titles "Chief Digital Officer" and "Chief Marketing Officer" collapsing into a "Chief (Brand) Experience Officer" (or similar) type role. Business adapts to reflect the changes in the digital economy we find ourselves in.

We now live in the age of The Connected Individual. It's becoming more crucial not just to serve a physical product, but provide an individual brand experience. Tell us more about how you merge the physical product and the digital experiences for your customers?

First of all, the key experience for us at KFC is our food. We know that if our food is prepared correctly and eaten hot and fresh it really is finger licking good.

We then think about how we enhance this experience through technology or the environment we create around it, along with the customer lifecycle. We do a lot of work around the in-store experience and how do we enable a better service experience for instance. Another example of an exciting experience in our restaurants was the SoundBite case study and how we used music as a passion point to attract younger consumers.

Another important aspect is customer service and enabling our staff with technology to improve the service they offer to our customers.

One of our partner markets created an Employee VR Education Program called the Escape Room. This was particularly created to educate service staff on hygiene, preparation of food, and applying the service levels in the virtual world and exposing them the KFC way of doing things.

What are the biggest challenges that marketers face, and what advice could you offer them to improve their marketing approach?

The whole marketing universe has just become very confusing and overwhelming for a lot of marketers. There are so many new technologies being introduced to the market, new ways of targeting consumers and a lot of marketers tell me that they feel intimidated by this constant change. The risk with that is that marketers tend to stick to what they know instead of exploring new opportunities for their brand or taking any risks.

We combat that at KFC by running several training programmes, often with our digital partners, so that our entire marketing team is comfortable navigating the digital advertising space.

Our customers are embracing this change, and as marketers, we need to be willing to explore and embrace these changes or we will be left behind. My key advice to marketers would be and stay curious. You really have nothing to lose, but so much to win. Just find the right fit for your brand to get you the results that you need.

Make budget available for experimentation. Be brave, test it. If it doesn't work, move on and try again.

In marketing, collaboration is key. What advice can you give marketers on choosing their partners to ensure the most abundant explosion of creativity and problem-solving?

Surround yourself with experts that are right for your brand and with the skill sets that you need. I am not an expert at all digital disciplines (and there are a lot), but I am trying to surround myself with experts in these areas to help me to achieve my vision.

What I have learned is that you acquire your partners based on skills and experience and you retain them based on people and culture.

If there is chemistry, you can make magic happen. We have built this amazing culture with our partners like Ogilvy and Mindshare, and we just click. It's also important to be able to have healthy debates and criticise ideas. Trust your partners and ensure you are always aligned.

There is a saying: Garbage in, Garbage out. How can we move away from generic briefs and inform our partners

better for effective projects?

Know what you want, what you going to measure and know what success looks like. Make sure you have strong insight into why people behave the way they do. Ask the question why over and over to match your product to the truth. It's a marketing fundamental.

Key takeaways:

1. Adapt to change
2. Your brand is no longer just a product. You need to augment your product with experiences
3. All your staff, whether head office staff or service staff, should be exposed to technology and empowered to offer better service to customers
4. Don't stick to what you know
5. Go for constant training to get future fit and be comfortable with the new
6. Make budget available for experimentation
7. Be curious and take risks
8. Choose the right partners

If you want to listen to the full interview with Ben, click [by Carmen Murray here](#).

ABOUT CARMEN MURRAY

Carmen Murray is one of the most influential modern marketers in South Africa. Her strong background in content, digital, mobile, innovation, and data analytics allows her to identify emerging trends and conceptualise disruptive communication strategies deployed with precision. The customer and their needs are always at the heart of her approach.

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