

# Respecting and connecting with the modern African consumer

There is a long overdue sea of change happening in South African marketing. A few brave brands have started shift the way that modern African consumers are being communicated with.

By [Llewellyn Allen](#) 3 Nov 2017



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The advertising industry, belatedly, is starting to reflect and respect the complexity and density of a market that, to date, generally has been treated as a lumpen mass with a singular identity. Metro FM is about engaging with the African consumer and strive to be present in the lives of the consumer, wherever they are.

Vodacom is about depicting South Africans at their best and make an extra effort to meet the needs of the modern African consumer with its innovative products and service offerings.

Winning the Grand Prix award at last year's *Sunday Times Top Brands Awards* is a testament to that Woolworths is another brand changing the way they communicate with the modern African consumer. The South African Customer Satisfaction Index (SAcsi) for supermarkets, shows that South African consumers are most satisfied with Woolworths in 2017, after winning last year as well. Woolworths has successfully shown that they are able to consistently meet the modern African's ever-changing needs. I would also respectfully add, Metropolitan.

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Metropolitan is a truly African-based business, providing aspirational individuals customised financial service packages that protect and enhance their assets. Metropolitan is all about people. These are among the brands re-shaping the conversation.

Up till now we have been operating off simplistic assumptions about identity and how our emerging middle class see themselves. However, continuous research, interactive engagements with our clients and plenty of other evidence suggest that identity is in fact complex and unique. South African millennials (Afrillennials), in particular, have multifaceted identities and will decide which facets of those identities matter to them without being dictated to.

## Afrillennials

They are citizens of the world and the continent and still proudly South African. They believe that the best version of Africa is not only the best version of Europe or the USA in Africa, but a melting pot of different cultures and ideologies. They live in their current environment and in their inherited communities.

They will, on their own terms, define themselves by race or language. They are 'born frees' who are also tied by their past. They want respect for all their identities and do not want to be pigeon-holed or put in a box. According to *The Deloitte Millennial Survey 2017* (Apprehensive millennials: seeking stability and opportunities in an uncertain world) the South African millennial is more optimistic than the global norm.

The financial knowledge and resourcefulness of the African consumer is far greater than previously acknowledged. They are effectively financial experts in their own right. For financial services brands, this has powerful implications. In the old world aspirational African consumers in this category were assumed to want to migrate upwards from a 'mass black brand' to an 'elite white brand'.

It's now very clear they want neither. What they want is a financial services brand that delivers solutions relevant to their world and backs that with responsive service. To connect, financial services communication needs to become ingenious, proud and real, because that's what our consumers are. We need to offer ourselves as mentors and partners, and not preachers or dictators. We must show respect and understanding.

## Omni-channel

The use of vernacular languages is a key part of relating to this market. English has been the default language of brand building for financial services in the middle market but that has to change, along with our service provision which must deliver, in what we call, an omni-channel way - whatever language, on whatever platform, and at whatever time the client wants.

Metropolitan's new #ISeeYou campaign is an attempt to really step change marketing into this world. The brief to amplify African success has resulted in a spectacular mash up of rap, vernacular, social seeding and assertive African positivity. The advert is the creative collaboration led by Ogilvy Cape Town executive creative director, Tseliso Rangaja, and directed by Sunu Gonera of Egg Films. Shot in a uniquely local back drop, Soweto born rapper Spoek Mathambo delivers a message of celebration of the hard work and financial Success of South Africans in poetic virtuosity:

*You're the guy that gets up in the morning and says  
"siyabangena! siphusha ipassion"  
You put your shoulder to the grind.  
You make each second of every hour count.  
My brother. Wena owaziyo ukuthi ama gents ayaphanda.  
That elke mens moet 'n plan maak...not only n boer.  
I see you!  
Giving it your all,  
No half measures.  
"It's going to be a good month".  
Because to you... failure is niks.  
To the people who make every day a success.  
I see you.*

Thus far, the feedback is overwhelmingly positive because it is so different from where the brand has gone before. With its focus on relevance and consumer awareness, Metropolitan puts appreciation into being one of the most modern African companies that elevates the lives of the consumer to establish a truly South African connection.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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