

KFC's Trivern Chetty on nurturing tomorrow's talent



By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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As marketing manager innovation and insights for KFC at Yum Brands Africa, Trivern Chetty relishes the opportunity to make one of the world's most well-known food brands relevant to local consumers.



Trivern Chetty, marketing manager innovation and insights: KFC, YumBrands Africa

He leads a team of young marketers in developing campaigns that drive sales and affinity for the KFC brand, and inspires his team to use marketing insights as a source of competitive advantage.

As a young professional himself, Chetty has already developed a passion for mentoring and nurturing young homegrown talent, driven by a vision to grow the next generation of talented marketers.

Here, Chetty shares more on his career journey and his determined approach towards the professional development of himself and others.

Trivern, tell us a bit about yourself and your background?

I am Triv, husband to Suvira and father to Coco the beagle. I love travelling, but these days I am confined to watching 'Kara and Nate', and 'Mark Wiens' videos.

I have the privilege of working for one of South Africa's most iconic brands, KFC. I am a passionate marketer and a champion of self-progress.

As marketing manager innovation and insights at Yum Brands, what do you enjoy most about your job and working in the QSR space?

We have a unique process at KFC where we spend a considerable amount of time with consumers, getting to know them and then creating food solutions based on their needs.

I love that KFC tests our innovation concepts before they are launched, and driving past a billboard with one of your ideas on it makes me so proud and excited for the work we produce.



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■ ***How would you describe your climb up the career ladder?***

My career path was linear, but it wasn't necessarily easy. It was during an honours class at Vega that I learnt about this job called a 'brand manager'. It fascinated me because you had the power to control a brand's destiny and help drive its creativity.

In my quest to become a brand manager, I found out quite early that companies wanted experience, but no one was prepared to give it to you. I applied to probably every big company in SA and must have had a 2% response rate. It was tough, but I kept my head up.

I eventually fought a recruitment agent and was finally offered a 6-month internship at Coca-Cola. As an intern, I made it my duty to get noticed and be offered a permanent position – which I did. I got placed into a management acceleration programme, became an assistant brand manager, and finally realised my dream of becoming a brand manager, working on the Powerade brand.

A campaign I worked on turned into a global case study, and this allowed me to network with the global team and I was given the opportunity to work with the global team, as a senior brand manager, based out of Atlanta. When I returned home, I was appointed as a marketing manager and was lucky enough to work on the South and East African business.

After spending almost 10 years at Coca-Cola, I yearned to create my own campaigns. An opportunity came up as a marketing manager on innovation at KFC and it seemed like a match made in heaven. KFC places a big emphasis on people and allows me to be my most authentic self. I have been part of this amazing fried chicken business ever since.

■ ***Tell us about some of the campaigns and marketing activities KFC has been involved in that you feel have successfully engaged the brand's younger consumers?***

Our December 2020, #LetsGo5050 KFC campaign allowed us to drive a global brand to become culturally connected with the youth. Locally, we realised, post-Covid-19, that 'summer' would never be the same and that youth were connecting with brands who have their 'back'.

So, in the spirit of generosity and given that we are celebrating 50 years of 'it's finger lickin good' in South Africa we decided to go 50/50 with Mzansi, offering discounts on some of their favourite KFC menu items. The coolest part though was that we also collaborated with Yay Abe, a talented local illustrator to create limited edition KFC collectable birthday buckets, to make our 50-year heritage in South Africa more unique and authentic.

We also partnered with Thesis Lifestyle, one of Soweto's most iconic brands, to launch the Thesis x KFC Streetwear collection, which went on sale in December 2020. The collection included an exclusive run of bespoke T-shirts, vests, tote bags and bucket hats. These were designed to reflect what we believe KFC founder Colonel Sanders would be proud to see and experience if he were to visit the streets of Mzansi today.

When I saw our consumers sporting our new range, I knew we had created something special – something we were really proud of.



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7 Dec 2020



■ ***You have a keen interest in nurturing and mentoring young, homegrown talent. How do you approach this and why do you believe this to be important?***

My approach is simple: make time and give time.

If I had to use a football analogy, the more a player gets game time/minutes, the more competent and confident he/she becomes. I prefer to be the coach who gives minutes and gets a 1-0 victory vs the coach who wants to win 3-0 only using senior players. Everyone deserves an opportunity.

The idea of opportunity is important to me because I think back to the time that no one wanted to give me a chance. I don't want others to feel that only experience counts – it's your work ethic, your willingness to try and your attitude that makes a big difference as well, so I try and do my best to support new talent.

■ ***If you were mentoring a future you, what career advice would you give to an aspiring young marketing professional?***

Read more books and listen to more podcasts (on a broad range of topics) – learn as much as you can. Not only will this equip you with your own point of view, but also help people take notice – of your voice and your perspective – and it will also prevent you from being a 'yes man'.

Find a way or make one. If you truly want something, it will come to you through your personal efforts, some faith, and a little luck. Don't lose hope, chase the small wins.

And don't forget to build relationships. While the technical aspect of a job can be taught, the difference maker is the relationship you have nurtured with others.



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Lauren Hartzenberg 31 Aug 2020



■ ***What have been your career highlights so far...***

- Sitting at the Coke HQ in Atlanta working on global campaigns
- Interviewing future talent and being able to support them
- Making a global brand locally relevant

■ ***What is your message for youth in SA this Youth Month?***

Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish, Stay Humble (Triv Remix)

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