

Selae Thobakgale to host 2021 IAB Bookmark Awards

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

15 Jul 2021

The IAB Bookmark Awards will be celebrating 13 years of this digital excellence, giving recognition to pioneering agencies, brands and publishers, and Selae Thobakgale will lead the announcement of South African digital marketing's industry benchmarks alongside the 2021 Bookmarks Round Table of industry executives come 29 July.



Selae Thobakgale, co-founder of Strategy Network and chief strategy officer at The Odd Number

We find out from the media and advertising titan what we can expect at the 2021 IAB Bookmark Awards.

■ ***Congratulations on being announced as host of the upcoming IAB Bookmark Awards. How do you feel about this?***

It is such an honour to be selected as the host. The unique proposition is my love and involvement in the marketing industry integrating with my presenting career.

■ ***How did you celebrate the news, and what does this mean to you, personally?***

Working in the industry, I understand all the hard work that goes into what we do. So, to be a part of recognising and celebrating the excellence in our industry is very important for me. I feel a great sense of responsibility to do it well.

■ ***As the host, what can we expect?***

I consider myself as being more than just a host, but an industry peer as well. So I am looking forward to bringing my

insights and interacting with fellow industry peers from a place of understanding. However, let me not shy away from the fact that I will still do my best as a presenter to make the awards as memorable as possible.



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■ You have some major experience in the digital marketing industry. Could you comment on the impact of Covid-19 on the industry?

Covid-19 has had an impact at both industry levels and organisational levels.

“ Studies done globally have revealed that digital adoption has taken a quantum leap as we have been forced to move toward digital channels because of the restrictions placed by pandemic lockdowns. ”

“You are on mute” was not a part of our daily lives pre-Covid-19.

However, from a marketing point of view, we have not been immune to the economic impact of Covid-19. An ailing economy, reduced consumer spending, organisations reporting losses all eventually lead to marketing budget cuts. We have had to innovate with less and find new ways of making our digital marketing efforts connect more with people beyond just the sales objective.

In addition to that, an increase in digital activity also means an increase in digital clutter. The competitive pool has new powerful entrants in the form of content creators, influencers etc. To be seen and heard requires more innovative thinking and an understanding of how to use digital tools to get our marketing objective across.

“ For me, overall, the greatest learning has been in adapting to change as a constant variable. This has allowed me to understand even more profoundly, the powerful role of consumer led creativity in a digital a world. ”

■ As the world of advertising has shifted, digital has grown and evolved into a channel that delivers real business results through this evolution. What can organisations no longer ignore?

Consumers have moved dramatically toward online channels. While this has obviously had a positive impact on the industry, we have had to respond adequately. Brands that failed to do so, are getting left behind. I think more and more brands have come to understand that a digital strategy should be a part of the fabric of the organisational strategy as well.

“ A key shift in response to consumer behaviour has been an increase in the digitisation of consumer interactions and offerings. ”

Some of these transitions will be the foundation of a new way of doing business that will stick in the long term.

■ **The IAB Bookmark Awards celebrate ‘13 years of moving the industry forward this year. How has this platform contributed to the evolution of digital marketing excellence?**

13 years ago, was 2008. Facebook hadn't launched the like button yet, and Instagram did not even exist. To be a platform that contributed to digital marketing for this long is something worth celebrating. Not only does IAB as a whole, empower the media and marketing industries to thrive in a digital economy, they also enable excellence. The Bookmarks are a result of that.

“ The more we empower, acknowledge and celebrate digital excellence, the more we innovate. This is how the industry keeps moving forward. ”

To book a seat at the Bookmark Awards, head to <https://www.iabbookmarkawards.co.za/>

Registration is open until 28 July 2021.

The awards will be an honour to work created under the categories: Platforms, Community, Channels, Publishing, Campaign, Craft, Emerging Channels and Special Honours.

The 13th Annual Bookmark Awards, powered by DStv Media Sales and brought to you by Accenture Interactive, 24.com, Everlytic, Google, Joe Public, Tractor Outdoor, Absa, iProspect, Bizcommunity and Mediamark.

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