

Africans for Africans by Africans

By [Nonye Mpho Omotola](#)

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Africa has a population of over 1 billion people, 70% of which are youthful, aspirational and passionate about their continent. The proposition 'Africans for Africans by Africans' has become a dominant force with young people in Africa. It is about change and holding businesses, governments and institutions accountable and so ultimately driving transformation.



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The continent has so many resources, and is blessed with young entrepreneurs and professionals. They are the hope for future generations, and they want to be considered, governed responsibly and provided with opportunities.

Africa is not a country

Every country in Africa is different. The continent is made up of 55 countries, each with its own government, currency, cultures and legacies. So, when communicating in Africa, brands should ensure that they are aware of local cultures and ways of doing business.

There are now several countries that offer a visa on arrival, the opportunity of opening a bank account in 24 hours, or even

the chance of registering a new business promptly. Where businesses have a presence across the continent, messaging should be varied according to a particular country's regulatory environment and language(s). Respect for local content and local people will continue to be key.

Authenticity

Damage to reputation has emerged as the main risk facing companies worldwide. Authenticity rules when communicating for brands. Brands that refuse to adhere will be damaged, as evidenced not just on the corporate front, but in political spheres and even with personal brands.

Ethical behaviour and corporate governance are critical in defining reputation: what you do must be aligned with what you stand for. Everyone wants a relationship that they can trust, so when a brand betrays this, it ultimately affects the bottom line and ruins the relationship, usually irreparably.

2018 will bring an even greater demand for brand reputation management and crisis communications services as companies look to protect brand equity from possible reputational risks.

Online reputation and social media

With the ongoing penetration by social media - blogging, influencer posts, videos, twitter, Facebook - online reputation management and the influence of social media will continue to go hand in hand. Most people have more than one phone, with access to different networks, platforms, groups and communities. WhatsApp, for instance, is the number one messaging platform in South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya.

As we know good news travels fast, but unfortunately bad news spreads even faster. There have been several instances of a viral campaign initiated in one region/country and adapted immediately in another. Crisis management plans should be reset for the digital age and companies must adapt to allegations or developments in real time. With digital and online media becoming more accessible on the continent, it is projected there will be a gradual decline in print. An online communications strategy is integral to any communications mix.

Creating shared value

Other than brands operating for profitability, creating shared value will continue to be critical for business strategy, especially when communicating in Africa. For a continent struggling to ensure it delivers the pillars of sustainable development, businesses can use their competitive advantage for social good, addressing societal needs such as skills development and technology, energy, education and health initiatives.

Integrated communications

Africa is evolving at a rapid pace, with both technology and consumer behaviour at the forefront of this evolution. It is

important that communication and brand specialists adopt an integrated approach to communications in order to remain relevant. Speak to the right audience in the right language in the right way, and media will be a powerful tool for driving change in Africa.

ABOUT NONYE MPHO OMOTOLA

Passionate about African Brands and the growth of Africa's economy.

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