

From Europe to SA with love: 3 tips for South African marketers in 2019

 By [Lisa Steingold](#)

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It seems fitting to be writing this on the last day of 2018. I set off, just one year ago in search of digital knowledge and broadened career experience from Europe. It's exactly what I found and more.



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Having little understanding of the legal implications of marketing in the UK and the European Union (I think the less said about Brexit currently, the better), I found myself in the midst of a [GDPR](#) implementation in an organisation where metrics were tracked in real time and where results from campaigns were measured daily.

In addition, we had customers' private information which they had shared when signing up not to mention all the usual tracking pixels and cookies.

The PoPI act governing marketers and brands in South Africa didn't exactly give me much depth and understanding in the legal aspect of marketing and implementation thereof; understandably so given South Africa is a country with greater political concerns at present and let's face it legality has never been our strong point.

London is a cold lover

After a dearth of research, I made it through GDPR and "The Beast of the East" (the worst winter experienced in the UK for almost a decade) only to find myself unable to make peace with living in London. God bless her soul but she's a cold lover; temperature wise that is, and whilst I love her and we tried, I bid her farewell in August.

It's now after a couple of months sabbatical in Spain that I gladly return home to SA soil. I look forward to sunshine, connection and yes even the antics of South African politicians.

This, however, isn't a story about my personal journey across the seas but rather what I discovered and the trends and learning from our European counterparts.

1. RIP last click

"Last-click attribution will (slowly) give way to customer journey views..."

So says a recent article in [Martech today](#) stating their five predictions for 2019. A similar sentiment was shared in a recent article in [Marketing Weekly](#) where the point was made that organisations themselves need to be structured differently.

“ Consumer demands are evolving at a rapid rate, so organisations have got to be structured in a way that enables them to respond and adapt quickly. Having disparate teams that don't talk to each other, or are set up around different objectives, will not enable that to happen. ”

It's not merely about focussing less on attribution but it's also about how organisations are structured and how customers are viewed. We're talking organisational design as an approach.

I am sorry to say but there are few South African brands who can attest to having a single eye view of their customer not to mention a comprehensive omnichannel strategy that ensures a seamless customer experience.

One thing that really hit home in Europe is just how competitive the market is. Only 1 out of 26 unhappy customers complain (Moengage.com, 2018) and with at least twenty other brands available immediately to service your every need as a customer, why not?

In an entrepreneurial nation such as SA, not to mention the influx of overseas brands in recent years, we're going to have to get this right. Why? Apart from the obvious benefits such as improved customer service levels, better customer retention and higher conversion rates, there's bottom line value in the form of customer lifetime value (CLV) which is now the most valued metric to European marketers.

Yes, it comes with a whole set of legal and operational implications but that's another story for another day. In the interim, Forbes sees 2019 as the [coming together of Omnichannel analytics](#). Let's see how we fair.

2. Culture counts and people matter

On a work trip to Lagos in 2017, I had the privilege of attending a talk by [Feyi Olubodun](#), renowned marketer and author of *The Villager*. He spoke about the importance of culture and how a famed South African brand (let's not mention names) had failed to measure the size of dustbins in Nigeria yet had started stocking dustbin bags in the country and marketing them to households. Culture is key is something I have always known but the true significance of it didn't really hit home until this year.

I feel for Britains at the moment. They've had a series of weather anomalies in the past year and I think they're all feeling more than a little uncertain.

They're as Brexit-befok as we are about election results. Thank goodness there's been the matter of the Royals to take the

spotlight off the political crisis. On the lighter side, they can laugh at themselves and I'm not going to say too much more but if you feel like a laugh, make sure to check out Michael McIntyre's (my favourite British comedian) commentary of British people on holiday.

I left London and arrived in Spain for a little sabbatical that included writing and some consulting work. What struck me almost from the get-go was the vast variance in culture. Granted, I went from a major capital to the small-time province and natural paradise of Asturias in Northern Spain but what struck me was the general feeling of "life is a celebration".

It can be seen in things as simple as time; dinner in Spain is generally only served at 9pm. Food, family and fiesta are all important irrespective of where one goes in the country and it truly was a privilege to enjoy her hospitality.

I've been fortunate to travel a lot in my life including countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, the US, Oz and more. What I understand now is that marketing to people is one of the most important aspects of the trade. I'm not talking audience segmentation; I'm talking real people.

Even within regions, there can be cultural nuances which could affect the interpretation of a message and as such represents the missing key to revenue lost or made. Just ask my long-standing friend Jocelyn, who having lived in the US for a number of years now says that Republicans greatest fear and concern is security. Well, this goes without saying and no need to mention to building walls across borders or anything of the sort.

In 2019, make sure you have a single eye view of your customer, use personas to classify groups and build your first-party data. Ensure you use real-time audienceing with ad placement to meet your audience "where they're at" so to speak, not just online but in terms of mindset too.

3. Real-time metrics that matter

I went from reporting weekly in SA to having a real-time automated dashboard in London that updated daily showing new customer subscriptions, churn rate, conversions from ads, best-performing channels, CPA and revenue. I had secondary dashboards that showed pointer information such as email open rates, net promoter score etc.

My point is that when I arrived in my post I was scared, s#*t scared. Nothing had been set up and it was my task to do it. There was so much information I didn't know where to start and it was thanks to some helpful mentors that I could make sense of it.

Is there too much information? No, there's just a lot that isn't important so don't waste time on it. Does it really matter how

many people commented on a single post in the grand scheme of things?

In 2019, keep it simple and don't make life complicated. What matters? It may differ from brand to brand but essentially there are a few common ingredients we all care about;

- Lifetime value - because we want to focus on the most important customers
- Churn rate, if applicable because we want to understand who is leaving and why.
- Net promoter score - because we also want to reward customers who bring us value and make them our heroes.
- CPA - because we want to know which channels perform best and optimise our spend.

Keep it to ONE (yes solo, uno) North Star Metric, no more than 3 primary metrics and no more than 5 secondary metrics. Nothing else really matters. And don't worry too much about a couple of negative comments; keeping it real is uber #ontrend at the moment.

And PS/NB!

I didn't mention this because it didn't occur to me but please ensure its all mobile-first and enlist the relevant tech to help you do all of this but that's another story for another day.

I'm super happy to be home and here's to a great year for brands and marketers but more than that, here's to a great year for South Africans; may we rise up and shine!

ABOUT LISA STEINGOLD

Lisa Steingold is a marketer, wannabe cyclist and author of *Out the Crap: the Power of Authenticity for Brands*.

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