

The new competitive advantage in mobile is content

By [Enver Groenewald](#)

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In a mobile-led world, it would be natural to assume that digital innovation or technical prowess is enough to get ahead of the competition. However, as our platforms become more sophisticated, the key to mobile success becomes simpler. The primary source of competitive advantage in mobile is content.



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As a brand owner or marketer in Africa, mobile should be a central tool you use to connect with your customers. Africa is the second fastest growth region for mobile globally. The speed and scale of mobile device ownership across African countries and population demographics ensures a real-time, always on connectedness for Africans with what's happening across the continent as well as globally.

Mobile is more than another platform in the media mix, it is a tool for empowerment. Historically, traditional media under-served African audiences and often dictated the stories to be told to them and about them.

Now, we have a situation where Africans – whether they are citizens, artists, commentators or brands – can define and tell their own stories using mobile, creating, curating and distributing content relevant to them. The audiences for such content get larger and hungrier every day. The prospect of being able to participate in a revolution that liberates individual imagination and expression across the continent is incredibly exciting.

This excitement can be translated into brand and consumer relationships, if brands listen to their customers. If you consider the amount of time the average South African spends on a mobile device every day, it follows that brands now have longer windows of opportunity, each and every day, to surprise and delight consumers.

Mindfulness

Yet that opportunity needs to be used mindfully. Mobile creates an environment of instant access to an overwhelming array of news, information and entertainment. Brands can access their audiences on this platform, but they need to differentiate themselves above the myriad of content competing for the same attention.

Brands have to be that much sharper, significantly more agile and, above all, highly relevant and authentic when it comes to what they say, whom they say it to and when they say it if they want to rise above a tidal wave of indifference, disinterest and online distractions.

In Africa, another key risk lies in the cost and availability of data. While the cost of smartphones has been dropping to the sub-\$50 level and driving increased penetration, the high cost of data access in some key African markets continues to be a key impediment to improving on mobile in Africa.

Again, carefully curated content plays a role in shifting the market. If we can get more consumers consuming more data, for longer and more often, then we unlock audience engagement opportunities, consumer market opportunities, social development opportunities and economic and cultural growth opportunities that are on par with other continental markets such as Asia, the America's and Europe.

The key to this mobile revolution lies in producing content that provides real benefit and a reason to engage with it. If executed with intuition and insight into the market, content is a powerful point of access to the hearts of minds of consumers. However, brands will only benefit from their content strategy if they remain relevant and authentic.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Enver Groenewald is CCM Director Africa at Unilever. He spoke about the role of content as a source of competitive advantage in a mobile-led world, as well as its implications for brand owners and marketers, at the MMA SA Forum

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