

Africa to lead the mobile creative revolution

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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This year's DStv Seminar of Creativity started off with an inspirational bang, delivered in the form of Sarah Personette, VP global business marketing at Facebook. Recently being inducted into the American Advertising Federation's Hall of Achievement and named one of *Advertising Age* magazine's 'top 40 under 40' marketing stars in 2014, her opinion and advice carries weight.



Sarah Personette, VP global business marketing, Facebook. Source: Gallo Images.

Imagine the audience's excitement then, when she stated that the African community is set up to lead the industry. And the reason for that is the rapid scale of mobile adoption. Personette explained that it took 38 years for radio to hit 50 million users in the world, television took 14 years to hit that number, it took digital four years, and it's taken mobile only two years. "We have just been through the most seismic shift in history; a shift that is grounded in accessibility, connectivity and driven by mobile."

Mobile first

Africa is a mobile-first continent. Personette claims that there are over 80 million people in sub-Saharan Africa on Facebook. 90% of people that access Facebook in the African market do so via mobile, and interestingly, three quarters of those accessing Facebook in South Africa will only ever do so through mobile.

One doesn't have to look far for an example of how mobile is causing industry disruption. "Connectivity inspires creativity and it's transforming Africa," she says. Mobile connectivity on the continent is becoming smarter, faster and its economic impact is increasing.

- **Smarter:** There will be 500 million smartphone connections in Africa by 2020.
- **Faster:** 1 billion mobile broadband connections in sub-Saharan Africa, which represents 60% of the connection base.
- **Economic impact:** \$100 billion is the economic impact that mobile will have in Africa. \$6 million is the number of jobs that will be influenced as a result of mobile disruption and connectivity.

Millennial-rich

Aside from being mobile first, Africa will continue to be rich with a highly sought-after consumer demographic. The global population is getting older, but not so in Africa. In fact, there are over 200 million millennials on the continent and over the next 30 years it's expected to grow at twice the rate of the rest of the world. And based on Personette's experience dealing with clients, brands harbour a strong desire to connect with millennials in order to grow their business.

Mobile edge

"Mobile matters more in Africa, and it's the things that matter here that actually matter when designing and creating for this platform." She says that the above belief of hers gives African marketers the edge for three reasons, important when designing and creating for a mobile platform.

Personalisation: South Africa alone has 11 official languages, and marketers have been brought up in an industry where connecting with people in their language has mattered. This isn't a challenge that many marketers face in the rest of the world. Take that talent and use it to export creativity to the rest of the world.

Customisation: There are elements of hacking together global usage here that are fuelling inspiration around the world. Examples are message-to-buy and cultivating new ways to think about missed calls.

Empathy: Bandwidth constraints are evident across the continent. Marketers here have thought about how to design and connect with people suffering these constraints.

Personette believes that Africa is set up to succeed more than any other market in the world, that the continent's greatest export will be creativity, and this will be based on a mobile and connected world. "If you started today not believing in the mobile evolution, it is time to start. It's time to realise that we need to think, create and design differently, because this is where people are. This is where we have the opportunity to connect in the most real and powerful way."

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