

Rebranding Africa - The Cheetah Generation

Rachel Lasebikan, WGSN 04.07.07

Following on from our first Rebranding Africa article, WGSN takes a look at some of the African businesses that are changing Africa's image and addressing the continent's issues with innovative solutions.

There is an inseparable link between the image of a country and its business brands and **we are experiencing a significant change from resource wealth creation in Africa to product and innovation** as new products and services including film, animation, clothing and magazines fuel a newfound respect in Africa.

A new generation of Africans - entrepreneurial, optimistic, inventive, undaunted - are shaping a very different future for their homeland. **'The cheetah generation'** a phrase coined by prominent Ghanaian economist **George Ayittey** in his book **'Africa Unchained'**, has been used to describe these young, fast-moving people.

In a recent article for the Ghana Cyber group he wrote "... they are not going to wait for governments to come and do things for them. **In the coming years, you will be hearing more about the 'Cheetah generation,' and the 'Cheetah revolution' in Africa.**" Africa's salvation he says rests on the back of these cheetahs.

Innovation



[1-3] Mobah Rural Horizons Desert Cooler, Pronto Condom Advert ([readers should be able to click on it to view at -http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuNrMZ1bzG0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuNrMZ1bzG0))

Pronto Condoms is an example of a brand in Africa that **is addressing internal problems through a unique design feature** and clever advertising. **Willem van Rensburg**, a Cape Town based inventor approached Metropolitan Life Ltd and the company agreed to manufacture the product, as the concept fitted well their philosophy for **the prevention of HIV/Aids**. Pronto Condoms **will not manufacture**

for the world market. Instead, they license the technology to other manufacturers, both locally and abroad. Pronto Condoms has released a number of **television adverts**, which can be seen on You Tube, to the amusement of the world.

As businesses launch across the continent, many do so in the face of adversity. A lack of infrastructure such as consistent electricity to power computers often obstructs the best of efforts, but it can also create **new business opportunities addressing core local problems.**

Two inventions that were highlighted, amongst many, at this years TED conference in June include:

- **Mohammed Bah Abba** of **Mobah Rural Horizons** from Kano, Nigeria who has designed and created an electricity refrigerator called **The Desert Cooler**, a new approach to refrigeration that's currently being used in places like the Sahel and the Darfur region to help preserve and cool vegetables and other perishable foods in these extremely hot environments. He has won the **Shell Award** for sustainable development.
- **Simon Mwacharo**, an alternative-energy visionary who has invented and markets the **Wind Cruiser turbine**, a small wind and solar powered generator designed for use around the continent, bringing alternative energy to areas that don't have a reliable power grid as well as other remote and rural parts of Africa. Once Africa has sustainable energy her potential is greatly increased.

L'afrique c'est chic

Aside from meeting Africa's challenges the Cheetah generation are also moving fast into the international luxury market.

At the **World Economic Forum on Africa 2007**, a number of Fashion industry specialists took part in the l'afrique c'est chic plenary session on the 14th June, to include **Robert Polet**, President and CEO, **Gucci Group**, Netherlands, **Oswald Boateng**, Designer and **Precious Moloi Motsepe**, Chairperson, **African Fashion International**, South Africa. They addressed Africa's growing opportunity and questioned:

- 1) With the uniqueness of Africa's heritage, does fashion represent a potential competitive advantage?
- 2) Can Africa sustain the trend or is it just another fad?
- 3) What does Africa need to do to benefit from the opportunity?

Many expressed; views on how **Africa could become competitive in the face of massive exports from China and other Asian nations**; a belief **that African products should have their own signature** that makes them different from other products in the world; that local companies have the **expertise, raw materials and market to be internationally competitive.** Some participants argued that they **cannot compete with international companies** and should stay within the niche African market.

Lynne Brown, Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Tourism of the **Western Cape Provincial Government, South Africa** said that "the secret lies in finding the elusive niche market... that **the Western Cape could attract**

international attention with uniquely African designs... and that the way to compete with goods that come in from the East is to create an image of elegance around African products.”

New Africa Design



[1-2]Deola Sagoe at Caribbean Fashion Week, Nena Kal Hunter modelling one of her hats, Ruff 'N Tumble, Nigeria,

Many designers are causing a storm across Africa. They are showing and exhibiting unique collections for both the African and export market across the continent and also abroad.

Deola Sagoe, a Nigerian designer and two-time international award winner has given **West African fashion in the 21st century a new international definition**. Deola, who flew the Nigerian flag at one of her shows, states that she **“creates designs that truly celebrate Africa and Nigeria”** and has been described as the African fashion designer who is **“best placed to interpret our cultural diversity and artistry”**.

Sagoe recently showed at **Caribbean Fashion Week** this June where **Andrew Tucker**, talent scout for The British Fashion Council observed that, **such an event is ‘important in promoting a country’s fashion identity**, both domestically and internationally, and can be a good source of revenue for the industry’.

With **West Africa’s fashion industry growing**, many designers who have lived abroad are attracted home, such as **Nena Kalu Ogba** who returned to Nigeria five years ago to become a hat designer after training with Mrs Rose Curry, a milliner to the late Queen Mother of England. Nana's business, **Nena Kal Hunter**, is bespoke, competitively priced and her business is online as the majority of her customers are in the UK.

Not all African companies are interested in export. **Ruff ‘N’ Tumble**, a Nigerian children’s clothing company has stated, "We don’t export now. **Export to the West African coast, yes, all along the West African coast, yes**, but to say, America or to England, I’m not interested in it at all. **If 40 percent of the 120 million people in Nigeria are children, I have the potential of a huge market here.**"



[1-3]Haldene Martin's famous café chairs, Comme des Garçons, by Daddy buy me a Pony, NEW AFRICA Brochure

NEWAFRICA - design at the cutting edge, is a design exhibition **due to show at the Rundetaarn Exhibition Hall in Copenhagen from 17 August to 30 September 2007**. It plans to **travel the world in 2008 and 2009**.

The exhibition promises to show the most **contemporary products from Africa**, "challenging prejudices against design from the African continent". It "aims to leave the audience with a refreshing view of the continent, by presenting a field where Africa is on the front edge of globalisation"

END

L'Afrique, C'est Chic! Session at at the World Economic Forum

www.weforum.org/en/knowledge/KN_SESS_SUMM_21529?url=/en/knowledge/KN_SESS_SUMM_21529

Caribbean fashion Week: www.caribbeanfashionweek.com,

The Other Africa: <http://www.theotherafrica.eu/TOAIntro.htm>

Deola Sagoe: www.deolasagoedesign.com

Nena Kal Hunter: www.nenakalhunter.com

Pronto Condoms: www.prontocondoms.co.za

Pronto Condom Advert: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuNrMZ1bzG0>)

NEW AFRICA Exhibition: <http://core.icograda.org/web/pdfs/synopsis.pdf> For more information go to www.solvgade.com

Mobah Rural Horizons

<http://www.worldaware.org.uk/awards/awards2001/mobah.html>