

The direct marketing industry shows its resilience and agility

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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The Direct Marketing Association of SA's Assegai Awards benchmark the direct marketing industry. This is an industry that has changed over the past few years, with several catalysts leading that change.



Image supplied. Candice Goodman, a non-executive board member of the DMASA, and head of the Assegai Awards working group

Candice Goodman, a non-executive board member of the DMASA, and head of the Assegai Awards working group says it is the direct marketing industry's adaptability and cost-effectiveness, that has made it resilient as well as agile in its ability to change over the past few years.

She says the biggest catalysts that had a direct impact on the direct marketing industry have been lockdown and the Protection of Personal Information Act (PoPIA) which came into effect on 1 July 2021.

"Spurred on by the lingering effect of lockdown and their empowerment by PoPIA, we see how consumers themselves are making themselves heard, and have shifted towards, and still prefer, a more digital communication with brands, demanding a more convenient, targeted, relevant and personalised relationship," she says.

"For marketers, PoPIA has meant redefining the way they manage their data and relationships with their "data subjects" as consumers in their target audience," Goodman adds.



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An exciting future

Regardless of these challenges, she says these are exciting times for the direct marketing industry. "With increased technical solutions to hyper-personalise the various channels of communication, these channels become more relevant. Also, the ability to make these channels interactive and bi-directional, allows customers to talk back to us. She explains that

these tech solutions are already available in the country.

- WhatsApp Chatbots using Artificial Intelligence to help answer your FAQs, in practically all our official languages.

- Data-driven videos that allow you to embed personal information into the visuals and audio and to interact with the viewer, to branch to options relevant to them and make it hyper-relevant, like the "choose your adventure" stories.
- Not to mention, enhancing our reality into the Metaverse.

Increased offline and online integration

The pandemic has also accelerated the need for increased offline and online integration in direct marketing. "I see direct marketing expanding to play an even more crucial role in helping marketers effectively provide relevant and valuable information and services to individuals and companies."



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Losers and winners

While the future is bright for direct marketing, Goodman says the lockdown had some casualties.

The losers

"Face-to-face marketing suffered tremendously with activations being cancelled leaving marketers looking for a digital alternative to engage with their target audiences," she says.

Also affected at this time was print media. "This was evident by the Media24 closures of many of their magazines and newspaper titles to further accelerate its transition to an increasingly digital world."

Cinema, she adds, with their forced closure during lockdown lead to record highs of streaming video, like Netflix, was badly hit.

"But arguably the worst marketing channel hit was Out-of-home (OOH) when people were sent home and away from their offices and CBDs, dramatically reducing the number of people exposed to billboards," she says.

The winners

“Digital marketing increased exponentially as it showed the power of social media, while e-commerce, has become embedded in our lives and ranks as the number 1 activity people do more than they did pre-pandemic,” Goodman says.

“From being a ‘mobile first’ country, South Africans became ‘mobile forced’,” she says.

“By being locked down in their homes, our consumers’ mobile phones became their lifeline, connecting them to their loved ones and to what is happening in the world around them making mobile marketing a big winner,” she explains.



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Direct mail, increased internationally

“This was reported by Dragonfly at the recent DMASA National Roadshow, that, internationally “96% of people engaged with direct mail and 44% looked forward to receiving mail during lockdown,” she expands.

In addition, it found that: “Our clients are giving us this feedback that shows a definite trend towards direct mail”. “In our post-Covid era I believe we will continue to propel the digital transformation and reshape the online mindset of consumers,” Goodman adds.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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