

The Afropolitan Revolution

By [Lebo Motshegoa](#)

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The mass market in South Africa is a fast-moving and ever-changing environment, with new trends evolving all the time. In 2016, a whole new swathe of trends is presenting itself, and marketers need to watch out for them or be in danger of missing the boat.



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Firstly, the mass market in urban areas and metros is moving way beyond cosmopolitan towards something altogether more African; it's becoming Afropolitan.

Young black people in particular are defining a new urban culture that is both cosmopolitan and uniquely African. There is a strong emphasis on 'going back to black' and, with that, a trend towards a fusion of local and international cultural influences. The spinoff is language and idiom that is unique to the urban black market and - now more than ever - marketers need to know the people they want to communicate with in order to be effective.

Youth power

In line with this is the growth in the influence of young black people in household purchasing decisions. While they may not be the main breadwinners in the household, they are educated and informed consumers who have significant sway over what is bought and used in the household.

Again, marketers need to know this audience well in order to communicate with them effectively. Young black people demand and expect to be treated as sophisticated consumers who have an in-depth understanding of the products and services they purchase.

Give me freedom!

Freedom never goes out of fashion, but there is an increasingly intense expectation of freedom of choice and, it goes without saying, of getting free stuff too.

So, for example, restaurants and coffee shops that offer free Wi-Fi will be more attractive to the discerning - and often fickle - urban black audience. Wired and mobile, Afropolitans see freedom to communicate from anywhere as an essential part of their freedom journey.

The media is another country

The #FeesMustFall campaign that swept through campuses around the country in late 2015 brought with it many lessons. This was a mass protest action that was organised without the use of either print or online media. Communications were generated and shared almost exclusively on social media platforms, and word-of-mouth was a huge factor in the success of the campaign.

The take-out from this is that we can no longer make any assumptions about media usage, especially about channels that have traditionally been used to reach the mass market.

Media strategists and planners therefore need to be aware of the greater issues affecting the way in which people communicate with their peers - and they need to take these into account when aiming to reach the mass market. In short, this means that there needs to be informed and intuitive integration of messaging across all media platforms and, above all, creative work must be super-innovative, even edgy.

Trending on 'Black Twitter'

A related phenomenon is 'Black Twitter', where hashtags created and used by black people define the social media space they occupy.

More than on any other platform, marketers need to know the Black Twitter audience intimately - and be able to communicate in ways that are acknowledged and accepted. Since the Arab Spring, Twitter has become an enormously influential social media platform and, as such, has to be on every marketer's radar.

ABOUT LEBO MOTSHEGO

Lebo Motshego is Managing Director of Foshizi. Foshizi is a 100% black-owned mass market research and strategy provider. For further information, visit www.foshizi.co.za.
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