

The rise of consumer resilience

By [Louise Marsland](#)

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How are people coping in this new connected world? A global study from Viacom looks at *The Next Normal: Rise of Resilience* among consumers, including those from Nigeria and South Africa, and how brands should respond.



The Next Normal: Rise of Resilience was presented at the annual conference of the Pan African Market Research Organisation (PAMRO) earlier this year and is currently being updated and circulated by Viacom, which directed the study, to present insights into consumer behaviour for 2017 and 2018. It was presented at PAMRO by Giuliana Dias, head of research and insights at Viacom International Media Networks Africa.

The Viacom global consumer insights team conducted the consumer research in 180 different countries and in 40 different languages. Since 2012 when they first conducted the study, there have been many elections globally, natural disasters and terror attacks, which impacted on the results of the study released this year.

In 2012 people were most concerned about the economy, following on the global recession. In 2017 the economy still personally impacts people most, but terror attacks and concerns about the rise of terrorism have risen by 40% globally everywhere since 2012, with the exception of China. This is due in the main because of China's censorship of media. But at the heart of this research is that people feel less safe globally – 37% in 2017 compared with 31% in 2012.

In South Africa, 61% of people feel less safe in 2017 compared to 48% in 2012; while in Nigeria, 48% of people feel less safe compared with five years ago in 2012, when only 12% of people felt unsafe.

“Does this mean it’s all doom and gloom?” asked Dias. In fact, in South Africa, people’s happiness quotient has actually risen since 2012 from 74% to 78% of people who are happy. Although in Nigeria, happiness has decreased from 87% to 73% of those surveyed, which is in line with global averages.

But globally, people are more happy than stressed, and this is where the rise of resilience comes in, explained Dias. “Because really, what we are seeing, is people are showing a real rise of resilience and are finding new ways of coping in a world in which we feel less safe.”

Globally, 32% of people are stressed, in South Africa it is 26% and 16% in Nigeria.

She referenced the commercial by Jose Cuervo: ‘Last Days’ as an example of the kind of resilience that people display when faced with adversity – with the help of Elvis and the tequila of course.

Building resilience

Dias said there are four coping mechanisms that people around the global have identified, that is making them more resilient:

1. Standing up to uncertainty: 71% of people believe they are coping: in Nigeria 85% and in South Africa 74% say they are coping. Things they do to help bolster their happiness quotient are:

- Listen to music
- Spending time with loved ones
- Watch TV
- Sleep
- Read a book
- In SA and Nigeria, praying is seen as a stress reliever too
- 71% of Nigerians and South Africans also dance alone in their rooms and over 80% agree that music inspires
- Humour is also very important and helps people to cope and achieve things in life – 64% of South Africans believe this and 74% of Nigerians agree, which is in line with the global average.

2. Staying grounded: Behind the positivity is a hard edged realism. The world isn’t perfect and there’s less trust in people and institutions, said Dias. People trust their mom the most and trust government the least. But trust in everything else has declined in South Africa: religious leaders (-45%), doctors (-37%), themselves and their own judgment (-32%),

grandparents (-32%), best friends (-24%), police (-21%). Nigerians have similar issues and there too, they trust mom the most, and grandparents and teachers have dropped the most in trust (-59%), fathers (-42%) and doctors (-40%).

3. Enjoying the moment: This is really about people moving away from material things and what it is that makes them happy, explained Dias. There has been a notable shift from the material to experiential and the conclusion is that happiness is more about time and how you spend it. These are the top five sources of happiness recorded globally:

- Spending time with family
- Spending time with friends
- Time for fun and relaxation (up from 2012)
- Going on holiday (up from 2012)
- Being successful (down from 2012)
- Having plenty of money (down from 2012).

“It seems as if people are moving more to experiences than things that define them. What has moved up in the rankings is faith and listening to music. In Nigeria, being successful is also still key, as is faith, and helping people in their community and creating something for others to love.”

When it comes to defining success, there’s been a shift from superficial markers to deeper connections, friendship circles and relationships; while superficial markers like looking good and driving a nice car have moved down in the hierarchy of happiness, Dias said.

4. Coming together: Social media is defining people, uniting them in tragedy, added Dias. “We wanted to see how social networks had changed since 2012. People’s total context of social media has changed fundamentally. There is significant growth in people’s networks globally. The online world is helping shift people’s views on the world. This aligns with people becoming more active in their communities, doing things that synergise and unite people. This is reflected in people’s openness towards others. There is a stronger sense of unity through wider networks, a desire to express solidarity when tragedy hits – people are demonstrating resilience in a world increasingly seen as less safe.



Slimefest

How should brands respond?

Those four strategies combined are what people are using to cope with the world around us, Dias reiterated. The question now, is how should brands respond? It’s pretty intuitive, said Dias. The implications are:

1. ‘Standing up to uncertainty...’ It is important now, more than ever before, to make people feel. Shows like *Breaking Bad* and *This is Us* do it well, said Dias. Brands also need to tap into the emotion of music and brands like Suburu use music to get to the heart of their consumers, with the tagline: “Love, it’s what makes a Suburu a Suburu”.

2. 'Staying grounded...' Be reflective of the real world and humour is a good way to deliver those emotions. Do not mask or minimise the complexities or imperfections of the world. People are acknowledging the world and themselves as they really are (the bad and the good). "The *Daily Show* and comedians like Amy Schumer are real about these imperfections in our world," explained Dias. She cited the Under Armour commercial. "It's what you do in the dark that puts you in the light. Under Armour #Ruleyourself".

3. 'Enjoying the moment...' Experiences and deep connections are valued over material things. Provide people with the opportunity to participate in experiences (especially with friends and family), like the *Nickelodeon's SlimeFest*, brought to *South Africa* by uShaka Marine World.



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4. 'Coming together...' Caring goes beyond immediate circles, there's more that unites than divides people. Brands need to demonstrate solidarity and unity. Engage people to make a difference. Often people want to provide support, they just don't know how, added Dias. *The Human Family*, shot on an iPhone, was one commercial that got it right: [#ShotoniPhone](#).

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