

Afrobeats, the new frontier for marketers

By  Danette Breitenbach

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#BizTrends2022 speaker, Franklin Ozeckhome calls Afrobeats music and its signature pop sound the new frontier for marketers, strategists, and brand custodians working in youth-centric sectors and with youth-focused brands.



Over the past decade Afrobeats has evolved from a music genre to a lifestyle movement that is now integrated into every fabric of society, inspiring the youth, and brands across industries and business sectors.

“It is a panacea for designing human-centric solutions that go beyond advertising and the orthodox communication model between brands and consumers,” Lagos-based trends and innovation consultant, and founder of Identitree, Ozeckhome, told the audience at the #BizTrends2022 virtual event hosted by Bizcommunity on Wednesday, 2 February 2022.

Ozeckhome's inspiration comes from his 15-plus years in strategy and insights planning, which saw him evolve as a writer/publisher to media planning at mediaReach OMD and then, advertising at Insight Publicis before moving beyond this to embracing an understanding of lifestyle and pop culture trends.

Where life happens

“The advertising process tends to go through a pre-determined process: from strategy to creative, and from media to production. It is a linear progression that limits strategic and design thinking,” he says.

“We need to develop and adapt human-centric marketing processes for designing solutions that embrace consumer lifestyle journeys from sunrise to sunset which is a true and authentic reflection of how people live their lives,” he explains.

He adds that advertising is limited not only in how it drives communication but how it tries to inspire.

“We try so hard to sell the “big idea”, the “point of view”, the “brand purpose” – all which emanates from a marketing and campaign-driven angle. Once we have established a connection, encoded a message, and made a sale with our intended audience, what happens next?”

For him, it is about moving from linear integration (communication) to lifestyle integration (pop culture) which embraces a wholly intrinsic start-off point covering cultural trends, consumer trends, and market trends.

“Then we can go on to create entirely new experiences that include storytelling and communication, but might also be about commerce, such as designing new products, services, processes, products, programmes and platforms that we ordinarily couldn’t have phantomed by merely communicating a product benefit.

“That is where the human integration process comes in, and what we have observed happening now in regard to Afropop music, which is being driven by the Afrobeats sound,” he says.

Everything that defines us today as a people, a nation, a continent is highly influenced by pop culture. “What we see, hear, do, advocate, distribute, recommend, share, experience and discuss ultimately affects how we transact, manage, and recode business across every sector - automotive, travel, luxury, retail, food, energy, wellness, telecoms, and fintech. It all starts from pop culture,” says Ozekhome.

Being a star

“A common thread that I have noticed in every metropolitan city that I have worked in, across different regions in Africa, is the underlying belief and pursuit for ‘stardom’.

While he says there is this constant hunger for more; and everyone wants to be a star, this is not in the sense of public celebrity but one of internal self-determination.

“A proof to peers, family and community that you can achieve success. Everyone wants to stand out in their own little way. It starts with the little things that move me from my reality to my dream.”

“From inspiration to aspiration; people want to connect with other people, brands, communities and networks so they can get from point A to point B,” he explains.

This is the common trait that he has seen is most evident in countries like Rwanda, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and Kenya. “It comes through in conversations, discussions, gists and formal and informal chats with teens, adults, students, business owners, and military officers,” he says.

An example is [Wizkid](#), who has moved on from representing pop culture to being the “pop” of culture. He thrives as a human platform that encompasses music and sound, models for fashion brands, runs his own clothing line, endorses mobile telecoms, luxury and beverage brands.

He has a 360 perspective that serves as a pivot for constant integration and meaningful connection with his audience. His sound is that singular thing that has brought all of these other lifestyle components together which is deliberate by design.

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A trend journey

Ozekhome views this trend journey through a lens of inspiration to aspiration, and from Africa to the world.

“It is the movement of individual needs and wants into a metaverse of opportunities, where one can embrace an unlimited sphere of ideas, of inspirations, of capabilities, and of being able to move across verticals and horizontals.”

To get there as well as embrace a purposeful journey of constant growth and empowerment, consumers will look out for brands and platforms that will provide them with the requisite tools, utilities and programmes that they can readily tap into to make their aspirations come alive.

“Today, it’s not only about the enjoyment of the afrobeat sounds and beats, but understanding the cultural meaning and signals every song dimensions,” he says.

“The dance, the lyrics, the choice of dialects, accents, word repetition, the visual montage, the orchestration of body movement in consonance with the background environment symbolises a universe of opportunities for future-thinking brands to leverage for consumer marketing,” he explains.

To really create influence, he says have to go beyond influencer marketing as is currently practised to influencing culture, movements and behaviour, and it is lifestyle integration that is the OS for humankind and the future of marketing.

“Afrobeats is a cultural representation of being given access, wings and affirmation to do great things; to be in a space where you can transform visions to the now and possibilities to capabilities to make things happen whenever and wherever I want it,” he explains.

It is about taking from the past and recrafting for the future, learning from the present, and using it as a springboard to create new futures. “This is a common thread across the continent and brands need to look at how they can not only inspire but create human springboards to birth stars, and lifestyle integration is the key to unlocking this,” he concludes.

Franklin Ozekhome is the founder of Identiture, a Lagos-based trends and innovation consultancy. He is an African pop culture specialist, trend and consumer intelligence researcher. Follow [@donniefranklin](#) [@identiture](#)

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

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