

Telling Africa's stories empathetically

By  Danette Breitenbach

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It is empathetic trend research that changes data to insights, which tells stories for the greater good as opposed to the binary of data.



This is the opinion of Dali Tembo, CEO of The Culture Foundry Co, who believes trends should provide brands with insight empathetically. "Today there is so much data - more than at any other time in the world. While data gives us information on our customers and what they are doing, it falls dramatically short in delivering much-needed context and empathy," says Tembo, speaking at the recent #BizTrends2022 event.

"We do this by merging anthropology (past behaviour), consumer research (present behaviour) and insight around trends forecasting (future behaviour). This gives us cultural intelligence, which is the ability to be in someone else's shoes and see the world through their eyes," explains Tembo.

A changed trend adoption

The trend adoption curve has changed. “Before big trends came to the continent from overseas; today the big trends are originating in Africa, and it is coming from the so-called ‘have nots’. Africa is no longer accepting and consuming products from the world simply because it comes from the West,” he says.

Young Africans are changing the flow of trends from the West, based on their survival and environments and what they want. This is turning the myth of Africa having an inferiority complex on its head. “We are no longer the world’s dumping ground and today we are the ones dominating music genres, for example, and contributing to the world,” he adds.

Bizcommunity · Dali Tembo – Trends: A bridge between brands and people

Trends for Africa

If trends are the bridge between brands and people, what are the trends in Africa that brands can tap into?

- **New community – chosen families:** Family is no longer defined as the people you are born into and physically located with. Young people are choosing their families and tribes based on where they feel safe and comfortable. They are segmenting themselves according to their shared values, forming cultural hubs, empowering each other. This is making life difficult for marketers. In Nigeria we find [waf.](#), the country’s first skateboarding and extreme sports company celebrating subcultures. In South Africa, we see it in the queer community, who established safe underground spaces and imagined creations that fashion and retail brands are tapping into. Brands that support these communities enable them to have an impact on society.
- **Tribal revival - communities with strong values:** This is what makes us and communities unique and this changing narrative is something brands can tap into.
- **Higher purpose: collaboration of values:** We have been talking about this for two to three years, but for the African customer it is incredibly significant. If a brand chooses this path its values must live with the purpose in a respectful

manner. Spar has taken on gender-based violence, but it has done so in collaboration with its brand values.

- **Progression: inspiration vs aspiration:** Not always in a western perspective but what our future can look at. Brands are focused into aspiration but need to be more inspiration focused.
- **Control. Aligning values:** #ShutItAllDown and #FeesMustFall are revolutions happening in our time. Again, a brand's values must align with this if it wants to get involved. This generation is not only fighting the system, but they are also trying to change it completely. How relevant is your brand to this, especially as in the next five years these young people may be your core market?
- **The outer limits - breaking boundaries and escaping into your imagination:** I started seeing this two years ago. It is happening in gender, colour, and the way people are changing the narrative. It is in the digital space. Before young people hustled on street corners, now their hustle is digital. Gaming centres are growing in popularity and young people are trading in crypto.
- **Influx of influence- a new centre of gravity:** Africa is no longer looking to the West for inspiration and aspiration; that is coming from us. Nigeria is replacing America as the place where influencers come from. Brands need to open their minds to this and collaborate to produce products and services, helping to reinvent how we are seen.

Dali Tembo is the CEO and co-founder of global consumer insights agency The Culture Foundry Co, providing strategic guidance to corporations across Africa, the UK, the US and MEA. Follow [@dalitembo](#) [The Culture Foundry](#)

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Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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