

Meeting youth in their need space

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Bongani Chinkanda, CEO of HDI Youth Marketeers, has been announced as one of the speakers at the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Conference 2018 to be held at Vodaworld on 8 February. He shares his insights on connecting with township youth.



With 50% of the South African population comprising under 24s, it remains glaringly clear that no brand can afford to alienate the youth market. It may be slightly depressing to read that South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world, (with a Gini Coefficient of 0.63%) and that our youth remain the poorest of the poor; but let's try to look at this with an alternative set of goggles.

Let's take a moment to explore what it is that brands can do to raise the narrative of these young disenfranchised youth, whilst concurrently propelling the business objective of their own brands. We're talking about a mutually beneficial strategy that is not to be confused with ticking corporate social investment boxes (I say this without diminishing the important role of CSI).

Combing through historical data from the annual Sunday Times Generation Next study, a couple of very interesting patterns stand out. The Sunday Times Generation Next Survey celebrates 15 years of polling thousands of youth (aged 8-24) to find out what makes them tick every year.

Seventeen years ago, in March, a new brand was born in Stellenbosch. This brand, which is now rated the World's Best Bank in 2017 is Capitec Bank. Capitec Bank is the only bank in the world to achieve five stars, beating local contenders Absa, FirstRand, Nedbank and Standard Bank as well as global leaders such as HSBC, Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase.

The bank operates as a retail bank that serves both individuals and businesses, but doesn't provide business banking for close corporations, companies, partnerships or trusts. Simplifying the banking experience is the focus, and this resonates with youth across the board, more so when we refer to lower income groups.

Capitec's business model is focused on providing value for its clients. Curiously, youth perception around Capitec is that they offer the lowest banking fees, despite this not being factually correct.

Our research tells us that some of the reasons behind the bank's success amongst the youth (it leapfrogged from fourth in the Coolest Bank category to second place in just three years) include the value perception that they are so good at creating, recruiting great staff who are young, relatable and friendly, ubiquity which means accessibility; and providing tailor-made bank experiences for consumers. Capitec took first place for the Coolest Bank category amongst African youth, and the majority of youth across kids, teens and young adults reported to banking with Capitec Bank.

Another brand that comes to mind, is the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), the political party that's become synonymous with parliamentary disruptions, and making headlines – the latest of which is related to the largely divisive #FeesMustFall campaign, after controversially advocating students be allowed to walk-in and apply for university acceptance for the current academic year.

Whether one agrees with the EFF's tactics or motives, the one thing this fledgling political party is getting right is that they

advocate for the youth interests. The party has been lauded for their youthful reflection. They tout education and apparently lead this conversation by example. In 2017, EFF leader Julius Malema graduated with a BA-Honours Degree in Philosophy at University of South Africa (UNISA), whilst the National Spokesperson for the party, Ndlozi, was awarded his PhD student in Political Sociology at the University of Witwatersrand.

The take-away is that what these two brands share, is that they are not waiting for youth to come to them, in order for them to provide some sort of service. They are engaging youth and having these key conversations in the space that youth occupy.

It appears that creating the correct perception is potentially more important than functional benefits. Of course these are key, but what matters most, is meeting your brand's target audience in their need space. Look for quick wins like refreshing the face of your staff, moving away from all things generic when engaging with your consumer, remembering the importance of a brand's agility.

What tools might your brand use to accomplish this? We look forward to unpacking some of these at the [Integrated Marketing Communications Conference 2018](#) and to assisting you in finding the next part of your disruptive brand story.

Integrated Marketing Communications Conference 2018

Bongani Chinkanda will speak at the Integrated Marketing Communications Conference 2018 on 8 February 2018, Vodaworld, Midrand. Twenty-seven of the industry's top minds will present across three stages, tackling nine topical themes in interactive sessions under the theme Evaluate, Consolidate, Integrate. Heated debates, networking platforms and learning content will be packed into one exhilarating day as big brands, top agencies and media owners come together to examine how the local and continental marketing industry is embracing new and exciting trends in the emerging market space.

Register here: <http://imcconference.com/conference/johannesburg-2018/home/>.

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