

Major digital marketing trends



By [Marc Spriestersbach](#)

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'Africa Rising' is no longer relevant - we have long passed that milestone and the transformation that the continent is undergoing is dramatic, certainly in terms of communication and connectivity across all sectors of the market.

The people of Africa are far more 'advertising literate' and significantly more critical of what advertising is and its role in their lives. They embrace the pace of progress and the need to make better lives for themselves, making them very valuable consumers to marketers, further driven by the very young median age of consumers on the continent.

We're already experiencing a massive take off in new ad formats, specifically in digital ads. Thanks to the rise in mobile and video, and new platforms that are pushing the boundaries, everyone is set to benefit from higher-quality, innovative and more engaging ads. Check out Pinterest's Cinematic Pins, for example:

Top digital trends for 2016 and onwards:

1. User-generated content

Albeit this isn't new, user-generated content is transforming everything from reviews to information discovery. Amateur created content is massive and will continue to grow not only in size but also in importance across platforms and content type. Everyone has an opinion and wants it to be heard! **Blogs** will also become more important in the marketer's armory.

2. Growth of Video-on-Demand

The implementation of digital television and broadcast will open many more channels to consumers besides the terrestrial channels previously owned by the respective states, with the choice of content as the key differential. Content is already key in the choice of consumers' viewing habits, and the availability of cable has driven this. The increasing popularity of DSTV's catch-up and online streaming platforms such as Showmax are slowly changing the way TV content is being viewed as people get to view or stream their favourite shows at their own leisure. The growth of the middle class in Africa has also meant more spending power, resulting in more audiences from the continent joining this global trend. Another notable area to watch is **digital video** - mobile is the medium of choice in Africa and video viewing will becoming just as big. If not

bigger, on mobile than on television. Currently vertical video ads on Snapchat have a 9x higher click-through rate than horizontal video ads and Facebook has become a huge video platform. Big opportunity for advertisers...

3. Scheduled content (programmatic advertising)

The explosive trend refers to using technology to manage digital advertising as opposed to a more manual way, using booking forms/ insertion order. It allows advertisers to find and focus on audiences. This props up the bet of targeting your ideal audience, as you're targeting beyond simply an ad impression. By adding geographic, demographic, first party/third party data, behavioural, contextual, and even transactional data to the process, we begin to gain efficiencies in targeting, thereby avoiding budget wastage. Programmatic buying also simplifies the procurement process, allowing for more time to be spent on strategy, optimising and creative. This is being implemented largely in SA, but will soon expand into the media world in Africa, as agencies expand across the continent.

4. Augmented reality

This global trend is growing rapidly, and while the implementation in Africa may still be a way off, it cannot be ignored. Augmented reality allows brands to optimise customers' experiences by bridging the gap between the digital and real world, creating endless possibilities for businesses to engage better with their consumers. Digital content can be added to physical objects, such as print ads or in-store displays, to provide additional information about a product to shoppers.

5. Mobile enterprise apps on the rise

With smartphone use in Africa skyrocketing, companies on the continent are taking heed and employing mobile enterprise applications to streamline business processes and mobilise their workforces.

Mobile enterprise apps let companies manage resources such as inventory and their supply chain using mobile phones, either through SMS or Web-enabled applications. The steady increase in the number of mobile users on the continent is fueling this trend. Research from Informa Telecoms and Media suggests Africa will have over 300 million smartphone users by 2017, roughly 30 percent of the population. Messaging apps are also fast becoming the cornerstone of communication, especially amongst younger consumers and as such, are a must for marketers!

6. Buy buttons for social media

In-app functions such the "buy button" on mobile apps and social networks will increasingly become prominent features that aim to enhance user experience. These allow users to purchase items they have seen on a Facebook, Pinterest or Instagram page with just one click of a button, without having to leave that page. This is fully supported by systems such as Paypal and Apple Pay as they continue to expand their reach.

7. Social video leading the way into 2016

The rise of video bloggers and the popularity of video content sharing has changed the dynamics of consumer/brand interaction online. Social networking sites are beginning to introduce innovative ways that enable people to share video content on social media. Facebook has already tested out the concept of video images for profiles, meaning you can have a video as a profile instead of a picture.

8. Culture relevance

2016 will see more brands pushing towards enhancing their online engagement with customers by appealing to the diverse aspects of society, especially in the continent. We have seen the introduction of dark skin toned emojis. Dove have recently developed curly-haired emoji's and will be launching the "Dove Love Your Curls" emoji keyboard to diversify the existing set of emojis to help promote the Dove Quench products for women with naturally curly hair. Dove will also partner with Twitter so that every time someone uses a #LoveYourCurls hashtag, a custom Dove Curly Emoji will auto-generate within the tweet.



Music and mobile are already huge in Africa © Ion Chiosea – 123RF.com

9. Mobile radio streaming

Radio listening has moved beyond the traditional radio set. There is an increasingly young audience preferring to listen to their favourite station via online streaming, especially with many consumers commuting for many hours to work every day - it helps with the monotony of the journey besides keeping them up to date.

Lastly and more generally, mobile advertising will claim its fair share of ad spend as advertisers and marketers try to reach the African consumer.

This is an incredible time for digital, platforms, content types, social media networks and advertising solutions and the radical transformations that are taking place globally will soon find their way on the African continent.

ABOUT MARC SPRIESTERSBACH

Marc Spriestersbach is a veteran of the South African advertising industry, having started out at Bates Wells in 1982.
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