

Media, marketers, advertisers living on a different planet

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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It is more than just perception that a lot of marketers and advertising agencies seem somehow to have lost touch with the media they use to get messages across to the consumer.

And a lot of them still feel that it is because they have relegated their former roles as media specialists to the independent media buying companies.

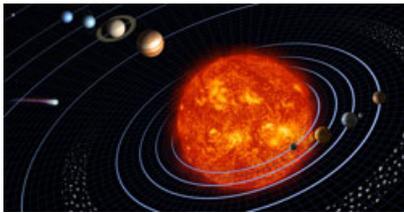
That resulted in them losing contact with the media, and this is not only impacting on strategic planning, but equally on creative. Not that creative directors made a point in the past of including regular liaison with media owners as part of their jobs, but in the general, run of the mill scheme of things, the fact that media owners and their reps were in and out of ad agencies every day, one way or the other paths crossed, people met in passageways and at presentations and somehow knowledge and information passed back and forth.

It's a psychological mindset

The problem does not arise out of anything intentional, but is rather from a psychological mindset, because media is now not necessarily something that is part of an agency but simply something that happens elsewhere.

Add to this the problem that available media is growing like Topsy and to keep up with everything that is at an advertiser's beck and call, one has to indulge in an almost daily routine of learning.

It is extremely confusing for the majority of media planners and buyers right now and they're the people who eat, sleep and drink media 24 hours a day. Understandably, then, it is a lot more confusing for anyone involved in the ad process, particularly those who firmly believe that understanding media is someone else's problem.



(Image: NASA)

A complication

Just to complicate things even more, the general inability of media owners to market themselves adds to the confusion. So much so that I often can't help wondering whether the inexorable shift of advertising budgets from above the line to below is not so much that marketers, ad managers and agency strat planners believe that below the line offers better value and returns on investment, but simply because it is so

much easier to understand.

I've been chatting to a number of ad agencies and media independents about this issue and it is interesting to see that not one single person denies that there is a problem.

A good sign

This is a good sign indeed, because instead of anyone going into denial or starting a huge debate on whether a problem exists or not, solutions can be sought. But then, they have been saying this for years. Decades even.

The biggest problem however, is that media owners don't like working with competitors in the company of ad agencies.

So, perhaps the solution to this problem of the lack of understanding of today's media by advertisers, marketers, agencies and media independents to a large extent, is for all concerned, while they might compete and cut each other's throats on a

daily basis, to combine forces to create a thorough understanding for the good of all.

Because without that understanding the standard of advertising in South Africa will continue to drop and will continue to move below the line and into the digital sphere.

Time to put petty competition aside and start looking at big pictures.

Media owners refusing to work with each other is as silly as trying to buy a car from one single component supplier.

There is no single media solution for advertisers. Media owners need to stop trying to convince their clients that there is.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Mberdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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