

Adam Byars - 2024 in two words: Culture and authenticity

By [Adam Byars](#)

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The word 'trends' implies that fads come and go – and in some instances, they do. But at Grid Worldwide, we're not seeing new trends impact the brand industry. What we're seeing is an amplification of a phenomenon that is becoming entrenched: brands can't buy their way into culture any more.



Image supplied. Adam Byars, Joint CEO and Partner at Grid Worldwide says culture and authenticity will build brand meaning in 2024

On the contrary, culture is growing in authenticity and is proactively creating spaces that allow brands to become part of a community in a way that is meaningful, genuine and fun.

Culture

Looking ahead, we see that culture, including music, art, fashion, cinema, sport, food and even the metaverse – anything that brings people together – is driving where and how people play.

Instead of owning cultural events through sponsorships, brands now have to earn their right to exist in these spaces and do so in a way that curates value and meaning.

The power has shifted to the extent that if a brand's involvement in cultural events isn't seen as authentic, consumers won't

show up.

As an agency that builds brands by giving them meaning, Grid pre-empted this shift when we formed 608 Experiences during Covid-19.

Essentially, 608 galvanises the creative community, enabling brands to be part of entertainment and lifestyle in a way that is relevant and impactful. It's about far more than sales and business, but rather about our culture, our people and our country.

608's first cultural festival, held 608 days after lockdown started, created a feeling of community at a time when South Africans desperately needed to feel included in something positive and uplifting.

Covid notwithstanding, the power crisis, our desperate economy and ineffective political leadership are pushing the resilience of the ordinary South African to the max.



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Authenticity

608 uses the creative collective to design moments in time where culture and community transcend this harsh reality.

The brands that play in this space must lead the authenticity of such moments.

The work we do for the brands that we represent is grounded in the belief that if you can galvanise a community, you can change the narrative of the country.

We fundamentally believe that we can solve social and cultural tensions through creativity.

Look at Siya Kolisi as an example. He plies his trade in the one thing that unites our country, but as a cultural icon, he transcends sport to give our nation hope and meaning.

When he signed with global talent management label Roc Nation in 2019, they “didn’t sign Siya the rugby star”.

Roc Nation’s investment in Kolisi is due to what he stands for, his purpose and his commitment to the community.

His ability to bring hope, to overcome challenges, to inspire and motivate Africans everywhere. Similarly, by supporting the creative collective that enables this kind of cultural influence, brands can contribute to changing the landscape we live in.



Why South Africa would vote for Siya Kolisi in 2024 if they could

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Cultural influencers

The idea of ‘cultural influencers’ as opposed to ‘social influencers’ is also gaining traction.

Social influencers don’t drive culture – they drive brands based on who is compensating them.

On the other hand, cultural influencers drive authentic cultural narratives through talent, leadership, passion, and purpose.

The rules that previously constrained branding as a discipline have fallen by the wayside, and the challenge now is for brands to find an authentic voice defined by the rules of culture.

ABOUT ADAM BYARS

Adam is an experienced businessman in the creative industry with a demonstrated history of working both locally and internationally in the marketing and branding industry, building key customer engagement experience in my early years on both brand and trade with BAT SA before switching to agency...

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