

'We have an amazing wealth of talent across our continent,' says Ogilvy South Africa CEO

With more than 1.2 billion people, Africa is the second most populous continent in the world. And with a growing middle class, it has become a target for an increasing number of companies and multinationals looking to grow their profits.



Ogilvy South Africa's Group CEO, Enver Groenewald

The potential payoff for brands is significant, with household spending across Africa worth an estimated \$2.5trn by 2030. But marketing products to this vast consumer base is tricky, and the rapid growth of mobile phone adoption across the continent means international advertising giants like Ogilvy have had to develop new strategies.

CNN's Cyril Vanier spoke with Ogilvy South Africa's Group CEO, Enver Groenewald, about the agency's role on the continent, and how and where advertising dollars will be seen in the future.

Here's an extract of the interview.

■ ***When it started in Africa, the company played a significant role in boosting South Africa's economy and South African companies. Can you talk to us about that?***

Enver Groenewald: The 90s was a period in which we established quite significant growth. After the 1994 elections, there was a lot of pessimism and negativity towards democracy coming to the fore in South Africa, particularly. And off the back of that, I think that Ogilvy really introduced a type of advertising genre that spoke to social justice, that spoke to social unity, that spoke to really celebrating the best of a democratic South Africa.

■ ***Can you give us examples of something that would have been important in terms of Ogilvy's work specific to South Africa's history?***

Groenewald: One of the most seminal examples is the work done for VW ... where we told the story of management and employees coming together at a time in which there were great industrial relations tensions. At the time, that was unheard of because trade unions were in opposition to business owners and management.

This piece of work for VW was surprising in telling the story of how for the success, not only of the company, but the workers in that company and the communities that depended on the success of that company could come together.

The other was for Castle, which still remains one of the most successful beer brands in South Africa, and really positioned itself on the notion of social cohesion and the coming together of groups that up until then had been separated by Apartheid. It celebrated the very best of what I think both Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela promoted: this idea of a rainbow nation. That we were a country made up of very different colours but put together, it made for a beautiful sight.

■ ***Can you talk about the talent in your sector in South Africa and more widely on the African continent. How does that compare to other regions?***

Groenewald: We have an amazing wealth of talent across our continent. I don't think that talent in Africa, particularly from an advertising industry perspective, has to stand back for any other region. Some people may have that perspective that if the advertising doesn't come from a North American perspective or Western European perspective, it's not that great because those territories and regions are the benchmark. I reject that completely. When you look at advertising, communication, creativity through the lens of authenticity, then that levels the playing field.



A mural of advertising agency founder David Ogilvy at the company's offices in Johannesburg.

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I'm talking about African creative talent not trying to emulate any other region but remaining authentic and true to what is intimately African. And I just want to qualify what I mean when I say typically Africa, because Africa is not one country. If you're a creative in Lagos versus a creative in Accra or a creative in Cape Town, you've got very different perspectives and very different definitions of authenticity.

■ ***What does it mean for Ogilvy to be a more than 50% Black-owned company?***

Groenewald: It is probably one of the most important things that characterizes Ogilvy in the context, not only of the

advertising industry in South Africa, but in the context of South Africa as a country and in terms of redressing the imbalances of the past. Being 51% Black-owned is vital in terms of making sure that we are contributing to economic transformation where it's needed most.

■ ***What do you want Ogilvy to accomplish in the next five to 10 years?***

Groenewald: I want Ogilvy to be a force for social change in South Africa. I go back to the idea of us not seeing brands and the power of brands only through the lens of the transactional relationship between the consumer and the product. I think brands can play an eminently powerful role in creating social cohesion and social justice. And that's not only in South Africa - that's globally.

If we look at what we call purpose-led marketing and purpose-led brands, for Ogilvy that has to be the space that we absolutely own and occupy and take a leadership position in because that is absolutely the right thing to do.

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