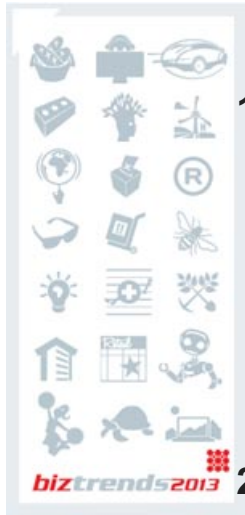


At the heart of African marketing

 By [Gerry Costa](#)

21 Jan 2013

As the world economy limps to recovery, Africa is increasingly becoming more important and on everyone's agenda. Here, I take a look at what is required to formulate Afro-centric marketing strategies that can succeed.



This is what we can expect in 2013:

1. Africa will become the new playing field in 2013

We are already witnessing an influx of small independent specialist agencies that are springing up all over the continent. This suggests that clients are now looking toward Africa for growth and are finally taking it seriously. Marketers will need to formulate strategies to succeed on the continent.

One thing is for sure: South African marketing templates will not cut it in other African countries. Efforts to reach these markets need to be culturally specific and refined.

2. We will see more and more multinationals move into Africa

There will be many benefits of the influx of large companies in Africa. Besides the obvious job creation, this is going to improve industry standards and bring a level of modernisation to the markets.

On the flip side, there will also be a period of education whereby the market adapts to these new multinationals. A great example of this is the speed of which international supermarket chains have moved into Africa, and the local people having to learn that their bargaining habits can not extend to the supermarket.

Competition will be rife across all sectors.

3. 2013 will be the year of many acquisitions, mergers and JVs

The spread of Shoprite into Africa has already seen local supermarket chains partnering with external retail giants just to keep up, as witnessed by the Park N Shop/SPAR relationship in Nigeria, as well as the Tiger Brands / UAC joint venture.

These initiatives can only help Africa as foreign and multinational companies bring with them the necessary experience, governance and industry standards.

As much as there will be modernisation, there will also have to be a reciprocal understanding of local methods and operating procedures, ie it will be a two-way street between the market and the suppliers. The suppliers will need to learn the ways and culture of the local market and the market will adapt to the modernisation that the suppliers bring.

4. Many have talked the talk; now it's time to walk the walk

Both clients and consumers will demand more in this competitive market where bang for your buck is what it's all about.

Consumer satisfaction, customer care and service will become increasingly more important on the continent.

Clients will no longer settle for the mediocre, or use Africa as an excuse for sub-standard delivery.

5. Understanding Africa

Managing Africa from a distance will be a thing of the past. Those who do not understand the dynamics of working in Africa will be exposed.

Relevance and being Africa-specific will be key. This includes the understanding of our diverse continent, the social and cultural nuances, and the informal market.

The current trend, employed by most multinationals, whereby expatriates are posted into Africa for a two-year period, only to be replaced by another expat just as they get an understanding of the market, will change. Clients will soon learn to let Africa be run by the people of Africa.

6. Africa travel

There will be continued improvements to airports and passport control across many African countries. For those currently travelling into Africa who think it's bad, believe me when I say that there have been major improvements from the '80s, '90s and into the millennium.

While accommodation is still expensive, the rapid growth of the hotel industry is already yielding price reductions and improved standards.

7. "Africa Time" vs "Africa's time"

Despite the ridicule that the term "Africa Time" has come to endure, I truly believe that 2013 is Africa's time! This is the time for Africa to come of age and take its rightful place as an important geography for the world economy.

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ABOUT GERRY COSTA

Gerry Costa is a Zimbabwean national who has worked in the advertising industry for over 20 years. His African experience is as vast as the continent itself, having lived and worked in Botswana, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and, now, South Africa. Gerry's career includes mainstream advertising and his expertise extends to outdoor and branding. Today, Gerry is employed by the McCann World Group (www.mccann.co.za). Contact him on tel +27 (0)11 235 4600.

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