

FOREWORD

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The global landscape of retailing and marketing is on the cusp of significant change, driven by the shifting dynamics following the 2024 U.S. elections. With Donald Trump's return to the presidency, the policies of the United States are likely to pivot toward heightened economic nationalism and a focus on domestic interests. These developments will ripple across the world, including Africa and South Africa, reshaping trade relations, investment flows, and consumer trends in ways that demand both resilience and adaptability from businesses and governments.

One of the most immediate impacts is likely to stem from changes to trade agreements, particularly those that have historically benefited African nations, such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). If the U.S. adopts a more protectionist stance, African exporters may find themselves contending with reduced market access or more stringent conditions. For South Africa, which relies heavily on exports of products like citrus, wine, and automotive components, such changes could necessitate the pursuit of alternative trade partnerships. This may encourage a stronger focus on regional economic collaboration, especially through mechanisms like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which offers a platform for enhancing intra-African trade. In this context, South African retailers and marketers will need to shift their strategies to emphasize regional supply chains and local consumer markets, fostering resilience in the face of external pressures.

The broader economic policies likely to emerge from this U.S. administration could also influence investment patterns in Africa. A retreat from foreign aid or reduced focus on African markets as part of U.S. global strategy might compel African nations to look increasingly toward other global powers, such as China, the European Union, or the Middle East. For South Africa, this could mean heightened competition for investment while also creating opportunities to assert itself as a gateway for businesses looking to access African markets. South African companies could leverage this positioning by innovating in areas such as digital commerce and sustainable retail, tailoring solutions that meet the unique needs of a rapidly evolving consumer base across the continent.

The retail sector in Africa, particularly in South Africa, is undergoing a transformation fueled by the rise of digital technology. The continent's embrace of mobile connectivity has enabled unprecedented access to e-commerce and digital marketing platforms. However, the potential regulatory changes in the U.S. that could affect major technology firms might lead to disruptions in investment in digital infrastructure, impacting the tools and platforms many African retailers rely on. This creates an imperative for homegrown tech innovations. South Africa, with its established tech hubs and entrepreneurial talent, is well-positioned to lead this charge, developing digital ecosystems that prioritize accessibility, efficiency, and scalability.

Consumer behavior across Africa and South Africa will also evolve in response to these global shifts. Economic changes linked to trade and investment policies will affect household incomes, altering spending patterns. Many consumers may prioritize value-driven purchases, compelling retailers to adjust their offerings to align with cost-conscious behaviors. At the same time, Africa's burgeoning middle and affluent classes are

becoming increasingly influential, driving demand for premium products and services that reflect global trends while embracing local authenticity. Marketing strategies that succeed in this environment will need to combine a nuanced understanding of consumer aspirations with storytelling that celebrates African heritage, creativity, and sustainability.

Cultural narratives will take center stage in marketing efforts, especially as global political trends inspire a stronger sense of regional identity among African consumers. In a world increasingly shaped by nationalism, African consumers may seek products and brands that reflect their own values and pride. South African businesses, in particular, have an opportunity to lead in creating powerful, resonant campaigns that emphasize local ingenuity, environmental stewardship, and community impact while maintaining a global perspective.

Ultimately, the influence of the 2024 U.S. elections on Africa and South Africa's retail and marketing landscapes underscores the interconnected nature of global economies. While the challenges presented by policy shifts and economic realignments are significant, they also open the door to reinvention and growth. By fostering innovation, embracing regional collaboration, and aligning closely with the needs and aspirations of African consumers, businesses can navigate this complex environment and emerge stronger, more competitive, and better prepared for the future.

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