

Connecting with ever-connected, ever-younger African consumers

By [Nicola Cooper](#)

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With the largest 'youth bulge' in the world, the future of Africa is young, dynamic, determined. No one can afford to ignore the youth in Africa and the local and global business community needs to prepare for the ever-connected, younger generations.



Nicola Cooper, senior trend analyst and cultural strategist at Nicola Cooper & Associates (NC&A).

The younger African consumer understands what we do not share with international consumers is the present – our 'Zeitgeist' (signs of the times), our mindset and the events and occurrences that we are faced with at present and will be faced with in future.



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The oldest of Generation Z are now out of high school, entering either university or the job market, with many armed with credit cards, the youngest are tweens with significant influence (nag-factor) on household buying decisions and you have less than 8 seconds (less than a goldfish) to gain their attention.

Along with the well-documented rising affluence of the rising 'Black Middle Class', which has grown by 60% in the past decade according to African Development Bank, many young Africans are also asserting their right to be regarded with respect on a global scale.



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3 Nov 2017



Let consumers co-create

Today's younger consumers are seeking ways they can be a part of something greater than themselves. Gen Z is attracted to ads that allow them to co-create and are more positive towards brands that let them vote for something to happen, choose an option, or make a decision.

The African consumer is no longer awaiting an auto-exotic, 'Americanised' or 'Eurocentric' gaze to indicate what should be trending or what we should be purchasing. African's are determining what we deem and claim as African. We have begun to value our cultures, insights, complexities and influences as a continent and as the necessary tool for the point of differentiation.



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Africa, comparatively to other markets, has its own unique fingerprint and the sweeping global trends often do not take into account the diversity, intricacies and complexities of a present and future Africa. When it comes to catering to emerging markets and developing regions, it makes sense to consider what the enabled, modern African consumer needs and what we want and what we can afford or are willing to pay compared to other countries.

“ *The 'copy and paste' approach of the past is no longer fitting to the empowered and informed African consumer.* ”

Which is why future successes in Africa will centre on companies, products and brands that **give the power back to the community or empower the people**, and relinquish control of how their marketing strategies are received and interpreted.



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This new consumer era marks a time where brands in Africa must reach out to previously neglected consumers who are in a state of brand boredom and are craving unique and dynamic brand experiences.

This is evident in recent times, with both local and international brands repositioning or applying a branding overhaul, especially in the larger consumer markets such as South Africa and Nigeria.

In the words of renowned futurist and author, Martin Raymond from 2004's *The Tomorrow People*:

“ Future trends cannot and should not be measured rationally, or quantitatively, but emotionally, intuitively, empathetically.” ”

Tomorrow's brands are about value systems, authentic or relatable narratives, transparency and empowerment.

ABOUT NICOLA COOPER

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