

Joburg to host first Advertising Week Africa

 By [Louise Marsland](#)

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The advertising and marketing industries in Africa needed a cohesive, credible and global platform to galvanise around and so Advertising Week Africa was launched, according to the organisers of the event which comes to the African continent for the first time, in Johannesburg, South Africa, 28-31 October, 2019.



Tosin Lanipekun, executive director of Advertising Week Africa.

Advertising Week Africa is aimed at advertising, creative, entertainment, marketing, media and technology professionals and has a strong theme of youth empowerment. It claims to bring a “new collaborative platform to recognise and celebrate Africa’s contribution to the global industry”.

As Africa’s first host city, Johannesburg now shares the stage with powerhouse cities, such as New York, London, Sydney, Tokyo and Mexico City, as the host of the prestigious four-day gathering, which will for the first time put Africa’s thriving creative and innovation industry on a global platform.

Organisations and brands that are supporters or participants, include South African Tourism, Brand SA, the City of Johannesburg, Facebook and Google.

The event does not usually have a theme, but because it is a first for Africa, the theme for this year’s event in Johannesburg will be *Great Minds Think Unalike*, explained Tosin Lanipekun, executive director of Advertising Week Africa. “This is a rallying cry around our diversity, our differences from region to region and country-to-country – all that helps us build a more robust, multi-dimensional industry. Africa as a continent is extremely diverse and there is a lot of innovation coming out of Africa, a lot of creativity is evident. What we have are complementary skills and strengths in the industry, which if we were able to galvanise and use together, would end up galvanising and uplifting the continent,” Lanipekun told Bizcommunity.

Innovation

According to press around the event, for the past 15 years Advertising Week events have created platforms and spaces for innovative breakthroughs, new creative partnerships and next-generation thought leaders across the global industry. Advertising Week Africa (AWA) intends to tell the “African story of entrepreneurship, innovation, inspiration and positive disruption via vibrant start up communities across the continent”.

Advertising Week CEO Matt Scheckner is quoted as saying: “Many of the positive cultural shifts that we have seen in arts, music, entertainment and film originate from Africa. It’s the perfect time to provide the international platform to share authentic African stories and showcase thought-provoking marketing and technological innovations sweeping the continent. It’s an exciting opportunity to bring internationally recognised professionals together with emerging talent to have engagements about how this vibrant continent is shaping global trends.”

As a voice of African innovation in media and advertising, Lanipekun and his partners believed it was time to bring a global advertising platform to the continent, and began working with Advertising Week to launch the African leg.

“South Africa stood out in terms of development of the creative and advertising media industry, which is why we decided to launch it in Johannesburg. Obviously, leveraging the SA industry serves as a lightening rod and an opportunity to pull in key players from across the continent within these industries. So, it’s an Africa conversation. We want a big, robust conversation about the soul of doing business on the continent,” said Lanipekun, speaking to Bizcommunity.

“A lot of the positive cultural trends that we are starting to see sweep through the world, especially in music, entertainment and fashion, were birthed in Africa. We are just at the edge of the precipice of that full, creative revolution, and the story of Africa – from Johannesburg to Nairobi, Lagos to Morocco – needs to be told on a global stage.”

Programme

For Lanipekun, Advertising Week Africa is the perfect platform to host the authentic conversations about home-grown innovation and doing business on the continent; it transcends our cultural and regional differences, and elevates the best work being done in Africa.

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“Africa’s flavour of creativity needs to be unleashed on the rest of the world. There is such richness and diversity across the continent, that this would be a positive addition to the global tapestry of business and culture,” he emphasised.

The programme is four-days long, double the length of usual industry events that don’t include awards and lots of partying, and organisers hope to attract 4000 attendees with 100 curated events involving over 200 speakers. Ambitious in a depressed economy where event organisers struggle to attract more than 500 people to local industry events these days.

Each day will feature the Global Keynote Series – a selection of thought leaders from around the world, who will share their high-level perspectives ranging from brands to cultural icons, agencies to tech companies. In addition, the #AWLearn Workshops offer intimate teaching and learning experiences, where delegates can interact with presenters to not only gain new knowledge, but walk away with actionable plans to position them at the industry’s leading edge.

“ *The World is Diverse, So Why Isn't Your Advertising?*

<https://t.co/ezAMLF8Yv2> pic.twitter.com/iV1DE7SWeU— Advertising Week Africa (@AWAfrica_) July 22, 2019 ”

Challenges

“We have some big challenges around business in Africa so we want to sit around the table and thrash out the different needs of different industries. From an advertising perspective there is a disparity in the quality of work that goes out [across the continent] and it is an opportunity to pull the different players together to learn from one another,” said Lanipekun.

“It is also a commercial and networking opportunity for businesses trying to attract other stakeholders; the brands on the continent will be in the room, and also the brands looking for the best agency to work with or the best network to plug into; and those who try drive quality and effectiveness of the industry... you have all the stakeholders in the room. This year we are doing a big push on the impact side of things – there is a big challenge for young people having access to the industry and we have elements within our impact category that we will be leveraging.”

The impact side of the event will focus firmly on young people from disadvantaged communities, hoping to encourage agencies and marketing departments to consider allocating internships to the event. Malaria No More has also been given space to highlight the work that organisation does in combatting the spread of Malaria on the continent.

“Africa is a citadel of culture and it has been for a long time and it has suffered from a very negative perception and a very negative image. We have had a leadership challenge, but when you realise what we have on the continent is an authentic, grassroots leaning towards arts and entertainment... we have our own version of innovation on this continent. Our creativity is now travelling to other parts of the world – our music, arts, fashion, entertainment, films. Africa needs to boost that image and it is right to have an event of this scale on the continent at this time,” Lanipekun said.

[Registration](#) and tickets for [#AWAfrica](#) 2019, 28 – 31 October at 1 Fox Johannesburg, will be available on the website.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMOG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.

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