

Will you be part of the quarter-of-a-billion-hustle?

By [Cobus van Zyl](#)

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On a recent visit to Uganda, I was stuck in the customary two hours' worth of deadlock traffic on the way from the airport to the hotel. With time to kill I looked on in amazement as the local hawkers used the traffic jam as an opportunity to sell their wares to a captive (captured?) audience. On offer was everything you can imagine and a number of things you can't, like a man selling a fish tank, complete with fish swimming around, plants, and a functioning pump.



Cobus van Zyl, FCB Africa executive business director.

First dubbed *The pearl of Africa* by Winston Churchill, Kampala is a city that never sleeps, never stops, and always seems to hustle. It did not surprise me to learn that, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2015, Uganda is considered the most entrepreneurial country in the world, where 28% of adults own or co-own a new business.

But why Uganda? Probably the biggest single factor is the fact the Uganda has the second youngest population in the world*. According to World Bank data from 2014, 60% of Uganda's population is between the ages of 13 and 30, with more than 50% below the age of 18. With so many young people added to the workforce every year there are simply not enough jobs in government and formal employment to accommodate everyone.

Upon my return, a Google search revealed that there are actually numerous listings that rate entrepreneurial countries in different ways over the last few years. Uganda is always at, or near, the top. Not surprisingly, so are a number of other African countries. Although each country will have their own unique factors influencing this, the key driver, of an extraordinarily young population, is pervasive.

The average age in Africa is 19.5 versus 40 in Europe, and the 15 countries with the youngest population in the world are all in Africa. So, if there is a correlation between entrepreneurial venture (driven by necessity) and youth, we are talking

about a much broader phenomenon than just Uganda. We are talking all of Africa. Uganda just happens to be at the forefront.

What are entrepreneurs mostly into?

Agriculture is popular, with flexible farming types and scale, it's easy to "custom farm", even with a day job. Egg production seems to be the number one choice for those with jobs in the city, due to the limited space required to keep chickens. Livestock and grain production obviously requires more space, and can be found in the outskirts of the city.

Hawking small food items can be found on every street corner, so can clothes, DVD's, and hundreds of non-perishable items. Walking the streets at virtually any time of the day, gives you the sense that everyone is selling something, trying something, planning something. The energy is electric.

So, where do the opportunities lie for big brands to get involved with this young, happening continent of entrepreneurs? It is important to remember that they are doing it out of necessity and not due to the typical reasons associated with breaking away and starting your own business. Don't expect to find a detailed business plan, seed capital, proper accounting etc. A good place to start would be:

1. Assisting them in developing their ideas.
2. Adapting and designing products to support and accommodate them.

Generally speaking, any form of assistance with knowledge, in a variety of fields is always highly appreciated. This can be as big as formalised training to mentorship sessions and one-off workshops. It can even be small and punchy, like daily SMS tips to help small entrepreneurs make their business better. There are great initiatives happening already, like *Google for Entrepreneurs*, *African Entrepreneur Collective* and various others designed to support this group of budding business people. Partnering with existing successful initiatives, or starting your own will have great impact for your brand.



Cobus van Zyl appointed as EBD At FCB Africa

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When it comes to designing products and services to suit the need, Telco's have really set the pace in creating this in the banking space over the last decade. Examples include products like Vodacom's MPESA, which serves as a no frills transactional account, allowing the user to pay and get paid by anyone with a phone.

You can draw or bank money at Vodacom agents, pay registered businesses, and a whole lot more, all from your phone. Connected to this, and an example of an alternative small loan offering, is MPAWA (also by Vodacom) which gives small loans and offers interest on savings. All you need is a cell number and a call history with Vodacom.

These kinds of innovations are causing a whole wave of new thinking, like banks applying for cellular licences, App development for most banks across the board, and a host of new players entering the fold, offering loans, credit, advice etc.

Some estimations state that Africa's population will double in the next 30 years. With such rapid growth in population, we are only seeing the beginning of what could be nearly a quarter of a billion entrepreneurs in our lifetime. If your brand is not contemplating getting in on the action somehow, perhaps now, during Africa month it should reflect on this unique phenomenon and how it can be a part of it.

**Sources:* www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/05/the-world-s-10-youngest-countries-are-all-in-africa/.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

FCB Echo is an ad hoc column compiled by FCB Africa and its affiliate agencies on the continent to unpack markets in Africa, highlight business opportunities and share insights into what works and what rebounds. This column was written by FCB Africa Executive Business Director, Cobus van Zyl. Van Zyl, a marketing communications professional with seven years' experience in South Africa and eight in various sub-Saharan Africa markets, is responsible for FCB Connect, the liaison between the group's affiliate agencies on the continent and clients with a footprint in markets across the rest of Africa.

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