

"It's Corn"

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Would you ever have believed it possible that, "It's Corn" could drive a connection between a brand and its consumers.

The intriguing title of the Ask Afrika Icon brands awards presentation held at the Venue in Melrose Arch Johannesburg on 3 November 2022.

The primary point of view for this study is to identify brands that have become iconic.

The backdrop to being iconic is interesting. Brand loyalty has been on the decline for years. Given the increasing numbers of choices, sensitivity to the price, and pure affordability of a basket of goods it's little wonder. Kendall remarks, "Despite the decline in brand loyalty, 96% of South Africans are still loyal to at least 1 brand. Think about it, if you went through your basket there is likely at least one brand that you will always purchase over others. Whether it be a certain brand of pilchards, an insurer, a peanut butter, your bank - or allergy medication we all have that one thing that keeps us coming back for more."

"As executives trying to drive business growth, we need more information. We need to know how easy it is in your category to be that chosen brand and if we can see that there is potential we need to know how?" is the question to come to terms with.

Here are some themes that emerge:

1. Reach and Frequency - And Relevance

Many wake each morning reaching for phones to see what happened during sleep time. Messages are checked for urgent to-do's or taken note of. A (favourite) social medium is checked – also for news and daily context. Often when scrolling through social feeds we see that every 2-3 posts are sponsored posts. Also known as paid-for advertising. The same is seen when we Google something. The top 5 posts for each subject are an "AD" – a sponsored post.

This suggests that the name of the game has been the share of voice – in favour of those with larger budgets. Good old-fashioned reach and frequency, brand visibility and perceived accessibility.

However, if the messages are invasive, not relevant - at best they will be ignored, or worse – branders run the risk of brand alienation. Especially amongst an increasingly critical younger market who have the propensity to take exception if you are seen to be imposing a point of view, without consultation and interaction, and some form of connection.



If every 2-3 posts on FB is advertising what will happen when the metaverse reaches maturity? It's unlikely that reach and frequency is going to be an impactful strategy.

2. The Choice Quandary: Choice and too much choice

Customers have more choices than ever before. Forty years ago, there were four insurance organisations, and today there are 40 or more organisations offering a different version.

The internet, online shopping – access to global platforms provides a boggling amount of choice. An inevitable outcome is that in some crowded categories the risk of customer dissatisfaction arises. People ask, post purchase, “have I made the right choice?” – post-purchase dissonance. The difference between being in a category that has a chosen brand and one that has multiple close competitors determines what, how many times, across a personal portfolio, consumers are choosing.

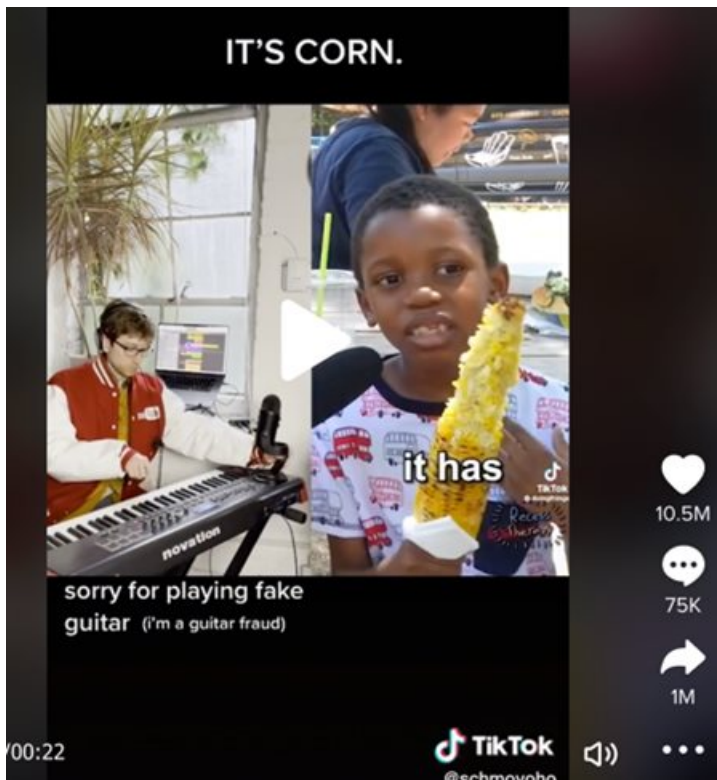
A simplified theory of choice is the relationship between emotion and cognition. Savvy branders have achieved an optimum balance to maximise the potential satisfaction a person has post their decision.

Most Ask Afrika frameworks are built on the complex nature of decision.

3. From “one way” to “two way” to in the storylines the embodiment of organic marketing

When branders move from telling people what the brander wants them to think versus creating a conversational environment in which consumers feel embedded in the brand conversation, and even feel the desire to create their versions of how the brand makes them feel, then the foundation of organic marketing are set. When people create TikTok videos that go viral and create an idea that others begin to own, creating songs then something magic begins to happen.

Here's the “It's corn” self-modelled movie star.



As movie stars do, the corn kid became famous. People started connecting with one another on a different level through the content. Some started sharing stories of this connection, whilst branders adopted this story as the future of marketing. Getting people to speak about the brand and how it fits the contexts of their lives. (Unlike an influencer who is paid to recommend a brand).

Savvy branders are creating experiences that link to a person's values to drive an emotional reaction that drive overall performance.
Experiences in which people are embraced as being in the narrative.

Linking to someone's values requires a deep understanding of who our customers are		
I want to get to the very top in my career (21% - 25,4%)	VS	I don't want <u>responsibility</u> , I'd rather be told what to do (12,4% - 16,7%)
I really enjoy cooking (18,3% - 24,1%)	VS	I like to prepare meals with the least effort involved (16,9% - 20,9%)
I drink alcohol in moderation (9,4% - 12,8%)	VS	When I visit <u>restaurants</u> I often order an alcoholic <u>beverage</u> (7,0% - 11,1%)

When looking at it from the customer's point of view – with the aid of digital technologies in a virtual world the new possibilities that have opened up from a digital perspective the possibilities are endless.

"Driving experience is going to become more important as we step into the virtual future where you as a person can experience anything your heart desires" says Kendall.

4. Categories that produce icon brands, and those that tend not to and the reasons why

It is easier to be a chosen brand in some categories compared to others. The categories where we have an outright winner (high solus usage) compared to the rest are distinctive for good reason: The food category delivers more icon brands because there are many sub-categories. Pharma follows. The willingness to try anything but a tried and trusted “medical potion or tablet” is lower.

It's mostly a category phenomenon

Some categories are at risk of consumers widening their personal shopping portfolios. Fish, Frozen Veg, frozen potato, Rice, seasoning, tinned food, some non-alcoholic beverages face this reality.

- For most – the most important factor considered when customers are making a purchase is price.
- Despite the importance of price consumers are willing to pay more for convenience
- Price is not the most important across categories
- Brand Image is No 1 when choosing a cell phone
- Advertising is most important when choosing a credit card, Life Insurance and a Savings & Investment solution

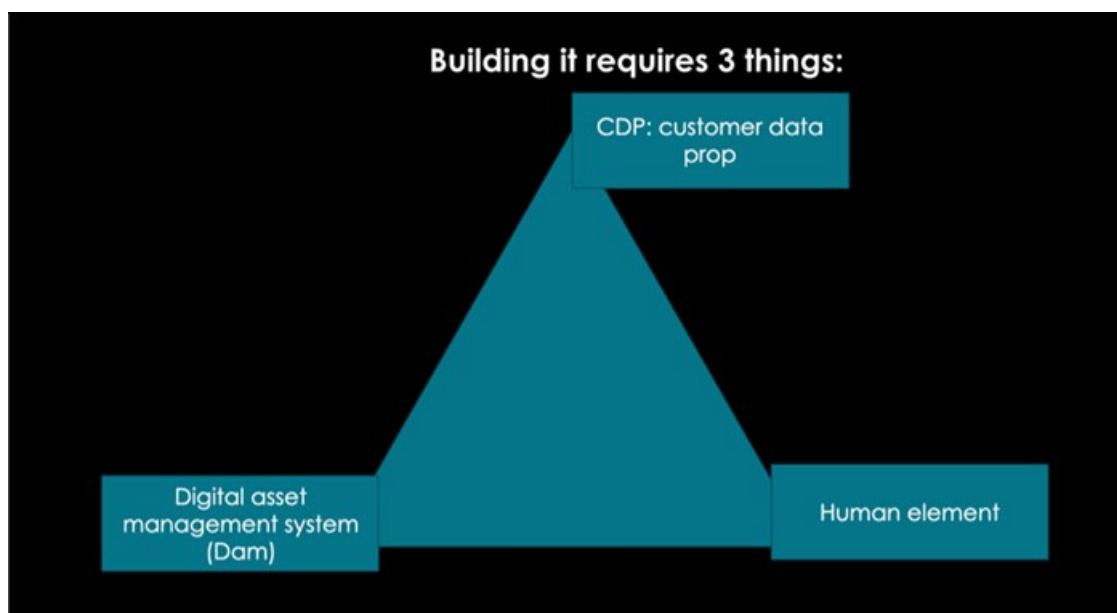
Price aside, differences do exist between categories one thing that stands out is how important advertising is to consumers that do have a chosen brand. Advertising is consistently more important to those who have a chosen brand (solus consumers) compared to those that don't.

5. The right message to the right person at the right time

Easy to proclaim, harder to put into practice.

Many branders are building CDP (Customer Data Propositions) and DAM (Digital Asset Management) systems.

For instance – a hypothetical - a giant global FMCG has 2 billion customers globally – across many categories. Utopia is to be able to gather data, on these people, create cohorts/personas – for Journey Mapping that is steeped in the data, for messaging that's relevant. It's an iterative system, requiring constant refining and optimisation.



“Ask Afrika we build lakes not dams. It's our business to leverage data that is exist and enhance it with what isn't in existence as yet.”

To conclude Kendall rounds off her presentation, “The name of the game has shifted from share of voice, reach and frequency to managing for “It's corn moments”. When you love your customers so much, they begin to love you back, by creating immersive, experiential happenings then the brand love will shine through. This is how campaigns go truly viral.

When songs are created and others become curious then the magic happens. Add experiential techniques that feel so personal. Driving YOUR BMW on mars – or wherever you like. Of course, having a solid knowledge foundation steeped in data, and insights about the emotional needs of your customers, cognition and emotion combine seamlessly for impactful strategy”.

- " **Challenging to achieve Ask Afrika Icon Brands status in the FMCG industry** 18 Mar 2024
- " **The 2023/2024 Ask Afrika Icon Brands winners announced** 7 Feb 2024
- " **Which brands are 2023/2024's most iconic?** 31 Jan 2024
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