

@Marketing4Youth #Africa

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Brands should have a bad case of FOMO* when it comes to marketing to the youth in Africa, because if you engage with the youth market now you could potentially have a customer for life. Africa has the youngest population in the world, with around 200 million people between the ages of 15 and 24 and more people under the age of 20 than anywhere else in the world. The population is set to double to two billion by 2050 and as the workforce grows and education improves, there is huge potential for economic growth and development.



Life on the continent is changing. Mobile has leapfrogged over the lack of infrastructure in Africa, connecting the youth to the global village by giving them access to information that previous generations did not have. Mobiles are central to life in Africa and many people make huge sacrifices to recharge their phones, even skipping meals. In some African countries more people have access to a mobile phone than to clean water or electricity. Phone penetration has increased from 1% in 2000 to 54% in 2012. With around 650 million mobile users, the continent is witnessing one of the biggest increases in mobile data usage across the globe, and forecasts suggest mobile internet traffic will increase 20-fold by the end of the decade.

Africa's youth use mobile phones for everything: communicating, listening to the radio, entertainment (such as Kulahappy in Kenya or AfriNolly in Nigeria), gaming, music (mobile music is a multimillion dollar industry in Nigeria), as well as banking, shopping, social media and more. Access to social networks and crisis mapping technologies such as Ushahidi have given them a platform for self-expression and civic participation that has impacted elections, governance and accountability.

Millward Brown has conducted lots of research across Africa, so we can share with you the ABCs of understanding the Ys and Zs! Although Africa is a huge continent with dozens of cultures, we find this generation has more in common with each other because of global influences (despite local differences). Technology is the unifying factor - even those who have not had access to it, hear about it and desire to access it - and global brands can play a great role in bringing cultures together.

Described as *screenagers* and the first tribe of true digital natives, today's youth are always connected and always on. To many, traditional marketing channels are so old school. Why watch TV when you can download off the internet? Why buy magazines when you can get the content online and for free? Plus you can engage with it in ways that you can't with traditional media.

A US study suggests that today's youth are smarter, safer, more mature and want to make the world a better place. UK studies say this generation is tolerant and broad-minded with a global and multicultural view. South African youth say issues like environment, health and community are increasing in importance. The internship era has arrived, with bursaries and learnerships identified as desired community development programmes. Brands engaging on these platforms are seen to build better equity and empower the youth to make an impact on their world.

The youth want to please their parents but fit in with their peer group simultaneously. Teens in particular want to stand out

from the crowd with whatever they can use to put them ahead and brands can help the youth fit in yet 'stand out' in a way that elevates their social standing.

Studies we've done in African countries show young Africans are ambitious and want education to fuel their ambitions. They aspire towards a college or university education to secure a good profession (that safeguards them from poverty). There exists a hustling mentality and when you talk to the youth, you hear responses like "I am a student at university but also sell *Mitumba* clothes to my friends"; "I am studying computer science. In the village I keep rabbits for sale". They want to control their economic future and realise they cannot rely on the government's promise of jobs. They tend to take more risks than their older counterparts and are more likely to challenge norms and sociopolitical processes that hinder economic development. Fear of failure lurks and there's a constant battle to ensure they do not fall into the ugly jaws of poverty. A study in Kenya and the DRC reveals their top fears include poor health, AIDS, unemployment, and poverty or poor living standards.

What do they spend their money on? A youth study we did in Kenya shows: 46% airtime, 25% food, 4% clothing, 4% personal effects, 3% soft drinks, 2% savings, 2% stationery, 2% cosmetics. Where do they play on the net? 85% social networks, 54% entertainment (gaming, music, etc.), 37% emails and 21% viewing job information or job searching.

The digital revolution has had a profound change on advertising. Youth advertising is more about connecting with them and not just communicating to them. Successful youth brands have an association with key passion points for youth: technology, gaming, music, sports and fashion. Social media, events and sponsorships are great platforms to connect (and empower them).

Brands wanting to engage with the youth should hang out in their world, on their terms, and need to be more than a product. Youth brands should be rewarding and reciprocal. They need to be part of their lives and identities and amplify what they are doing to make it better. Young people want to have fun, reflected in their YOLO* attitude. Brands can benefit from this by using experiential marketing to project a fun brand image and involve the youth in new product development and co-creation.

Social networking, today's word of mouth, is essential when you're selling to the youth. Social media allows brands to become part of the conversation and one of the best ways to secure a long-term, ongoing relationship with young people is to start listening (rather than talking). There isn't huge loyalty to particular social networks though. For them, a social network is like clubbing - you go there with your friends so long as it's cool.

The digital playground of the youth like YouTube, Google, Skype and Wikipedia, set a high benchmark in IT for other brands, so don't disappoint them with the bad use of tech. And don't forget value! Young Africans are becoming increasingly brand conscious, but with a limited budget, they want value! They look for a balance between good quality and affordability. Loyalty programmes, instant prizes and promotions are big! But be transparent and don't make claims and promises you can't live up to.

There are no hard and fast rules about youth marketing in Africa. Teens are constantly shifting in preference and attention, so marketers need to stay relevant and keep up with the trends. Brands need to be exciting to capture their short attention span; because what is cool can change overnight. And they don't want brands to just sell, they want brands to entertain and inspire them by being interesting or funny or relevant or cool or different. Be predictable or boring and you will lose their attention. The truly successful brand will give them things they don't even know they want yet!

And finally, although the internet has changed the game of advertising, the big idea is still key to great advertising no matter who the generation. A great idea will always sell and connect. Everything else is really about the mechanics of ad delivery and how to engage with the idea!

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*FOMO - *fear of missing out*

*YOLO - *you only live once*

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