

: This year's big predictions

 By [Ben Wagner](#)

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A couple of days away from the 6th edition of The Bookmarks Awards I've attempted the impossible and taken a stab, as no one was either stupid or brave enough to do, at predicting this year's big winners.

The great thing about the evolution of The Bookmarks is that it's basically become the decathlon of awards shows in South Africa with entries needing to achieve excellent scores within a cross-section of criteria that include: Creative Concept, Overall Execution (UX, Design & Content), Technical innovation and Results (Strategic delivery and/or ROI).

The weighting of criteria changes from category to category, but overall mostly looks at rewarding strong results with the highest weighting of 40%, with the remaining three sectors (Creative Concept, Overall Execution and Technical/Innovation) receiving a 20% weighting each.



Keeping focused

While some might claim that this only rewards middle-of-the-road work, i.e. is boring, I feel it's helped agencies remain focused on demonstrating their strategic value to clients rather than wowing their industry peers with whizz-bang gimmicks that reached an audience of two, or weren't practically executable or achievable. Hopefully as an industry we can finally get to the point where creativity and ROI aren't mutually exclusive and that clients, as bill payers, should be demanding stronger transformative ideas.

The challenging part however, is that the results section (weighted at 40% for most categories), does entice agencies to potentially apply voodoo statistics and performance graphs to demonstrate stratospheric social media reach and engagement, which I hope will have judges pulling out their bulls**t meters.

Overall the level of work has stepped up and it's heartening to see work that can compete on a global stage. In previous years, remember I jury chaired this thing in 2008 & 2009, I remember feeling disillusioned about how our industry was stuck in a cycle of using tricksey ways of doing rich media banners or simply depending on technology as the concept, instead of matching great ideas to technology to create something compelling.

Local ideas

What's fantastic this year is that we've turned a corner, probably not THE corner just yet, in developing ideas that remain grounded in a local context, stretch our abilities at a technical level and ultimately have purpose for clients. Old excuses like lack of bandwidth in South Africa are no longer relevant, which is evident when you see the amount of ideas that deploy activation or installation based ideas and that quickly demonstrate how vivid and inspiring the "internet of things" can and will become.

At a production or craft level we're still lagging, reference Intel Beauty Inside, to see that we simply haven't reached the level of craft that free up those kind of production budgets, but sustained good work will eventually allow this.

So before I dive in and claim the unclaimable, there are some heavy disclaimers to point out. First off there are a ton of finalists and I suspect that this year's filtering mechanism was lowered or someone forgot to turn it on!

I also had no access to any of the ROI figures that the judging panel would have access to, the 40% part, other than case/entry videos in the public domain (Loeries or Creative Circle Ad of the Month winners) or in instances where Google was kind to me.

I'm also an agency head, which keeps me subjectively blinded to all things agency based and which is why all of my picks are from these categories.

This year's top 10 big Bookmark Agency Awards winners (in no particular order):

1. Woolworths/Quirk - www.woolworths.co.za

A blockbuster of a project that created plenty of buzz within the local e-commerce landscape and which I'm sure will serve as a momentum starter for other major retailers to follow suit. I can only imagine the UX time spent on this thing, particularly the design responsiveness piece which must have been an ordeal of note!

The interface is relatively clean for a website of such scale and it immediately conveys the overall brand style that is Woolies. There are great functional components to the site and these alone set this project above the rest and ultimately provide a brand experience that performs from browser to front-door, just ask my wife. I expect this entry to do exceptionally well and to pick up two gold pixels at least.

2. #AudiA3Exchange/Ogilvy CT - <http://vimeo.com/69551277>

The dream team at Ogilvy CT keep coming up with the goods and this entry is yet another reflection of sound strategic thinking, tapping a key consumer insight (consumer's lust for a new Audi A3) and amplifying this through social media as well as using a mix of media that generated strong results for the brand and drove product trial

3. Audi R8 - Gone in 5 seconds/Ogilvy CT - <http://vimeo.com/69545899>

In a category that in years gone by was made up of gimmicky flash wizardry, this piece of work makes sense on multiple levels. It's devastatingly simple, makes use of free media in the form of the five second mandatory viewing sample on YouTube and matches this with a key product attribute, in the Audi R8's case, SPEED! An effective and annoyingly cost-effective use of users dwell time on YouTube.

4. World's First LIVE Tweeting Honey Badger - Hellocomputer - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGTptt7iwj8>

Otherwise known as "that bloody badger or beaver" in agency circles, purely because it was so damn popular. The idea and technology were clever, but what truly astonished us cynics was the amplification that this achieved with widespread global PR being achieved in no time, hell even Perez Hilton was going on about it. The exposure alone on this project will hold it up high for the judges and I'm sure it will receive at least two pixels.

5. Cape Town Tourism - Send your Facebook Profile to Cape Town - Ogilvy CT - <http://bit.ly/16YR2WH>

This piece of work nearly broke the Bollinger/Cyber Lion drought at Cannes this Year, although it received Gold in the Branded Content category, which absolutely makes this a sure bet in my eyes. In an ocean of innocuous Facebook tabs and same-same competition mechanics this piece of work stands head and shoulders apart from the rest.

The project deftly incorporated multiple phases to the campaign, including good use of online video that kept users seamlessly locked in. The campaign also achieved significant results and makes it a worthy Bookmarks contender.

6. The 5Gum Experience - DDB South Africa - <http://bit.ly/1hsXdbI>

Having reached the age of 40 I can tell you with certainty that I've never and therefore am unlikely to ever crack the nod to any 5Gum Experience. My personal age issues aside, I can assure you that the force field that 5Gum have managed to create is an amazing achievement in a market where brands struggle for relevance.

Sure the music artists are a major draw card, but the brands ability to create compelling mechanics in revealing who'll be

headlining or where the venue will be is part of the secret sauce that reminds me of what Lucky Strike managed to do before social media even existed.

The results are good considering the claim of zero media spend and the outcome of a strong and responsive brand community. I'm sure this will win a pixel in either the Social Media Properties or Campaign categories.

7. bookly - NATIVE - <http://bit.ly/1hsYfUL>

It would be remiss of me to not look at any of my own agency, NATIVE's, contenders, given we have 29 finalists. This piece of work is likely (hopefully) to do well now that the MetropolitanRepublic debacle has settled down.

Contextually this project is smart, given that most young South African's cannot afford smartphones or e-readers and the use of Mxit as the primary messaging platform is a great fit for this market. Functionality wise, the app provides all the functionality that an e-reader provides without massive data charges and its rate of user adoption and usage is impressive.

8. Loom Immersive Retail - Ikineo - <http://bit.ly/11LPOcV>

One of the standout pieces at Loeries this year and judging by the fact that it has six finalists at Bookmarks, I can't see how this piece won't pick up at least one or two pixels.

At a concept and craft level the work is world class and it certainly ticks the criteria at a tech innovation level too. The only part where it might struggle is at a results level, but hey, I'll leave that argument to the judges.

9. Isuzu Trail View - NATIVE - <http://bit.ly/17XLJ8I>

Yes I am drinking my own Koolaid, but by sheer show of numbers seven finalists isn't a bad indicator. The platform and technology fit the Isuzu brand like a glove (I couldn't think of a 4x4 analogy, sorry) and the community growth over a relatively short period of time has been exceptional given how niche this audience is. I can see at least one or two pixels coming.

10. Toyota RAV4 Outdoor Website - Hellocomputer - <http://bit.ly/16CqfxQ>

This last piece tipped for pixel success is a great example of online marrying into the real world and again fits the majority of criteria, given that I don't know what results it achieved. It's a great demonstration of thinking outside the browser, outdoors to be exact.

The pure cool factor in experiencing an outdoor website whilst simultaneously being exposed to a vehicle's product attributes is likely to have attracted the mountain bike "hey boets" in droves. The craft experience is fantastic and typifies the level of work that goes into HelloComputer's work, which they've managed to pull into the outdoor theme park itself.

So to all the agencies that end up proving me wrong, good on you, and to those that I've guessed right, you know where to find me at the bar - the drinks are on you!

Best of luck!

ABOUT BEN WAGNER

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