

10: Can Africa lead the creative revolution globally?

 By [Ingrid von Stein](#)

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The tenth [Thought Leadership Digibate](#), recently hosted by [Aegis Media](#) in conjunction with [Bizcommunity.com](#) focused on perspectives into the African consumer market. If you missed the Digibate, download or listen to the podcast which is now available.

Whilst competition for brand spend in Africa is highly competitive there remains a great need for industry sharing and insights amongst industry players across Africa, hence the broadening of the Aegis Media Thought Leadership Digibate platform into Africa whereby sharing can be done not only by the media/marketing industry players, but also from client perspectives.



Post the tenth Aegis Media Thought Leadership Digibate streamed live from the first [African Cristal Media Festival](#) in Abidjan Côte d'Ivoire, the question posed before the Digibate seemed to rouse a few feathers as the answer from many South African agencies was "of course". Yet, once you venture beyond the SA borders you soon realise that the continent is a vast place with more than 50 different countries, different languages and certainly different ways of communicating via the individual countries media/marketing landscapes, but the common thread was an insatiable quest for knowledge and insight into how the various African regions are communicating to these markets so that a greater "African Consumer" insight could be gained.

Three key perspectives

The Digibate panel represented three key perspectives into the African consumer market; agency, client and a media perspective.

The panel was hosted and moderated by Dawn Rowlands, CEO Aegis Media Sub-Saharan African (and interestingly the only senior woman at the entire festival representing a global brand in Africa, this in itself tells you volumes of the marketing landscape in Africa. Joining her on the panel were Marc Seynave, MD, Drive Dentsu (agency perspective), MENA region, Emanuele de Leonardis - International Head of Data & Advertising Mobile - France Telecom/Orange (client perspective) and Bony Dashaco - Group President & CEO Acmar Media Group Africa (media perspective)

Key issues

- **What are global clients looking for in Africa and what should agencies in Africa prepare themselves for?**
 - Accurate measurement on spend and return on investment.
 - Transparency - clients want and need to know exactly where and how you are spending their money - not just a blanket monthly invoice. Currently the perception is that it's filled with kick-backs, paybacks, under the table deals and we all know it happens but if we are all on a global scale of being open and transparent about how we conduct business then the playing field is much more open and ethical.
 - More investment into digital as its easier to track and translate ROI.
 - Traditional media tracking in Africa remains sceptical and is very difficult to truly translate back into brand spend.
 - Traditional media needs to have a lot more invested into accurate measurement and media strategists need to up their game to ensure that they are providing the best and most accurate results for their clients - Africa is a

continent of more than 53 different countries and one media strategy does not fit across the entire continent.

- Each African country needs its own media strategy that is done in the language and with the understanding of the culture of the country, based on key insights into that particular market gained by proper in-depth research and data analysis.

• **Is there creativity on the African continent?**

From both a client and agency perspective the openness and working relationships between the two are staggering and the level of combined creativity is unique in this industry and in many instances the African continent is leading the creative revolution globally.

When you start seeing creative recruitment from Africa to the rest of the globe, you know that the answer to this is yes - that Africa can lead the creative branding/marketing sector. Whilst in many cases the actual strategic planning needs outside input, the big global brands are bringing those specialists into the African market to work in tandem with the creatives so that all round skills development and upliftment is being seen.

We are also starting to see more young people going into the industry which can only boost the level of emerging creative and strategic talent.

Global brands and agencies are investing more into Africa than any other region in terms of skills development as they see the massive market growth and profit potential.

• **Why is the African continent such an attractive option for brands and what are the pitfalls in a new region?**

- It's the massive size of the market that attracts brands
- Trying to understand the various African regions and how they respond to brand communications is always tough and entering a new market requires effort and a massive amount of research into the various regions.
- The growth of digital/mobile across Africa is mind blowing and brands want to be part of the action and gain a share in what is fast becoming one of the most profitable markets globally.
- Make sure you truly understand the region you want to play in - it's vital, otherwise you will lose a lot of money. Invest first in research and then make sure you have the right local partners who understand the region to work with. You can't come from Europe/America and just expect to make it in Africa.

• **What future media partnerships will be seen in Africa?**

Mobile operators and brands will have to work together to deliver messages/products/services to consumers, as there is still a massive "fixed line" issue in Africa that would appear to be remaining for a long time to come. There will have to be much more collaboration between creative and media agencies in order to manage and roll-out client campaigns. Integration between the various media options and agencies will have to be fast tracked across Africa in order to keep up with the level of demand from global brands wanting to enter the African region.

Data analysts will become much more involved in brand campaigns - they will sit at the table with both the strategic and creative divisions of brands and agencies right from the outset and in many cases will lead the way the brand roll-out into market ahead of the creative execution.

We will also see a lot more woman moving up the ranks in this industry as they gain global exposure and find their own voices in an African context and many "new breed" integrated agencies will be born and lead by woman across the continent.

Says Rowlands: "Africa is a land that is rich and fertile and the market place filled with both creative and strategic

agencies who can certainly show and grow inroads into leading the creative revolution, but right now we are not. What Africa is currently doing is showing the rest of the world that where there is opportunity there will be creativity and an opportunity for business to grow.

"We need to see more innovation from the African market, as opposed to trying to adapt global offerings to fit our markets. Our work is great, yes we need to continue to invest in skills development and infrastructure, but we do amazing and innovative work in Africa," says Rowlands.

Listen to the podcasts

If you missed the show, download or listen to the podcasts [here on Bizcommunity](#) or on [BizRadio](#).

Listen every month

The Thought Leader Digibates are held monthly and include a panel of leading media-marketing experts who will discuss, debate and share their knowledge - gleaned over years of experience - with a wider audience. The official Twitter hashtag is [#aegisTL](#).

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