

Nine ways women are changing African markets

The African female consumer has long been mischaracterised and overlooked by marketers across the continent. But now, with women continuing to emerge as powerful decision-makers and consumers - they are changing the face of the African market.

Instant Grass creates relationships between businesses and people. It has an ongoing dialogue with our grass communities across Africa, using a range of communication tools. The following report is a compilation of opinions from those grasses on the ground.

***Where applicable data and sources have been included.*

#1: The main market



Africa is home to some of the fastest growing economies in the world, and women are playing a big role in accelerating this growth. According to the World Bank, roughly two thirds of African women are now working in either formal or informal sectors. In some countries, like Kenya, women make up a little more than half of all entrepreneurs. With women starting to dominate the market, brands should keep up by focusing their efforts on the female consumer.

**New York Times, "Women Entrepreneurs Drive Economic Growth in Africa" 10 Oct. 2012*

#2: The new decision makers



With more and more African women entering the workforce, their earning and purchasing potential makes them very important consumers to target. Globally, women constitute about 70% of all consumer spending. The growing middle class of African females will buy an ever-increasing number of goods from mobile phones, to cars, entertainment, homes and education.

**Bloomberg, "Women Controlling Consumer Spending Sparse among Central Bankers," 25 Jul 2011*

#3: Amongst the most tech-savvy

Upwardly mobile women need to save time and stay connected; and technology is a central facet to almost every woman's life. Overall, Africans are willing to spend more money relative to their income on technology than Europeans and Americans.

Demand for tech products like smartphones, household appliances and cars is expected to drive the African consumer market to a value of \$1 trillion by 2020*. Brands must capitalise on how central technology is in women's lives.

**Media Club South Africa, "Middle Class Africa: Meet the new African consumer," 21 Feb 2014*



#4: Re-defining traditional African values

Women are re-defining for themselves what it means to be an African woman. While many women describe their values as being rooted in more traditional beliefs, such as the importance of being a loyal community member, they are also striving for more independence and acknowledgement for their skills.

This creates a big challenge for brands: connecting where she is with where she wants to be.

"Good parents give their children roots and wings. Roots to know where home is, wings to fly away and exercise what's been taught to them." - Nigerian Grass, 30.



#5: Trailblazing formerly male-oriented industries

Women are paving the way for others to work in formerly male-dominated industries. This is helping young women to see their potential and to take advantage of new job options they didn't know previously existed them. Women like Rachel Tladi, a millionaire construction company owner and finalist at the World Entrepreneur Awards 2010, are helping to create new opportunities for other women like them.

"When I first started there were no women in the Ivory Coast who worked online jobs. Today, when I look around, there are more and more slowly progressing into this world and that's amazing." - Ivorian Grass 30.

#6: Shattering perceptions of the working class

Although women across Africa still suffer from serious socio-economic inequalities, from health to education

and gender-based violence, the stereotypical imagery of what it means to be an African woman is shifting. This increasing female middle class is also bringing adapted expectations of how women should look and behave. Power, opportunity, and mobility are no longer foreign words.

Gone are the days when African women were 'laid back' and had no purpose. You notice things are changing when parents stop being shocked by women driving big cars they actually bought." - Nigeria Grass, 22.



#7: Balancing being a mum and a career woman

Traveling to work and often leaving families and communities behind, many women experience a necessary sense of independence. While she must look out for herself now, she is also often the sole caretaker of her family. Brands should reflect this shift and use imagery that shows how she can be both a mom and a career-woman.

"We are different because we live in a survival of the fittest cultural environment. What are you to do if you get divorced and the family leaves you with nothing? We have to put in more because it's different" Kenyan Grass, 26.

#8: Role models at home and abroad

This generation has seen its first African female presidents, Nobel Peace Prize winner, Forbes' wealthiest women, and a host of globally-renowned leading female scientists, artists and entrepreneurs from all over the continent. Emerging role models like these women will continue to inspire girls' education and development across the continent and the world.



#9: Buying into brands that understand them



Few brands currently successfully support female entrepreneurial activity or achievements by fronting their

products with progressive women and replacing the male stereotype. Brands can rather create occasions celebrate single African females' potential and lifestyles, and use communication that reflects who women are and where they want to be going.

"We are vibrant, young and thirsty to achieve. Just like the new black woman from the rest of the world we see no difference between them and us and our ladies are doing it on that same global stage." - Nigerian Grass, 24.

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