

Africa needs to do campaigns like *Lesso Lessons* again and again

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

23 Jan 2023

In 2022, Ogilvy Africa's *Lesso Lessons* campaign won a Cannes Gold Lion, four metals at the Loeries including Grand Prix and a gold, and a LIA (London International Awards) bronze - each of these are a first for any agency in East, Central and West Africa. The agency also won Africa's only yellow pencil at 2022 D&ADs



Image supplied. Vikas Mehta, chief executive officer, Ogilvy Africa would like to see more great award-winning work come from Africa

Vikas Mehta, chief executive officer, Ogilvy Africa, hopes to see more work of this calibre coming from the Continent and being recognised on the global stage.

“*Lesso Lessons* is an example of a collaboration of diverse entities coming together and doing something because it felt like the right thing to do. We like a collaborative advantage more than a competitive advantage, and *Lesso* is a great example of collaborative success between Roto Foundation, Kenya’s Ministry of Health and Ogilvy Africa,” explains Mehta.

Not just a flash in the pan

“Our biggest priority, and something that keeps us awake at night, is what if this were just a flash in the pan?” he says.

“We would like to see a scenario three years down the line where many pieces of work from more countries and more agencies across Africa shine at global award shows.”

For him being a global network in Africa comes with the responsibility of putting Africa on the world map. He says they would love to see work that’s good enough to compete with the best in the world, coming from African countries you didn’t expect.

“We’ve seen this evolution in Asia and Latin America in the past and their rising share of excellence. The world is not going to do it for Africa. We need more of Africa coming to the party and do work like (and better than) *Lessons* again and again.”

A functional network

“In Africa the canvas is very wide because the Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa are poles apart. And yet, despite being a continent of 54 countries, most of the creative excellence stems from a few places like Egypt and South Africa. At least historically.”

He adds that different countries are also in different development cycles which impacts the kind of work clients expect from their agency.

“When you look at countries such as South Africa, there is over half a century of history with this industry that exists. However, at times, history can also become baggage. The opportunity to leapfrog and create innovations exists in some of the lesser-known countries because they do not have the burden of years of baggage. It will take many brave clients and agencies to drive it simultaneously.”

Chasing true North

Their aim is, to give their clients and employees the same expertise and experience they would expect out of Ogilvy anywhere in the world.

“It is a lot easier said than done, but that’s our true North at Ogilvy Africa,” he says.

He explains that the Ogilvy Africa network manages sub-Saharan Africa. “That is everything beneath North Africa, starting with West African countries such as Ghana and Nigeria, and it goes as far south as Zambia and Zimbabwe, in effect giving the agency network 39 functional dots on the continent’s map.

“We structure ourselves around the East and Central African region managed through Kenya, and the West African region managed through Ghana.

“I wish I could say that competencies are the same across all 39 countries, but it’s a functional network that actually works, enabled through enough lines of collaboration between the hubs and the countries.”

He adds that they are excited about scaling competencies in influence, technology, content, and data. “When it comes to mass media advertising, the calibre of work continues to get a lot better.”



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A model for other parts of the world

So why did this particular campaign resonate so clearly with juries from across the globe?

Simple, says Mehta. “This campaign is essentially a human impact story. The universal appeal of human impact stories often resonates well with audiences and juries alike.

“Even if you removed the context of Kenya, where this was designed to work; and look at most of the developing and emerging world, issues such as nutrition need to be solved.

“I believe this campaign framework could possibly serve as a model to solve similar problems in other parts of the world, provided it’s interpreted right for the local context, like Lesso is to our cultural context,” he says.

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Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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