

Comic Con Africa: Making brand connections

By [Emily Stander](#)

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After Covid, fans are excited to see the return of Comic Con Africa to the South African stage.



Image supplied: Carla Massmann, show director of Comic Con Africa

However, this year, we are seeing more than what we could expect from previous years. Streamer Con, StreetCon and Sew-a-thon are just some of the newer things coming to Comic Con this year.

However, beyond being an event that brings entertainment and excitement to an African audience, Comic Con is also a chance for us to understand the scope of the gaming industry and what that could mean for South African brands and businesses.



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The Doritos Crunch Cup series of tournaments is an example of this kind of integration. A new tournament at the forefront, the series is meant to be a way for Doritos, as a long-standing brand that has always connected with gamers, to give their audience an opportunity to win, have fun and learn more about what brand connections can mean for the scene.

We spoke to Carla Massmann, show director of Comic Con, to find out more about the events, the impact of Comic Con and why this is an important event for the creative community in South Africa...

■ Tell us a bit more about what you do as show director at Comic Con.

As show director at Comic Con Africa, I oversee the overall show, the brand as well as creative and strategic direction for the festival itself and the partnerships we build with brands.

Specifically, I look at how to align them with our audience and the relevance thereof.

🎲 **Comic Con Africa only started a few years ago - what was the value in bringing this massive event here?**

Bringing it to Africa was well overdue and a chance to expose mainstream fans to the various pop culture pillars and fandoms, which in turn created a demand and growth for local brands and retailers.

Launching Comic Con Africa also puts South Africa in the international spotlight - we have a large pop culture fan base in SA, top local comic book artists and a strong and growing gaming community and shows like this show the world this local talent.

🎲 **What is the importance of investing in the gaming industry in Africa, in your opinion?**

Africa's gaming industry is on the rapid rise.

We have seen growth locally, of brands investing time, money and resources into the SA gaming ecosystem, but I do believe there is more room for brands to get more involved, not just with the professional gaming landscape but also with casual and mobile gaming.

There are exciting avenues for brands to get involved, festivals like Comic Con Africa being one of them.

Something incredible happens when products are in the hands of consumers and a consumer can tangibly experience a brand.



Comic Con Africa announces a new addition to 2022 festival

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🎲 **Let's talk about branding and the gaming space - what is the value of connecting with brands?**

The gaming space is a space where brands can create a fun and meaningful engagement with their audience. Brands can build relationships with their audience and also a chance to get to understand that audience better.

Gaming allows for brands to communicate in an interactive way, while players are immersed in what they love.

It really comes down to creativity and sincerity - the way brands get involved is so important, especially how they make an effort to stand out from other brands.

🎲 **Why do you think brands should invest in the gaming industry in Africa? For example, here, what is Doritos hoping to do with their connection to Comic Con?**

I believe that the partnership with Comic Con Africa allows Doritos to integrate into the community with a strong backing and allows them to get to know and understand the gaming audience more. Gamers and gaming communities are reciprocal to brands that show them love.

So, with Doritos, showing that they are supporting the gaming space and helping to grow the gaming scene locally, automatically drives brand loyalty.

And this is especially appreciated when it is done in a big way.

■ ***What kind of impact are you hoping Comic Con has this year?***

What I believe Comic Con Africa worked hard on was ensuring that we remained salient and we constantly kept communicating and entertaining our audience during the two-year hiatus Covid forced.

This showed a 30% growth in our audience that has not yet attended the actual event. So with the live event returning this September, we are excited to see old and new fans and a massive gathering of all coming together again after the long wait.

Bringing that large audience back together in one space allows a higher return for retailers – large and small. Comic Con Africa insights a spirit of spending within the passion economy.

It's the excitement to spend and the excitement to sell meeting that is going to be the biggest impact.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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