

## Breakfast Roundtable: Insights into Nigeria

24 April 2019

Marx Room, Quo Vadis Club

Soho, London



## Meeting Notes

### Attendee List

First name	Last name	Position	Company
Dee Maria	Olajide	Founder and CEO	Intentional Digital
Ed	Harkins	Managing Director	GBK Ventures
Emmanuel	Finndoro-Obasi	Director	Africa House London
Feyi	Olubodun	Managing Partner	Open Squares Africa
Hannah	Davies	Account Manager	OMD EMEA
Hannah	Motaln	Senior Account Manager	Gutenberg Global
Ian	Whittle	Head of Interactive	AMV BBDO
Lanre	Akinola	Editor	Nurmara
Lucy	Tesseract	Features Editor	Marketing Week
Mara	Faggion	Senior Account Manager	OMD EMEA
Matt	Gould	Senior Designer	RPM
Melanie	Chevalier	CEO and Founder	Creative Culture
Nick	Stockbridge	Director	Transmedia
Paul	Duncanson	Managing Partner Non Executive Director	Creativebrief Creative Culture
Peter	Stephenson-Wright	UK Director of Executive Education and Business Development	ESCP Europe
Rob	Morbin	General Manager	ICCO
Ronke	Lawal	Founder	Ariatu Public Relations
Stella	Opoku-Owusu	Deputy Director	Afford UK
Susan	Speller	PRCA Global Member Consultant	PRCA
Yemisi	Mokuolu	Director	Hatch Ideas Worldwide

## Introductions

To open the event, Paul Duncanson (PD) first welcomed all attendees and introduced the concept of our roundtables. He then asked for everyone to briefly introduce themselves.

PD invited Lanre Akinola, Editor at Nurmara, Feyi Olubodun, Managing Partner at Open Squares Africa, Emmanuel Finndoro-Obasi, Director at Africa House London, and Dee Maria Olajide, Founder and CEO at Intentional Digital, to share some of their knowledge and insight on the Nigerian political, social and economic conditions, as well as on managing marketing and communications activity in the country.

## General Discussion Points

### Politics and Economics

As Africa's biggest economy, largest oil producer, and most populous country with almost 200 million inhabitants, Nigeria has huge growth potential as a consumer market. Its population should surpass the US by 2030, even though the country is only the size of California. Its main asset is its inhabitants, who have a reputation for being dynamic, entrepreneurial and successful, not only in Nigeria but all over the world. Nigeria is also a very young country, since the average population is less than 30 years old.

Whilst Nigeria is a very diverse country which has over 300 tribes and 500 languages, the cultural differences amongst millennials might not be as important as within older age groups (they aren't to be ignored however). The millennial generation in Nigeria is becoming more integrated, as inter-tribe marriage becomes more normalised - something that would not have been accepted in previous generations.

However, the country struggles to maximise its potential, in part through a lack of infrastructure and a lack of meaningful institutions. According to the World Poverty Clock, Nigeria has overtaken India, with over 90 million people living in extreme poverty. But, alarming as these statistics are, the need for many Nigerians to survive on their own and to face difficult situations is one of the reasons why they are so resourceful and successful.

Politically, Nigeria has just gone through an election, with Muhammadu Buhari being elected again, after a first mandate in 2015. Therefore, little change in economic or social policy is to be expected and no major changes should be implemented by the government in the upcoming years.

It is interesting to point out that although Nigeria has a very young population, only 18 years old on average, they voted to elect an older man, as Muhammadu Buhari is 76 years old. This can be explained by the fact that younger generations think that older people are wiser and more suited to lead a country.

Corruption is prevalent in the country and is largely factored into the business environment.

### **Nigerian culture**

Nigerians are very much attached to the idea of belonging to a community (as opposed to individualism which is prevalent in Western countries).

The current drive is to modernise the country without Westernising it. This is reflected across different levels of society, from food to fashion and music. Rather than choosing an international brand, Nigerians will favour local ones.

The Nigerian way of thinking is very different from the Western one, rather than trying to change things, they tend to find ways of succeeding in spite of the (often harsh) environment they find themselves in.

Humour is integral to the culture and there seems to be no limit as to what they can joke about. Although they might be accused of not being serious enough, it is also a way to cope with a difficult environment.

Nigerians are proud of their music tradition. Whilst Nigerian music used to be very local, it has now become more and more popular all over Africa.

Nigerians remain very attached to their culture which they carry with them wherever they go to live and work.

### **Main advertising channels**

Radio is the most important advertising channel in Nigeria, with 97% penetration. TV comes second, with significant prime time programme and channel audiences - a long term tradition and practice and as such still offers an important advertising medium. Social media advertising has developed significantly in the past few years with mobile now beginning to impact communication bandwidth significantly.

### **Use of social media**

Being a particularly young country, Nigeria has been taken by storm by social media platforms. Instagram, especially, has the ability to create celebrities overnight, who then go on to become brand ambassadors. Comedians also have a growing influence on social media, reflecting the cultural importance of humour in Nigerian society. Additionally, many companies grow their brand and sales through Instagram, a platform that makes it harder to track amounts of money transacted.

### **Doing business in Nigeria**

Nigerian business culture is profoundly different to Western countries, and thus the best way to operate in the country is to follow the established structure.

It was stressed that the importance of finding the right local partner when looking to expand or do business in Nigeria is essential, and of not rushing into the process. Working with an unsuitable counterpart might entail communication issues and a lack of cultural understanding. Identifying the right partner, on the other hand, is necessary to build trust. Giving them a small pilot project to begin

with is a good way to test their reliability and the quality of their service. The right partner should be able to intermediate for you and understand what you need as well as provide you with the right tools to operate in this market.

Another key aspect is to take the time to visit the country and observe social and business culture. It appears particularly complicated to do business in Nigeria without being there and understanding its population and culture.

Learning a few words of one of the key local languages (particularly Nigerian Pidgin, which is a derived form of English), as well as having a good personal code of conduct, is always helpful. Preparation of a business plan is also essential to the process.

Face-to-face meetings are crucial to build relationships. For Nigerians, having good chemistry and a connection with their business partners is essential (society is qualitative vs. quantitative even when it comes to business terms). Although it is tempting to predominantly communicate by email, telephone and WhatsApp are generally a better way to exchange with local partners or customers.

Generally speaking, Nigerians have a different sense of time than Western cultures. Processes can take substantially longer than they were initially meant to. This can apply both for a two-hour long meeting or to a three-year business plan. Foreigners need to be aware of this and to adapt as things tend to move fairly slowly.

Finally, those wishing to do business in Nigeria should bear in mind how tough the operating environment can be. That being said, the country also offers many opportunities and those who manage to work as a team with the right partner can be successful.

### **What this means for brands**

Overall, Nigerians are very receptive to foreign brands, which they find aspirational.

Some sectors including FMCG, are dominated by foreign brands, as the cost to set up and establish a company/brand can be prohibitively high, preventing Nigerian brands from launching and prospering.

That being said, brands should make the effort to localise their campaigns in Nigeria. The example of a campaign launched by Hero lager, a brand owned by a Nigerian group called International Breweries Plc (itself part of Anheuser-Busch InBev), was put forward to showcase how successful a brand could be when it understands and leverages the country's culture. Brands like Guinness and Heineken used to be dominant in the country before Hero launched a campaign in the southeast of Nigeria. It was based on the anniversary of a local war leader's death, with a red cork to symbolise heroism. The campaign was extremely successful in the region as it resonated with their culture, pride and values. The brand went on to gain a 10% market share and progressively expand throughout the country.

As the Southeastern population of Nigeria has the largest proportion of beer consumers (who are also very proud of their culture), the brand knew how critical it was to be successful in that region first to then expand to the rest of the country.

Brands should also use the entertainment industry to raise awareness in Nigeria. One of the best ways to do that would be to use a famous comedian to promote their product, or have a Nigerian band sing about their brand. To be successful, foreign brands need to sit within the culture, instead of outside it.

Although global brands generally implement brand guidelines that are to be used across all their markets, it remains important to adapt them to come up with truly localised campaigns.

Brands should always strive to be genuine in communication and to always focus on one target audience at a time, in order to be culturally relevant. When developing campaigns, brands should make sure to include Nigerians in the co-creating process, and bear in mind that the way they tell a story depends on who they are targeting, as the country is so diverse.

With hundreds of tribes and languages from different religious aspirations across very diverse regions and levels of wealth, Nigeria is a fragmented country, which requires several layers of adaptation and localisation when it comes to advertising. The country was described as a “melting pot of subcultures”.

Adverts tend to be developed in English and then adapted into the three or four main languages in the country. However, across the entire country people speak what they call Nigerian Pidgin. Visuals also need to be adapted between each region. For example, it would be impossible for a brand to launch an ad featuring a woman on her own in the north of the country, as this is predominantly an Islamic based culture but it would be possible in the mainly Christian south.

Brands should always test their campaigns before rolling them out in Nigeria. A few years ago, Guinness launched its #MadeofBlack campaign, showcasing why people should be proud of being black. While it was particularly successful in Ghana, the campaign did not work in Nigeria. As the two countries are perceived as being fairly similar, it was interesting to see that they reacted differently to such a topic.

### Tips for brands

Mélanie Chevalier concluded the meeting summarising key learnings and asking our local experts to share some do's and don'ts when it comes to operating and communicating in Nigeria.

#### **Do:**

- Visit the country before doing business there
- Protect yourself by signing a contract and a code of conduct with local partners and customers
- Be open to learning about the culture, observing people and not being judgmental
- Be empathetic and patient as Nigerians evolve in a harsh environment

#### **Don't:**

- Forget to collect your money after doing business
- Work without a contract
- Implement anything before testing it locally
- Create anything without a trusted partner

The meeting concluded at 10.30am.