

The 'sound' of Africa

 By [Sampa Diseko](#)

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Africa is entrenched in oral storytelling, movement and vocal expression. Marketers need to engage with the source of that sound.

Some 'different' thoughts on Africa:

1. Reclaim the funk

The South African electronic music culture is extremely powerful, influential and loved not only in Africa, but throughout Europe. An industry that often pumps some of the hippest, hottest and coolest beats is going un-credited. 'Gcom,' the KZN flavour with a heavier base has broken through the speakers and is truly representing a different flair, and this is only one of many. So often are these electronic and music trends layered with local vocals and appreciated by the crowds of 'cool' and those up-and-coming. The song is then ripped and repeated globally, but the vocals are stripped and removed. Unnoticed and unaccredited.

The culture interest amongst Africans from different demographic backgrounds is strengthening and so is the integration between art forms, which will feed the 'African trademark of sound' so as to ensure to be recognised globally. Marketers looking to learn about Africa need to engage with the source of sound, because we are entrenched in oral storytelling, movement and vocal expression. This avenue is increasing, with more cultural groups having the option to engage in this art form as a respectful avenue to build one's future.

2. The future of nostalgia

The current speed and integration of technology is reshaping what we know about nostalgia and the degree of influence nostalgia has in relationships it forms with consumers. The current youth between the ages of 10 - 24 years old account for 1.8 billion of people in the world, and they are growing up in the age of instant communication and engagement. Nostalgia is generally framed and explained under a duration of time where a brand and consumer builds and establishes deeper connections. These relationships often have deeper meaning, not only because of the product, but the context of engagement.

Yet, with the speed of instant communication, nostalgic relationship building is becoming difficult. Brands that have been able to hone and create products that have been entrenched before this immense technological injection and necessity for instant gratification will be the brands that truly have an additional point to leverage off of, as a value-added point of difference. We believe we will be moving towards authentic nostalgia. Marketers must not get confused between heritage and old, neither should there be confusion between point of emotional relevance and repetitive consumption.

3. The gap between educating and communicating

Southern Africa and Africa is on the 'list' for multinationals' expansion plans. In an economically lean market, supply, production and ease of operation is also lean. In the time of tighter marketing budgets, we see that global campaigns are tweaked ever so slightly so as to slip into the African market. It saves time, saves money and sure, it may make overall business sense, but it doesn't always make brand sense. Things cost more and the point of differentiation in FMCG is becoming increasingly tougher.

The next two years is in no way going to be financially easier, as we are expecting financial constraints. The constant strengthening of the middle-income bracket is growing rapidly and their behaviour and product purchase cycles are changing, but the degree of understanding and rationale on how to consume or use the product is lagging. There is still a big gap behind product knowledge amongst consumers, and running an advert that is merely based on a global campaign driving the 'feeling' of the brand, will do very little to shift and change usage patterns.

The magic will be between the traditional production function messaging and the brand-driven essence. Soft points of communication will assist in recalling the brand, and product knowledge will assist in driving conviction when the consumer is at shelf.

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