

Africa's youth are living in a time of renaissance

By [Natasha Omokhodion-Banda](#)

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Being a female, African executive in Africa at this point in time is one of the most rewarding privileges I thank God for. Africa, by nature of its history, has come a long way and has been shaped by various events and nuances over time.



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Working in Africa is highly rewarding, because I feel that I contribute to our continent's growth, and am part of its great story.

Our parents' generation was different to ours – they were focused on more traditional ways of earning a living. They deliberated, reviewed, analysed, and went to school with the aim of getting a job, and 'doing things the right way'.

Our generation is one that investigates, collaborates, and is less afraid of risk and more willing to live through today's uncertainty in order to achieve tomorrow's dream. We are hungry for true economic freedom. Young millennials are solutions-driven, brave enough to try new things and stand up for what they believe in.

How is business being influenced?

Historically, African culture and business has always been influenced by the West, but now we are also playing witness to the contrary; the most recent example being the enormous success of *Black Panther* (something I thought would never happen in my lifetime).

By 'success', I do not only refer to the fiscal results of the film, but also the research and budget that went into the production, creating an amalgamation of African truths evident in its multi-faceted theme. This is an indication that global business is being influenced by Africa, and that we as a continent can no longer be overlooked.

Africa encompasses 54 countries and is the most ethnically and linguistically diverse continent on Earth. Brands like Multichoice have contributed to the integration of African cultures amongst our people, making it borderless and allowing us to have a commonality based on the content we consume across the continent.

Many other satellite channels are growing, such as Kwese. As someone who works in advertising and marketing, I couldn't ask for a better time to be a young executive on this continent.



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In light of this, global business is sitting up and taking notice of Africa in its new capacity of 'influencer', rather than just 'consumer' (by Africa, I include the wider diaspora and the Caribbean).

The future is exciting! I feel proud, optimistic and excited to be here - and at this particular time in history.

I believe that there is a powerful spirit of renewal on the continent. I feel that it did not start recently, but rather that it has come into its own and the momentum is too fast to stop or turn back. You can hear it in conversations from around the continent, you can feel it in the arts, music and literature. Africa's youth are living in a time of renaissance.

Discussions around the 'water cooler'?

It really is a myriad of positive discussions; around business, development challenges and solutions, leadership and the future of Africa.

In this century, the 'water cooler' concept has evolved to new platforms and networks, such as Afrovisionaries on WhatsApp, which was founded by a Pan-Africanist and an old friend from university, Lebogang Chaka. Its membership is made up of young African professionals from around the continent in various disciplines.

More structured groups include, 'The Africa List' (powered by CDC), of which I have recently become a member. The Africa List is creating communities of next generation business leaders in Africa, allowing us to share experiences and network in order to turn our businesses into sustainable world class organisations.

The discussions for Africa will always focus on poverty reduction, sustainability, scaling up the value chain from raw materials to processing, strategies for brain gain versus brain drain, and so much more. But, in all our challenges, the common factor remains the one that keeps us positive and driven – the fact that we are a global growth centre and our potential for excellence allows for unlimited possibility... perhaps more so now than at any other time in Africa's history.

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