

An uncomfortable world

By  Danette Breitenbach

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In same the way as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Revolutions did, the 4th Revolution is creating discomfort around the globe.



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As old gives way to new and as we wrestle with this discomfort, we are experiencing a social backlash against this change. “Evidence of this Trump’s election and Britain’s exit from the European Union (Brexit) as well as social unrest and the resurgence of independence movements around the world,” says Guy Lundy, senior client partner in Korn Ferry's Johannesburg office, where he leads the Consumer & Retail sector across Southern Africa.

Resurgence of superheroes

This is typical of the discomfort people feel when massive change occurs, he adds. With this comes the wish that someone will rescue us. “We become wishful thinkers as we wish someone would rescue us from this and therefore we are seeing so many superhero movies,” he says.

The first superhero was Superman and he came about at the time of the Great Depression just before World War II. “Today’s superhero resurgence is in reaction to the social environment, and economic and political changes the world is going through,” he explains.

“Oddly enough this has also led to a strong resurgence of flat-earthers, especially on social media and in memes,” he adds.

Changing of the guard

Political change is taking place as the old establishment is rapidly being replaced by a new type of leader. Examples include Brazil, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

“Replacing the old guard are on the one side, the strong men (Putin and Trump) as people are willing to accept a more hard-line leadership. On the other side are the new hope leaders in France, Canada, Angola, and even in South Africa with Cyril Ramaphosa, who have a new way of doing things,” he says.

At the same time deep global power shifts are taking place in the world. China is doing what the United States (US) did after the WW2 in Europe, that is investing in countries with less infrastructure to lift the economic growth in these countries. “The idea is to have a road, the old silk road, that is an infrastructural connection between Europe and China. What we need to ask ourselves is how do we take advantage of this so that it does not pass us by,” Lundy says.



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Africa's growth continuum

Africa is changing. For the past 50 to 60 years the continent has gone through tough times but now, post-Cold War Africa is in the process of changing and moving to become a more stable continent he says. “It is still a risky place, but it is more stable as democracy and macroeconomics ramp up with investors coming in.”

He adds that the continent is on a growth continuum. “Infrastructure has created a new consumer on the continent and we are starting to see real consumer spending. Money is moving into ICT and Banking as well as increasingly into manufacturing on the continent. The eastern side of Africa – the Indian Ocean belt – is a hot spot for investment for manufacturing and as it becomes more expensive to produce goods in China, jobs are shifting to cheaper markets such as Ethiopia. This growth continuum is circling around Africa and is not a once-off effect; it is self-sustaining. It is still early days, but it is something that should be on your radar.”

South Africa is somewhat of a mixed bag in this scenario. “Corruption in a deep form has settled in and has to be rooted out and while political change is underway, with the election coming up we will see increased social unrest.”

There is movement, but the country has a low growth. However, the ratings downgrades are on hold for now which instils some confidence. What the country has is a legacy of good infrastructure he adds. “If you visit Lagos and Kenya then you will appreciate just how good the country’s infrastructure is and we need to use it to reaccelerate our growth.”

Lundy was a guest speaker at the recent Manufacturing Indaba. This is Part 1 of his presentation 'South Africa and the world beyond 2020'. [Read Part 2 here.](#)

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

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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