

Franklin Ozekhome - Navigating the fast-evolving African trend landscape

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Scheduled to take place on 2 February 2022, BizTrends 2022 will feature Lagos-based trends and innovation consultant, Franklin Ozekhome, founder of Identiture, who will take you on a cutting-edge journey through the fast-evolving contemporary African trend landscape. Here he shares a taster of what delegates can expect from his executive trend presentation at BizTrends 02.02.2022.



■ Can you share a bit about what audiences can expect from your presentation?

I will be sharing three elements that relate to understanding and interpreting trends in Africa. The first is to understand that Africa is not a country. It is a continent of diverse people, cultures, behaviours, and habits. Megatrends exist, but marketers need to localise these within the context of a country and region.

Nigeria is different to Ghana; East Africa is different to North Africa. While we share similarities, it's the differences we need to be cognisant of to give us the edge as marketers. This is where the second element, cultural context, comes in. Highlighting specific pop culture trends in Afropop music and its varying sounds, and how one country perceives it compared to others.

Thirdly, unpacking how these trends relate to developing contextually relevant communication and amplifying them commercially for brands. It is pertinent that we diffuse these trends in such a way that they positively impact consumer behaviour through the development of unique products and services while appreciating their local, national, and regional nuances.



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■ You have stated that Africa is on the cusp of a revolution when it comes to advertising agencies? Can you expand on this statement?

We are witnessing a convergence of trends, strategy, commerce, technology, storytelling, influence, distribution and experience leading to disruptive changes in the advertising landscape. Agencies are forced to continually reevaluate their business model if they want to remain relevant. A one-size-fits all approach no longer works.

We need to have an operating system mechanism that keeps us updated every 12 months in tandem with global trends, local shifts and insights, and an understanding of the new consumer. As consumers evolve, the agency has to also update itself on a regular basis; the same is applicable to clients and the products and services they put out in the marketplace.

Advertising has gone beyond online and offline campaigns, the big idea, media buying, TV/radio commercials, influencer marketing and social media planning. We need sustainable and innovative solutions to solve real challenges that surround us every day. The future of the agency model has to incorporate on-trends strategy playbooks, marketing services and innovation programs that are designed based on where the consumer is going, and also provides clients with the best viable solutions for connecting with them and vice versa, as well as positively impacting the environment for good.

■ ***How do you look at trends to guide you?***

I see trends as always-on signals and patterns that one needs to take cognisance of, and then put into play using strategic intuition and cultural triangulation to see if they could have a multiplier effect on your industry.

They can also be disrupters that can be either positive or negative. Positive because you are aware of the trends and you can immediately apply them to the benefit of your agency, business, or client, as well as future-proofing what you are doing. When you are not even aware of a significant trend impacting your business and your category, then it has a negative long-term consequence.



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■ ***The business of trends has evolved. Do you see more organisations understanding trends and what they can bring to their business?***

>I have been in the trends business for over a decade, and in the last two years, I have observed a shift in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya as some future-thinking businesses are finally beginning to understand and appreciate consumer trends, and the impact it has on their growth, product design and profitability.

As we witness evolving shifts in consumerism, lifestyles, behaviours and purchase patterns driven by Gen Zs and millennials who are disrupting virtually every sector, from fintech to gaming, and health to sports and entertainment, these businesses are becoming more invested in subscribing to bespoke trend reports, culture mapping and systematic storytelling.

When a business sector is been disrupted, the players in that market must take time to understand why it's

happening, and more importantly, what will happen next. Decoding trends helps us to understand and dimension the issues and provides us with clear insights that are applied to create better futures for the client.

Every serious marketer, advertising executive and business lead should learn to understand and appreciate trends, and work with professionals to lead them accordingly.

■ How do you keep your ear to the ground to spot trends?

I tend to hang out regularly checking out art galleries, museums, stadiums, restaurants and parks. Clubs are one of the best places to find out the next thing that's going to pop. I observe what people are wearing, drinking, eating, and listening to. How they react when a particular music or sound mix comes on.

And more importantly, their style of communication – the language, codes, signs, gestures and symbols they use. When people are in places or an environment where they can be themselves, you will observe a lot of things you cannot find in an online survey, report or focus group study. It's important to immerse oneself in consumers habitat and you will get a more interesting and refined perspective.

I am an avid reader of science-fiction and fantasy novels, I love dreaming and envisioning new possibilities for humankind, new worlds, new planets, new challenges, new tools, and a multiverse of people, places and products. I also love comics and Comic Con festivals, fashion magazines and websites which I regard as the epicentre of where pop culture is headed.

I am inspired by graphic novels, paintings, musicals and Asian film noir. I take inspiration from one culture and blend it with another totally different subculture. For instance, I am a fan of Chado – “Way of Tea” in Japan and could look for ways to create that same spiritual experience for beer.



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Emily Stander 5 Jan 2022



■ What is the next big trend in Africa?

Gamification is the next big trend, but it's already happening. What makes it really interesting is the way you can see it's going to immediately disrupt sectors like education, health, financial services, media and entertainment. For starters, it's easy to capture an underserved market like insurance by simply gamifying its retail process for the mass market.

Marketers will be forced to ask themselves these questions: How can I gamify the consumer experience with my product? How do I keep you coming back to my e-commerce store and convert you into a customer? How can I create my own model of games or entertainment? How do I entertain, enlighten and educate you all at the same time?

These three components are instrumental to defining the gaming evolution in Africa - entertainment, enlightenment and education. Businesses must strive to incorporate them into their gaming strategy if they want to connect strongly with today's fickle minded consumer.

■ What is the craziest trend you have come across?

“Spiritual Z”. It's a natural progression from the plethora of zombie and disaster movies genre that has eclipsed small and large black screens consistently for over five years. The pandemic and low-touch economy has only heightened the trend especially among millennials and Gen X customer segments. SZ is recoding the reality of our lives so that we can deal with it by finding an inner space, sanctuary or community where we thrive in harmony.

The search is for a utopian “zen-like” state where human, cultural and climate perspectives are all in alignment, creating an illusion of a new world where everything and everyone is perfect. The real adventure is in the discovery process for

enlightenment.

Smart businesses focused on health and wellness are already tapping into this and creating unique products and sensory experiences for people who would like to journey into such a world.

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Event: BizTrends2022

Date: Wednesday, 02 February 2022

Time: 13h00 – 17h30 with tea break

Location: Virtual

Price: R150 per head; 25% discount for bookings of five or more. Students are free.

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ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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