

Increased recognition for communications campaigns executed in Africa

 By [Kelli Knutsen](#)

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The economic surge in Africa has increased the need for world-class communications across the continent and has in turn been mirrored by the increased recognition for communications campaigns executed across Africa.

In 2015, The Public Relations Institute of South Africa, responsible for hosting the Prism Awards, introduced the Pan-African Campaign of the Year, a new award to recognise excellence in PR in Africa. In addition to this, the first ever African Excellence Awards took place in 2016, once again to acknowledge top-notch PR in Africa.

Industry awards are a dime a dozen, but the magnitude of the challenges communications professionals have to be cognisant of and overcome to execute a campaign, is what truly makes Africa-specific awards spectacular.

When communicating in Africa, a 'one-size-fits-all' approach doesn't work. Individual markets have many differing factors, which makes communications challenging.

Individual markets need to be understood, prioritised and a custom-made solution needs to be applied to achieve results. Executing a PR campaign that changes behaviour and builds advocacy, requires consideration of all cultural nuances and economic status. Something which is considered the norm in one African country may be offensive in another.

Subsequently, content needs to be highly customised for the individual African market, unless it transcends borders as well as cultural boundaries. The language and tone used needs to be relevant to the local people.



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Trevor Chueu, Africa Lead at FleishmanHillard, identifies one of the biggest challenges he faces when activating a campaign, “With high penetration in Africa in mobile communication, some countries have adopted usage faster than others. Media consumption needs to be looked at closely. The finer details such as whether the market is using a feature phone or smart phone will determine how you communicate to the target audience. Can they only read an SMS? Can they access social media channels? Do they have internet access? These are all questions which need to be answered before execution.”

“Infrastructure development is another communications challenge still prevalent in Africa. The challenge of mobility impacts the access to radio, newspapers, internet, etc., and ultimately prevents consumers from certain types of media consumption,” adds Chueu.

With the challenges of executing a PR campaign in Africa in mind, Chueu voices his opinion around judging the Africa-specific awards, “Whenever we achieve remarkable PR results, the judging criteria needs to measure the results against the challenges faced when activating a campaign. If an agency was not able to communicate due to Africa-specific issues, how the PR professionals come up with a creative way to reach the target audience, should be a big consideration.”

Chueu adds, “PR professionals need to show us how they have creatively adapted to a market when they deliver the campaign. I personally believe that when scrutinising PR campaigns, we need to take into consideration the market in which it was executed. A concept considered as creative and ingenious in the Kenyan market, may not necessarily be seen in the same light in South Africa. Equally, the judges of these awards should be pan-African, representing many cultures.”

ABOUT KELLI KNUTSEN

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