

Dali Tembo – Culture: redefining the African narrative



By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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This exclusive #BizTrends2024 interview is with the CEO and co-founder of The Culture Foundry Company, Dali Tembo.

Tembo chats to *Bizcommunity* Marketing & Media editor, Danette Breitenbach on the shifting African narrative, the role of culture and how culture is proving to be a powerful tool for brands to connect with these audiences on a deeper level.

Africa has always been a huge source of inspiration for the rest of the world, with a plethora of people who have played big roles on the global stage. In the 90s a barrage of international brands was already in the African cultural space.

"But, for the first time, we are really seeing the opportunity for Africa to have a huge influence on the rest of the world and to control the narrative that goes to the rest of the world," he says.

This interview is also available on [YouTube](#), via downloadable [App](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#) and [IONO.FM](#).

Commodification of culture

This is because the barriers to entry have changed. “Back then there were many barriers to entry for these brands. Even in the early 2000s, the price of data was a barrier or access to the knowledge to get you into hip-hop culture or some of the many other types of cultures, you needed to know someone who would function as a conduit into that world.

“Today, with the internet, you have access to these subcultures in a matter of seconds. The uptake of African culture (think music and fashion) globally that we are witnessing, is, in part, due to the Internet,” says Tembo.

As a result, as brands look for relevance and recognise that the power of cultural symbols and traditions resonate with consumers, there has been an increasing commodification of culture,” he adds.

Brands, he says, are asking how do we stay relevant, asking: “Who's next? What is next? What is the ultimate in terms of the cultural zeitgeist for people and what subcultures are super important?”

Agencies, he says need to have conversations with brands around this. “Is it by just giving a bunch of money and slapping your brand over it, or is it about genuine and authentic collaboration? Is it about long-term commitment to assisting people to get more exposure?

“These are the types of questions and engagement that we're having with brands that I think is critical and something we need to look more and more into in 2024.”



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Culture: A powerful tool for brands

Authenticity and connection are the big trends Tembo hopes to see flourish in 2024.

“I am expecting authenticity to flourish this year but embedded in reverse innovation.

“Reverse innovation talks about places in the emerging market starting to establish themselves on the global stage, and even more in the developed world.

“And we are seeing it, with lots of examples in business, but also seeing in culture, arts, and creatives making a splash internationally.”

In terms of connection, this is one he says we have talked about for the last five years and that is the establishment of these innovation hubs in all the major centres on the continent with people producing amazing innovations with real impacts on communities.

“In South Africa, we've had so much exposure to local community heroes changing how townships work, providing free services that the government has struggled to provide.”



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Redefining the African narrative

As such, he says there has been a shift in that Africans are now able to see themselves how the international community views them, and we can see that we are on a par or, in some areas, better than, what the rest of the world is producing.

For example, Tyla, with first song by a South African soloist to enter the US Billboard Hot 100 in 55 years.

“From businesspeople, entrepreneurs, to creatives producing amazing content, for the first time, what we are seeing is the opportunity to have a huge influence on the rest of the world and to control the narrative that goes to the rest of the world.

“While some of the big economic issues, political issues, social issues are still there for Africa, and difficult for us to find answers for, this is helping us understand that we can help define where our future is going.”

Dali Tembo is a highly regarded futurist, TEDx speaker, and co-author of the book The Future is Now. He is also the CEO and co-founder of The Culture Foundry Company, a global consumer insights agency that delivers trend guidance to companies and clients in 25 countries across Africa and the world, from Europe to India.

[The Culture Foundry](#)

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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