

Communicating with the one of the world's fastest growing middle class

Despite the vast opportunities that Africa is presenting to various brands and businesses, communicating with the continent's one billion consumers can be a challenge due to the various cultures, political situations and language barriers that exist.

This is according to Megan Collinicos, Head of Advertising and Public Relations for DHL Express Sub-Saharan Africa, who says that should messages and channels not be correctly targeted and adapted for the growing market, the success rate of businesses expanding into this region is significantly diminished.



Megan Collinicos

Consumer spending

The African Development Bank has reported that on the back of economic growth in various African territories, rising real incomes will lead to higher consumer spending, which is projected to almost double in the next decade. It is further reported that a growth of 4.5% in per capita GDP compounded annually through 2015 will result in an increase of more than 35% in consumer spending in Africa.

Collinicos points to the recently released Nielsen's Emerging Market Insights research, which highlights that consumers in Africa are very receptive to marketing messages, with half (48%) of those interviewed confirming that advertising has significant influence on their purchase decisions. The research also reveals that 38% of respondents are motivated to buy a specific product due to promotional activities and that 34% will buy more of or give preference to products from companies that they know engage in corporate social responsibility programs or practices. Word of mouth marketing continues to play a large part in the decision making of emerging-market consumers.

"Companies should therefore be innovative when it comes to marketing on the African continent, as consumers in these regions are relatively open when it comes to non-traditional channels. It is also key to have individual strategies for the different regions in Africa, as what may work in Nigeria will not necessarily work well in Uganda or Zambia.

"As we are present in every country in Africa, we have worked hard to understand each individual market and develop individual strategies to suit them. We have seen some of our greatest success from street activations where we engage in fun activities with the general public. This is especially effective in cities where the traditional advertising landscape is already cluttered. Our service promise is 'Excellence. Simply Delivered' and therefore we aim to centre our communication messages and actions around shipping and delivering with excellence. That way it gives the consumer a clear idea of what we do - this enables us to

combine brand awareness with brand association, so when consumers need to send a package, they think of DHL," adds Collinicos.

Increase usage of mobile

"It is predicted that internet usage on mobile phones will increase 20-fold in the next five years in Africa, which is double the rate of growth in the rest of the world, and the price of data is set to steadily decrease. This makes digital and smart social media advertising techniques a viable channel to reach your target market. It's relatively cost effective in relation to traditional channels and has the added benefit of being flexible and immediate. We have in excess of 450,000 fans on Facebook, which allows us to communicate with a large audience in real time, about everything from special offers, shipping tips, promotional activities sponsorships, sharing our CSR stories and using it as an additional customer service platform."

"As excitement and interest mounts around Africa being an attractive growth market for SMEs, careful attention should be paid to choosing marketing strategies for the respective regions - effective communication can make or break the success of global expansion," concludes Collinicos.

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