

Brands, the world needs you right now

By [Lynn Madeley](#), issued by [Havas Johannesburg](#)

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I know, it's that five letter word again, but bear with me.

Way back in March, as the world began to realise the enormity of the Covid pandemic, we were tasked as strategists to get out our crystal balls and predict the future. As top behavioural scientists at the most renowned universities were struggling with that, we felt the obligation to take a different route. We emphasised in our strategies that, while we could make assumptions and hypothesise about the near future, none of us had been through anything like this before.



Lynn Madeley, Havas Southern Africa CEO

There was one thing that we really did get right though, and it still rings true as we deal with this pandemic. It is that if there was a pre-Covid-era and a Covid-era, we will probably not have a post-Covid-era. The problem is that as humans, to navigate complexity, we need an endpoint. While everyone adjusted from originally thinking we were in a sprint to then being in a marathon, the human condition continues to struggle with the fact that there is no end in sight.

With no end in sight, comes enormous fatigue. Even the most zealous adopters of safety protocols are beginning to change their approach to this new way of existing, and are starting to say things like, 'If I get it, I get it.'

And this is where brands must step in. When most of the world went on a wave of lockdowns, there was an enormous amount of deep and meaningful messages delivered by brands, echoing togetherness, encouraging people to stay put. That was great and much of that work may (or may not) have sold more stuff, but it certainly connected with people and gave people hope.

It's been eight months since the beginning of the global wave of lockdowns and we do not have a sure vaccine in sight. Which means Covid is still as concerning and we all need to remain compliant and cautious. Yet, brands are behaving like everything is back to normal, selling their wares as they did way back in 2019. On one end, this is important in order to shore up the economy. On the other end, brands still have a truly significant role to play in keeping people aware that Covid is still with us.

“ Brands, over governments, know how to make people think and do things and they have a responsibility to help society navigate through their fatigue and settle on new habits and rituals that will help mitigate the risk of Covid-19. ”

We need to keep the messaging up. We need to help people maintain the behaviours that the governments are trying to instill, and brands can do it better.

We have a responsibility.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynn Madeley is the CEO at Havas Southern Africa

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