

Dali Tembo - Trends are the bridge between brands and people

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Scheduled to take place on 2 February 2022, BizTrends 2022 will feature Dali Tembo, co-founder of The Culture Foundry, and past MD of Instant Grass International, who will talk about how trends gathering has changed, how communities are functioning differently as well as other trends that brands will need to consider if they want to move forward on the continent. Here he shares a taster of what delegates can expect from his executive trend presentation at BizTrends 02.02.2022.



■ *Can you share a bit about what audiences can expect from your presentation?*

I aim to combine the experiences that we as a business have had over the past two years building our business in Africa into a palatable format by taking some of the biggest insights on what customers are going to be looking for, how environments are changing, how media proliferation and the way people are consuming media is changing with what has become important for African customers today, from a needs perspective. I will also shine a lens on Africa innovation.



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■ *What are some of the biggest trends you have found in Africa that you will be discussing?*

The bigger theme is the changing sense of community. That's directly because of Covid, and the increased pressure as well as the mental and physical isolation that people are living with. This has changed our idea of what community is radically.

For brands this is of vital importance. Take the riots that took place in South Africa last year. A lot of that is based on the fact that many brands have not been engaging in communities in a way that the people who consume their products and services feel like they are part of the community. That's why you had one brand being ransacked at the mall and another one completely untouched.

Then there's the changing face of the African consumer altogether. We want to demystify the myths around the African customer, which because of Covid, have expanded to new ridiculous levels as well as look at what are the differences between the things African customers want and what they need now.

The younger generation, which is the centrepiece of what we do, has focused for the last two years on GenZ, and then GenZA. This year we are focusing on the African GenZ.

It's all good talking about the community and the African customer, but looking ahead, which is what trends are about, it is what this new young generation going to look and feel like, and how brands need to approach them. Our experience shows that is bad news for brands in the sense that the youth in African countries are all vastly different. Brands like a standardised approach, but that won't work here.



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■ ***You define your business as a cultural intelligence business. How is that different to research or insight?***

Intelligence is an increase in the ability of the average brand to be able to live in their customer shoes and to be able to do that without any bias or bringing in any misinformed notions of changes happening with customers.

There are three high-level elements that make this up: anthropology, which looks at the past (human behaviour), consumer research which looks at the present, and trend forecasting, which says because of Covid we don't know what is going to happen in six months. We look at it holistically by merging these elements into something that can help us understand the future.

■ ***How do you go about identifying trends and has this process changed?***

Back in the day, it was so much easier. We had our trendsetters in some of the markets that we knew were the early adopters, knowing we would be seeing the same thing here in five or six months.

These days that does not really work and the reason is the democratisation of the internet, which is now at the point where the people we would have been calling the laggards or the late majority, now have so much more influence than they use to have in the past, often creating the big trends.

Music is not coming from people from the most expensive music schools in the world, it is coming from the township from a guy who has produced a beat with his pan.

We are finding this throughout the arts and in business with a proliferation of innovative ideas coming from segments of the market we use to just give products to.

This is exciting, but it meant that we have had to change our model and go into those places to create



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■ What does this mean for agencies who are working for brands who want to sell their products and services into these markets?

One of the biggest challenges that agencies are facing is the democratisation of tools that they were able to hang onto for years.

There is Tik Tok and Instagram and everyone is into video content. On Facebook, you have a lot of locally produced campaigns, where the people themselves are the platforms. Today the average person has the capacity to put together a video that is more impactful and has a bigger hit than an agency produced campaign.

Some of the biggest campaigns that agencies are producing are not when they come with ideas, it's when they provide content-generating platforms for everyday people to create those ideas.

■ Where does this leave brands?

Marketing 101 says the brand is the hero, not anymore – the people are the hero and brands are able to support them. Previously we plugged into the brand value, while these brand values are still important, they must find ways to plug into the communities' values.

That's a complete change in how the world works. Brands are not starting movements anymore, they are joining movements and giving that movement an extra push into the direction they want to go. A fitting example is Nike with Colin Kaepernick. That was not Nike's campaign, it's someone doing it and Nike has gotten behind it, saying we see you and we want to help.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

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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