

Tamron SA's newly appointed brand ambassador Shawn Ogulu

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Not a brand manager per se, but a well-known photographer and branded content creator who has made a name for himself in the social media sphere. Shawn Ogulu was recently announced as the brand ambassador for Tamron SA and has done some remarkable work with brands across the tourism and travel space, locally and abroad, the airline space, and so much more.

Ogulu is based in Durban, but travels extensively showcasing the country and the world we live in through his content – both for himself personally and for local brands.



Shawn Ogulu

Here, he tells us more about his career with respect to brands and what's in it for them harnessing the power of storytelling through content to build long-term brand loyalty and as a form of advertising...

■ Shawn, you are a branded content creator. Tell us more about this role and what it entails exactly.

Being a branded content creator means I get to work with awesome brands across South Africa, and worldwide, to create unique content that tells the brand's story or a campaign through my lens.

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[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Shawn Ogulu (@shawnogulu)



■ Social media – I'm assuming Instagram is your preferred platform? Why, and what's your 'secret' to Instagram success?

Instagram became my preferred platform mostly by chance. I just loved to travel and eventually decided to teach myself how to take photos, and Instagram happened to be the best place to share my photos. I fell in love with the photography and the community of people that social media provides.

My 'secret' to Instagram has been consistency and improvement. I'm also very strict when it comes to deciding what makes the cut and what doesn't from a content perspective. I'm basically my harshest critic.

■ You were recently announced as a brand ambassador for Tamron SA and have done some incredible work with brands across the tourism and travel space in SA and abroad. Tell us more about your experience and more specifically your new role as brand ambassador for Tamron.

I've loved traveling since a young age so I consider myself very lucky to have worked with various brands, tourism boards in South Africa and overseas (like SA Tourism, Danish Tourism and Faroe Islands Tourism). One of the most amazing ways to profile a destination and experiences is through striking visuals and powerful visual content.

I've actually been working with Tamron for two years and have given talks and represented the brand at events in the past. This ambassadorship is more of a formalisation of our relationship. It's great to work with a brand I personally believe in and I'm looking forward to creating more content with their lenses. We have some exciting things planned for the months ahead – keep an eye out.

■ What other brands have you worked on to date?

SA Tourism, Emirates, Huawei, BMW, CNN to name a few.

■ Tell us about your work on these brands.

I helped Huawei create a TV ad to launch one of their phones where the ad was shot completely on the phone and at the time was the only region-specific ad they had ever done anywhere in the world. It also sparked a partnership between Huawei and SA Tourism.

With BMW we did a cross country road trip for the launch of their X3 range in South Africa. We got to be the first people in the country to drive the car.

I helped shoot a product launch for SYRP (a New Zealand-based photography company) in Iceland, one of my most incredible trips to date. I was a brand ambassador for them at the time.

■ ***How has the pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns affected your work and especially as a freelancer?***

It's been devastating, especially because most of my clients were in the travel/tourism space. There was a six to seven-month period where I didn't do a single job. Most of the jobs I did end up doing last year were more corporate jobs, so I'm at least fortunate to be able to still work in that way.

■ ***How do you go about marketing yourself and securing work (do you approach brands directly or do they usually approach you, etc.)?***

Both. For me, marketing myself means just creating content that I love for myself. That in turn attracts the sort of brands that have a similar vision to me. I do also reach out to brands who I love though.

■ ***In times like these, where industries across the board have felt the effects of the pandemic, the value of brands harnessing the power of unique and powerful storytelling through content has never been greater to get and hold people's attention, and really create a feeling or emotion to build long-term brand loyalty. Please elaborate.***

In a content saturated world, it is more difficult than ever to get people's attention. I'd say there isn't a specific type of image that encourages people to engage, but rather, the image needs to tell a compelling story, be of a high quality and technically good, and be visually appealing. This combination is likely to keep people more engaged.

The most important thing as a brand is the story you're telling. That's what we as users connect to. Content is one of the most direct and valuable mediums for that story. Good content can be a window while bad content can be a hindrance.

■ ***Comment on the power of branded content as a form of advertising.***

Branded content has been proven to be more effective than traditional advertising; for me it's a case of recall. For example, if I see an ad before a video on YouTube, all I'm doing is waiting for the skip button to appear so I can get to the content I actually want to see. In that case the ad is seen as not much more than an obstacle.

On the other hand, if the content creator has integrated the same product in a creative way, I'm far more likely to remember the product, recall the features of the product and view the product in a favorable light.

■ ***What do you enjoy most about working in this space?***

My number one priority for as long as I can remember has been to travel. That's why I got into this space, and it's still the thing I enjoy the most.

■ ***Any career highlights you'd like to share.***

I've had lots of moments where I look back and think, "Did I actually do that?". But the biggest highlight for me is whenever a stranger comes up to me or sends me a message saying I inspired them to travel to a specific place, or just in general.

■ ***If you were mentoring a future you, what career advice would you give to aspiring young marketing and branding professionals?***

Always make time to create something you love and work with brands that share that love with you. Know your worth and don't compromise on the things that are important to you. And most importantly, treat every project as an opportunity to learn something and meet new people.

Visit Shawn's website at shawnogulu.com and follow him on [Instagram](#).

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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