

Africa is ripe for disruption

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Africa's fluctuating markets require a nimble-footed approach by marketers, who need to challenge convention and adopt breakthrough, original and interesting approaches to their communication strategies. If they don't, they are not going to survive in an environment where change is the only constant.



Image by 123RF

The Africa rising narrative is not wholly dead. The region continues to grow faster than most others and countries with more diversified and robust economies, such as Mozambique, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Kenya, enjoy relatively high growth rates.

The flip side of the coin is that commodity-based economies are suffering. There is a lot less money to go around and, in most instances, government spending remains high. This has a broad-based dampening effect and means doing business in these countries is difficult.

In addition, many companies looking to grow their businesses on the continent are learning that there is not always a plug and play model, process, product offering or service for the African market. Solutions that work in Europe, the US or even South Africa do not necessarily work for Nigeria, Kenya, Angola or Botswana.

The only way to be noticed in this milieu is to challenge the status quo around communication and ideas. Marketers need to consider how to do things differently, get more bang for their buck and drive return on investment.

Hotbed of innovation

This is why Africa is ripe for Disruption. Just as TBWA has 'Disruption' in its DNA, so does Africa. Characterised by uncertainty and dynamic change, the continent is a hotbed of innovation. There is no shortage of challenges that need to be solved. Purpose-built solutions are needed for Africa, by Africa.

The continent has a culture of leapfrogging technologies, services and processes – think M-Pesa and the other mobile phone-based money transfer solutions in Kenya, now processing over \$24 billion dollars per year (about 39% of Kenyan GDP); or Uber – also in Kenya – which takes cash as well as of credit cards.

Other great ideas of disruption across Africa include Ghana's alternative to cars, the eco-friendly Green Bike with its durable and lightweight bamboo frame; and Nigeria's Shypmate, a peer-to-peer delivery service that allows individuals to buy products online in the United States and get them delivered through homebound travellers, especially in Nigeria and Ghana.

Marketers would do well to take note of Africa's energy and dynamism. They need to harness its inherent creativity. They need to challenge the mundane and find uniquely African solutions. Only then will businesses survive and even thrive under the continent's tougher economic circumstances.

ABOUT GRAHAM CRUIKSHANKS

Graham has spent 19-years in the advertising business in a career that has spanned Asia and Africa. He has worked across multiple business sectors, worked with local and multinational companies on some of the world's most recognised brands.

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