

Social activism and trench marketing FTW

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While TBWA is focused on disruption to grow our client business in Africa, the following trends are bound to be top of mind in the year ahead.



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1. Social activism Africa

This has been somewhat of an international phenomenon for some time, but we are seeing it more and more across the continent. Consumers are seeing things that they don't like and then banding together via social media to voice their concerns or frustrations, sometimes to quite dramatic effect.

We have seen this very recently in SA with the student protests against fees and against Woolworths against Israeli food imports. In Kenya, [#someoneTellCNN](#) became popular after CNN called Kenya 'a hotbed of terror', just before the Obama visit. Public opinion forced CNN to send their global VP to come and personally apologise to the Kenyan president. There's also a Twitter group called [Kenyans on Twitter](#) (KoT), who have raised issues about DStv subscription rates ([#boycottDStv](#)):

“ EPL is back to compact+ starting 1st Dec, 2015. [@ConsumersKenya](#) the [#BoycottDstv](#) paid off. Cc: [@DStv_Kenya](#) [pic.twitter.com/PCtTyUW7zH](#)- Otiego (@_Otiego) [November 28, 2015](#) ”

In Zimbabwe, there was social media outcry against Dairibord (Maheu) regarding the quality of one of their sorghum-based drinks. There was a huge response on Facebook.

In Botswana, there's Facebook page that lets consumers [name and shame brands](#). There are few instances on Twitter, where popular opinion has become quite significant, especially if the commentary is started by those with a more significant social media following.

Ghana has seen similar activity. Examples are 'Old Students of Achimota' coming together to sign a petition against the sale of school lands. "Occupy Flagstaff House" was another campaign, organised on social media, protesting against harsh economic conditions in the country.

Tanzania has not yet seen major consumer activism, however, there are hints consumers will soon follow suit. Telecommunication consumers are also taking their grievances to social media. This happened recently when Vodacom's internet services were down and they did not communicate it to their customers. Consumers took to social media to "loudly" express their dissatisfaction to the brand.

A few countries are more muted in this regard. In Angola, for example, there remain concerns over being too publically outspoken, therefore consumer activism has not really reached the same levels. But across other African countries this is something we are likely to see much more of as consumer confidence grows more and more people find their voice and have access to social platforms.

Trench-marketing

2015 has been a tough year for Africa, based on floods, drought, the sustained low oil price, Chinese slowdown leading to lower commodity prices across the board, currency devaluations, continued threat of terrorism, and key elections that have not really changed things for people. All of this is likely to see a broad-based contraction in many economies, or certainly see them experiencing far slower growth than we have seen in recent years. While there will be exceptions, the "Africa Rising" narrative is losing some of its luster and an "Africa-leveling off" might be a more accurate moniker.

As a result, we are likely to see marketers fighting harder to keep their share of the pie. They are going to look for more cost-effective ways of doing things and putting much demand on agencies to respond to their more austere reality. Could this lead to marketers demanding more of us creatively, so that they achieve a greater bang for buck? Or will the default be to drive highly functional messaging and conservatism for fear of not ticking all the boxes?

App Africa

Although smart phones still have limited penetration throughout the continent, their proliferation is growing rapidly - especially with the lower cost imports that are beginning find their way into many African countries. As these become more and more prevalent, we can expect to see growth in "made for Africa, by Africa" applications that cater very specifically to the African consumer and their environments.

In Botswana, we are beginning to see a lot of young people develop apps and solutions for mobiles. One point in case is an app called "Modisar", which just won funding from Orange Botswana. The app is designed to help farmers in Botswana manage their livestock better.

There is another app being developed to help farmers get access to market for their livestock. It is USSD-based and its

purpose is to connect a farmer to a buyer through a mobile phone. There are similar versions in Ghana, Kenya and Cameroon.

In Ghana and Nigeria there are apps to help people spot fake drugs. In East Africa, the apps are finding their ways into the local social and entertainment scenes. For example, in Tanzania, the Mzikii app lets you download songs and listen to them later, even if you are offline. In Kenya and Uganda, the [HelloFood app](#) give you access to a food delivery service that access restaurants across Nairobi and Kampala.

Again, some countries lag behind others, and this trend tends to be more prevalent in the larger, more digitally savvy centres. In Ghana, for example, MTN hosts an annual competition for the best app ideas.

Financial future-facing

This is possibly a trend to watch in years to come, but not something that is showing significant up-take in more than a few of the more financially mature markets.

Although banking is one of the fastest growing sectors across the continent, the support services such as insurance and wealth management are not showing the same degree of expansion. With a growing financial sector, in years to come are we likely to see a greater demand for financial planning for the future as people protecting their assets in a more formal way.

Most markets feel that we are a few years off from this becoming a reality, but as financial institutions start to educate their consumers about financial awareness and more western notions of wealth creation, we'll start to see a change...

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