

"No place for one-size-fits-all in truly relatable regional storytelling" - Lanre Adisa

By  Leigh Andrews

19 Jul 2019

With the year's biggest international award shows done and dusted, I chatted to the regional jurors ahead of the upcoming Loeries Creative Week. Next in the series is this year's Live, PR and OOH juror Lanre Adisa, also CEO/CCO of Noah's Ark Communications, Nigeria.



Lanre Adisa, CEO/CCO of Noah's Ark Communications, Nigeria, and Loeries 2019 Live, PR and OOH juror.

Adisa's story is a tale of the entrepreneurial African spirit.

He started out as a trainee copywriter 29 years ago and since then has worked for some of the top agencies in Nigeria, holding creative leadership positions.

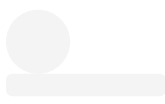
The last agency he worked at was TBWA\Concept, where he was the executive creative director. He then started Noah's Ark in 2008, and hasn't looked back as they've grown from a startup of fewer than ten people to Nigeria's most awarded agency, creating category-shifting work for some of the biggest and most influential brands in the country.

About three years ago, Noah's Ark became an affiliate creative agency of Dentsu Aegis Network, and describe themselves as "a young ad agency working hard to change the face of advertising in Nigeria." Adisa says:

“ Beyond this is the culture that has evolved from our journey so far. Because this is Noah's Ark, everyone here is a creative animal of some sorts, with their own avatar. There's a general air of freedom to be who you are in that animal kingdom, which has influenced our approach to work and life. ”

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Link these Arknimals to their Avatars! One of the cool things we do in the Ark is choosing an Avatar! Everyone gets to choose an Animal Avatar that says something about their personality. So yeah, that's the background story on "Arknimal"💎💎 #ReArkivate #NoahsArkCommunications

A post shared by [Noah's Ark Communications](#) (@noahsarkcomm) on Jun 26, 2019 at 6:20am PDT

Adisa also served as a juror for the Brand Experience & Activation Lions at Cannes Lions 2018, marking [Nigeria's first time](#) representing behind the scenes at this global festival of creativity.

He clearly understands what drives the creatives who thrive in this industry and has visited SA numerous times, even attending the Loeries as a delegate before, so who better to judge on the 2019 Loeries' Live, PR and OOH work, under jury president Ralf Heuel?



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I chatted to Adisa about regional differences in creative work, his judging expectations, and more...

■ **Let's kick off with something meaty: How does work from your region differ to what you've seen from SA?**

Clearly, SA and Nigeria are two different markets. Owing to the state of its economy, infrastructure and other factors, SA has always had an edge over other markets in Africa. It's had the advantage of being exposed to and influenced by Western advertising principles from way back.

Therefore, most work from SA from back then was work that easily would appeal to that international audience. But I do know that it's also evolving with its current socio-political reality. And that's where we may have something in common.

Here in Nigeria, our industry is going through a lot of changes. With the opening up of the political space after years of military rule, the need to tell our own stories has been more urgent than ever.



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Leigh Andrews 3 May 2019



We've seen this in the ascendance of Nollywood and the new wave of content driven by the power of social media powered by the youth. With the political and economic space opening up, we've also seen an influx of international brands who come with their own expectations of creativity.

The work coming out of our market today reflects a higher sense of identity than before. And that's a good development.

■ ***It sure is. What makes you excited about brand communications then? What new skills and technologies do you see coming through in media and advertising right now?***

The greatest joy for me comes from being part of a team that consistently offers creative solutions to our clients' business problems.

“ We pride ourselves as an extension of our clients' businesses. Seeing these solutions translate to results is the adrenaline that keeps us going. ”

One common thing that is emerging in our work and, I dare say, that is influencing our market in general, is the rise of storytelling in a way that is relatable to our local experiences.



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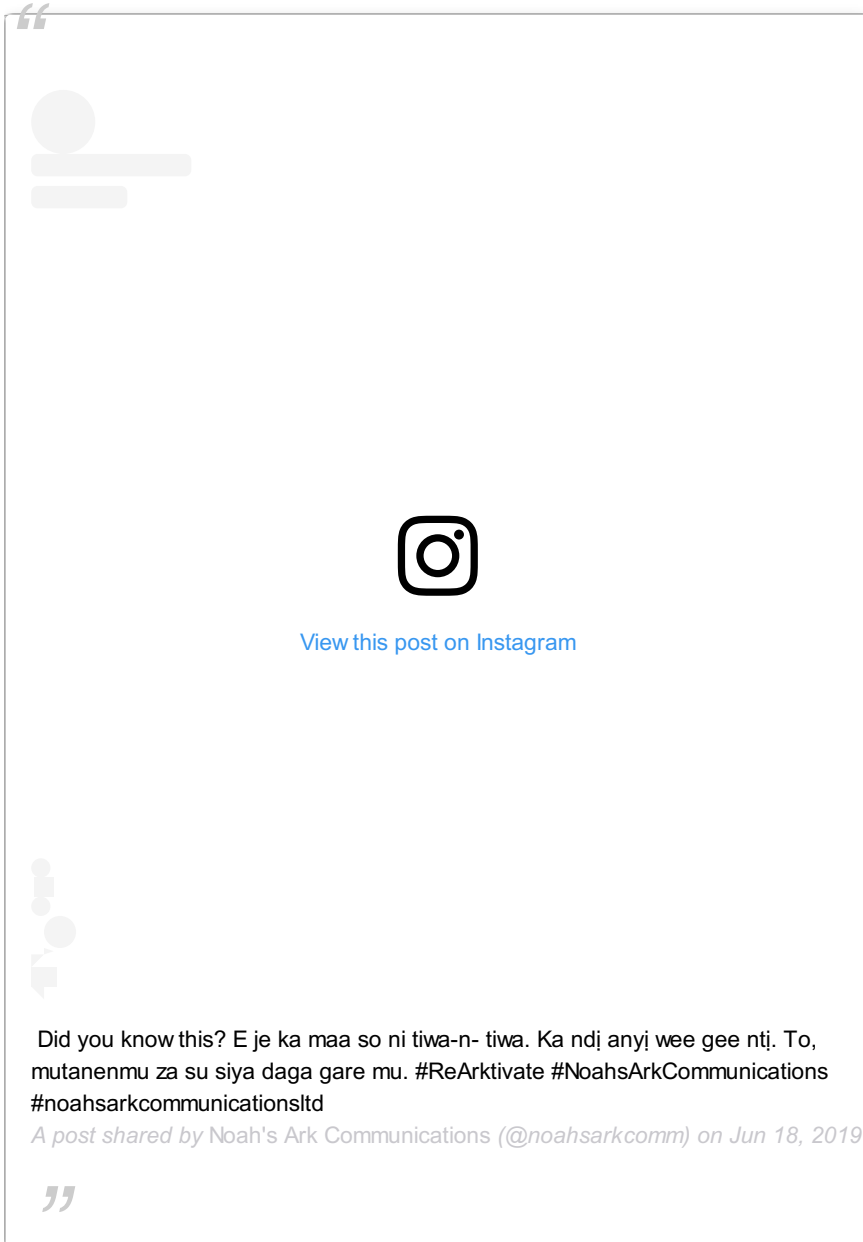


We have deployed this so well that we have been able to convert our audience to fans and advocates of our work. This has been further boosted by the rising power of digital.

■ ***Excellent. Do you think the tenets of a successful media campaign are universal? What makes a campaign work in your country?***

By and large, the most effective communication is that which reflects our realities, be they personal or local, in a fresh, bold way. It may make us laugh, think, cry or take certain actions we weren't thinking of before.

Sometimes the issue may be human and universal. Even at that, our audience must be able to relate to it. So it can never be 'one size fits all'.



For any work to be successful here, it needs to mine the things that are peculiar to the local audience and express them in a way that is down-to-earth and entertaining or action-inducing.

■ **With that in mind, what's unique about brand communications in Africa and the Middle East?**

The first thing to note is that ours is a young continent. It's the same thing you'll find in the Middle East.

These young people are smart and tech-savvy. They know what they want and sometimes they bring about change using the power of their numbers and their knowledge of today's technology, as we've seen in the Middle East and most recently, in Sudan.

As brand people, this is something that is propelling us to do better work.

“ The rate of urbanisation in Africa is on the rise. Today, content is created and consumed without boundaries. This is where we play today. Understanding our audience and the new reality of our world is driving us to work better and raise our game. ”

We are no more in the business of just creating advertising; we are all about relatable and relevant content that delivers results.

■ **That's for sure. What kind of innovation and creative work will you be looking for as a judge of the Loeries 2019?**

I'm looking forward to the evolution of the African narrative. How are we telling our stories with all the new tools at our disposal?



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Leigh Andrews 26 Apr 2019



I'll be looking forward to ideas that deliver solutions we never thought possible using what we know in ways we never could have imagined. I look forward to being blown away by all these beauties.

What else are you looking forward to from Loeries Creative Week 2019?

I would like to see what's going on across the continent and the Middle East. I expect to see how we as a continent can enrich the global conversation on creativity with our own unique narratives inspired by our experiences across various cultures and realities.



#AfricaMonth: "It's time to celebrate cultural nuances in creativity" - Andrew Human

Leigh Andrews 1 Jun 2018



I hope Loeries will boost the confidence of ad men and women in Africa to keep raising the standards, keep doing great work so that one day the world will come to celebrate us like it does other regions.

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The Cat speaks

A post shared by Noah's Ark Communications (@noahsarkcomm) on Jun 3, 2019 at 5:13am PDT

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Excellent insights on the power of telling better regional stories. If you can't wait for Loeries Creative Week Durban, taking place from 22 to 24 August 2019, keep an eye on the Loeries' [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) feeds and stay tuned for my interviews with more of the regional jurors and all the latest updates in our [Loeries' special section](#). You

can also follow Adisa on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and Noah's Ark Communications on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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