

One size doesn't fit all: Advice for brands seeking to access the African market

By [Candice Robertson](#), issued by [Wavemaker](#)

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When entering a new market, brands have to do a lot of intensive research. They need to test the market thoroughly to see how their brand will perform, examine consumers' habits, assess their local competitors and decide how best to make their mark. It's never an easy journey. This process can be particularly challenging in the African market, which many brands, especially global brands, battle to access.



Image source: Clarke Sanders on Unsplash

There are an abundance of opportunities for brands to grow in Africa, but the question is: How?

After working on a global FMCG brand that has a huge footprint in Africa, I've learnt a lot about what matters when it comes to accessing the African market. One of the most important things brands need to understand, and a defining feature in how we guide our clients in this sector, is this: one size doesn't fit all. Many brands use a blanket approach when it comes to marketing and market penetration, and that isn't necessarily how you should approach working in Africa.

Different markets come with different consumers, market operations and regulations, currency and exchange rates, levels of market inflation and price structures. Every market also has its own challenges, which is why it's important to have a detailed understanding of the landscape. This is your first guide in deciding how and what media to use to engage with your consumers.

Markets can be grouped according to the similarities in their landscapes, which might assist brands in their approach. But tailoring messaging and language to markets more specifically shows consumers that brands care about them and are not using a broad-based global message that doesn't talk to the audience.



One of the biggest things that Africa lacks is data. While established markets such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Mauritius have detailed insights available, markets like Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia, Angola and Swaziland have very little to no data available. In these instances, you'll need to rely on what you are able to find or, even better, form a relationship with a local partner agency that understands the market, and can guide you what works and what doesn't.

Working in Africa has always excited me because you're always learning something new. It's amazing how different markets compare to one another. If brands take the time to properly understand these unique landscapes, and tailor their messaging accordingly, they are likely to find long-lasting brand loyalty among their consumers in Africa.

About the author



Candice Robertson is the client lead, media strategist at Wavemaker South Africa.

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