

Connecting with the mass market and creating a shared purpose

Issued by [Joe Public](#)

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We live in a world that is rapidly changing. Every day more and more channels, options and ideas come to life, allowing us to access the latest technological advances as well as the latest devices every few months, at only a moment's notice.

This technological pace, also a product of cheaper manufacturing options, has led to the majority of the mass market moving to smartphones and tablets. Which of course begs the question: How do brands digitally target these new markets? The answer is far simpler than you think. It's about talking and listening to the consumer in a social media space.

Looking back

Agencies used to sneak in the odd colloquial ekasi term to appeal to the township demographic, but today this is simply not enough, as more and more markets are becoming 'connected'. Typical ekasi expressions that are used are derived from specific cultures, cliques and neighbourhoods, which means you need to understand the people before you attempt to speak their language. Looking back we missed deep, rich insights into the market. One clique may say, "Ayoba!" but another won't.

Looking forward

The digital revolution has made ekasi and street cultures far more textured and complex. But, the streets give creatives the chance to immerse themselves in the culture i.e. Back to the City, Thesis, Street Cred, The Cape Town Electronic Music Festival. These are all events where the most influential people of our time hang out and connect.

We need to start learning from the people who are at the forefront of these trends, the Braam kids who know what is what on the streets, the homies from ekasi who prove that township frequency is still a thing. Social influencer, Phindile Thengani, who has started a photo fashion series on her Instagram page, is a prime example of how we could be learning from the streets every day.

Phindile has teamed up with Adidas Originals South Africa and, on a Sunday of her choice, she has an exhibition on Instagram where she shares her latest images and fashion designs. What's interesting is that there are usually little or no Adidas products in her shoots. Instead, her exhibition showcases the influence the brand has on other brands and the consumer.

The role of digital advertising

As a brand your digital agency should strive to create content that is entrenched in the consumer's needs and desires. To speak and connect authentically we need a shared purpose.

Like Phindile and Adidas.

Adopting a shared purpose has also allowed street art and fashion for example, to evolve in new ways. Brands are now working hand in hand with consumers to create new looks and new pieces of artwork. And just as influencers use brands, so too do brands use influencers as we talk more and share more.

A few months ago Adidas launched a new shoe called the NMD. Adidas combined Instagram influencers with iconic artists from major cities around world. Creatives were given a chance to take images of the shoe in iconic spaces in their cities,

culminating in international, city-wide exhibitions. The shoe was in instant success and Adidas recorded its highest quarterly results ever.

How do you create content that has a shared purpose?

You start by generating content that changes the consumer's lifestyle. Consumers today want something to belong to, they want to influence and engage with whatever they come in contact with.

This pushes brands to be more human than ever. The current tide of digital marketing is no longer about regurgitating information and assimilating trends. Consumers can now challenge brands to do more, say more and be more.

Brands need to look for the opportunity to move from the outer peripheral of society and debunk the idea that there is an 'us and them'. We know that our content is successful when the purpose of our campaigns becomes the purpose of our consumers. That is what every brand that chooses to exist in the social sphere should strive for. It's about working hand in hand with consumers – we learn from them, they learn from us – and we talk. Together we can create products that do more than just serve the purpose of consumption.

Today it has become more evident than ever that consumers are no longer just consumers, they are co-creators. They participate, like, share, comment and create. When we start a conversation, and ultimately share a purpose, then together we can create something of truly great value for both our consumers and our brands.

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