

Do you learn anything at conferences?

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

19 Jun 2017

I've always thought that conferences and seminars were a little ho-hum. However, I went to one recently and I have to admit that I really did learn a lot.



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It was called “The Future of Advertising” and held at the Radisson Blu Gautrain hotel, lasting two days. It was organised by Knowledge Resources – a company that does this sort of event on a regular basis.



The future of advertising

Chris Brewer 22 May 2017



My first observations might seem obvious – but they're important.

The venue has to be good – and well catered.

The sound and audio systems must be first rate – with roving microphones so that audience members can be heard when

asking questions.

Regular breaks (say, after two speakers) are extremely important – and no speaker should talk for more than 45 minutes.

Finally, you need a really good MC – who needs to control timing and tells everyone those tedious little details that, ultimately, make life easier for the delegates/audience.

Fortunately, this one ticked all the boxes.

Firstly, Ricardo Gressel was a masterful MC, with many interesting observations and a great sense of humour.

Matthew Arnold from Native VML gave a fascinating account of how 62% of shoppers expect (and probably demand) to be remembered – a simple enough concept, but one easily overlooked.

Personally, I didn't know that people engage longer on mobile than they do on desktop computers or TV. His advice on how to market to the “connected consumer” is essentially:

1. Make great stuff.
2. Make what you say relevant.
3. Make it easy to buy – that seems to be a maxim many South African companies have overlooked.
4. Be authentic (obviously).
5. Collaborate! This is another area which many of us miss in SA – and it's not difficult.

Brad Reilly (Net#work BBDO) talked about “virtual reality”, which is something I'm totally fascinated about – and I needed to know more.

The really big lesson, for me anyway, came from Ryan McFadyen from HaveYouHeard, about influencer marketing. Now this really did open my eyes.

I hadn't fully appreciated the awesome power that can be harnessed by collaborating or engaging with the huge number of those on Instagram and other social media. There are SO many people (across all target market groups) who have seemingly small numbers of followers – but put those people together to promote whatever product you want to sell and suddenly you're talking to an audience of many thousands.



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That's a concept that just cannot be ignored and it certainly changed my mind.

Another great contribution came from Xolani Wiseman Sedibe (Black Smoke), who spoke most animatedly about the future of mobile advertising – how to do it and how not to. Watch out for this guy and his agency, because they'll go far.

And, of course, there were many other extremely good presenters – each sharing great insights into various aspects of the future.

Personally, I think the first speaker got it right when he said that: “advertising has always been, and will always be, the engine which drives commerce and that advertising is adapting and is about to enter a new golden age, with standards and returns soaring.”

Amen to that.

So will I be going to another conference or seminar? You betcha, provided the topic, the speakers and the organisers meet all the right criteria.

ABOUT CHRIS BREWER

Having joined the ad industry in London, Chris Brewer spent most of his career in media analysis and planning - but has performed just about every advertising task from Creative to Research. He's an honorary lifetime member of the Advertising Media Association and regularly advises agencies and clients regarding their media plan costs and strategies. He is also often asked to talk at industry functions. Email: chris@brewers.co.za. Twitter: [@brewersapps](https://twitter.com/brewersapps). Read his blog: www.brewersdroop.co.za

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