

Promotions and activations: A brave (not so) new world lockdown Level 2

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Do yourself a favour and take a drive through your nearest township or city centre today. Check out the throngs of people in the shopping malls, cruise past the bustling taxi ranks, bus terminuses and informal traders. See those queues of shoppers masked up, socially distanced and sanitised to within an inch of their lives outside the local Shoprite, Checkers and Woolies? It's business as usual on the streets of SA.

We understand that the clients and the brands agencies serve and respect, and have had some of the most challenging periods in their careers, with questions that are almost impossible to answer. As activation agencies we have been unable to advise adequately on many of these questions: *"When can we activate again? Which channels are open? Will consumers ever sample again? Will people still engage with promoters?"* We know that it is challenging for marketers not to be overwhelmed by the uncertainty gripping the world, but the fact remains that our country's infection rate is slowing, and our recovery rate is on the rise.

Although we still don't have the exact answers, we are definitely in a much better place to advise and predict short-, medium- and long-term decisions in the space. The Actuarial Society of South Africa's models show huge margin for error in models used by the government but the devastating economic impact, the results of which will take years to undo, is clearly being felt. There is a strong argument around the fact that a lot of what we *think* we know, is based on misinformation. Along with the rest of the economy, South African and global brands are feeling the impact. So, what are we all waiting for?

The real South Africa isn't sitting around in bubbles with masks, soaps and social distances. It's gritty out there. The bulk of our country (our consumers) are out there all day trying to survive. The president has asked us to help save our country and our economy and with that we believe that the onus is on us to take a responsible approach to getting to the coal face again, where consumers are still engaging with us.

Great brands create opportunities out of threats and challenges and we constantly ask ourselves how we and the industry – including our powerful clients and partners – can be of relevance to the real South Africa. We say again that our people are out there: taxis are full, supermarkets are crowded, commuter hubs are busy, people are engaging and interacting at petrol stations and in informal markets. So which brands are out there braving the streets in a responsible manner with these consumers? Which brands are offering the 'human touch' as opposed to a message on a screen? Should it not be your brand? Should it not be us being brave, driving a responsible message and embracing consumer connection rather than fearing it? Brands should look closely at all the channels that are open in the activation space and get involved with their consumers as soon as possible.

Despite the overwhelming amount of data available, a unanimous voice in Mzansi is already living a new normal and is out there consuming, working and living – and it has been for quite some time.

This is what other experts in the space have to say about activations in the time of Covid:

Lauren Durant, CEO of Tradeway Promotions: *"We are quickly emerging out of the dark days of Covid-19 and a low-touch economy is not a no-touch economy, so provided all safety precautions are taken and PPE regulations are met, there's no reason why brands shouldn't be on the ground where their customers are, doing sampling, forging relationships and making sales!"*

"While some brands have been sitting on their proverbial hands, we have sold over 26,000 cellular handsets in store in

the last three months for one of our Level 4 ICT customers. We have been busy growing market share and monopolising sales in the category since May,” she says.

Durant agrees that some brands have not seized the opportunities offered by the currently uncluttered activations channel.

Michelle Combrinck, MD of Zinto, says: *“If your customers are out on the streets, you should be too. And if you are slow to take up the chalice you run the risk of coming second. Or dead last. The character of the African continent is inextricably linked to socialising, the human face and interactive mechanisms. Covid and other strains of viruses will be around for a while, so we need to adapt, fine tune and forge ahead.”*

Ronen Aires, owner of Student Village, agrees. *“Sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch are all essential for truly deep brand connections and the sooner we get out from behind our laptop screens and into the public eye, the better.”*

Your brand’s brave, patriotic and hard-working customers are out there. Out of necessity they have chosen to step out into this new normal in order to put food on the table. None of your competitors are there. Strong words, but also an opportunity for great brands.

Fortune favours the brave and the brave aren’t the ones sitting behind their laptop screens waiting for the world to change. Main market South Africa are the ones who are out there filling our petrol tanks, tending to our sick, staffing our factories and crammed into fully loaded taxis. The only way to be relevant to them right now is to stand beside them. Literally.

About Tradeway Promotions

Tradeway Promotions, a BBBEE Level 1 full-service agency established in 2005, is SA’s largest below-the-line agency trusted by 180 brands to provide quality outcomes-based activations. Our core function is to ideate, create and facilitate experiential consumer connections.

Tradeway employs 85 industry experts who are passionate and energised about helping brands solve consumer connection challenges.

Our creative studio provides end-to-end creative and strategic solutions to complex business problems.

With national execution, channel agnostic brand solutions and Promoforce (specially developed promoter and channel management system) we are able to reach a large customer base and provide our clients with insights into the world of their consumers.

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