

South Africa's township residents are driven by a sense of social duty and a deep-rooted cultural heritage

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New GfK research reveals how brands can connect with people in townships by aligning with their values

The top personal value that motivates consumer behaviour in South Africa's townships is a strong sense of social duty rather than the search for personal opportunity that drives consumers in other segments of the market. That's according to GfK Consumer Life, a longitudinal survey GfK conducts in 25 countries, including South Africa, each year.

The research – drawn from face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of 1,000 South Africans – reveals that township consumers attach a high importance to social responsibility. They aim to help themselves in a way that will help their neighbours and peers at the same time.

Furthermore, they have a deep pride in their culture and value their roots even more intensely than South Africans in other segments of the market.



Other key findings from the study include:

- Nearly half (49%) of township consumers regard television programmes as a trustworthy source of information, compared to 40% of South Africans overall.
- Some 34% consider radio to be trustworthy, compared to 27% of South Africans overall.
- Around half (51%) accessed the Internet in the last 30 days.
- Fifty-three percent own a smartphone – and 73% of 15- to 24-year-old township dwellers.
- Township consumers spend an average of R420 per person per month on airtime.

Says Rachel Thompson, Insights Director at GfK South Africa: “To be successful with township consumers a brand must show that it understands their heritage and shares their code of ethics.”

Marketing tactics need to be localised to the needs of township residents and their pursuit of social responsibility.

“For example, we found that when a township consumer makes a purchasing decision about personal care, he or she is motivated by a desire to be a good role model for younger members of the community rather than by personal vanity,” says Thompson. “Brands must show how they can add value to consumers’ lives by providing them with products and services that resonate with their emotional needs.”

Experiences, not possessions

Overall, 44% of South African consumers agree that experiences such as holidays and travel are more important than possessions. Township consumers agree, though the experiences they seek are time at church and with the radio or television rather than holidays or meals out. These activities present an opportunity for brands to impact people’s lives by offering relevant and exciting experience benefits.

Authenticity is an increasingly important value for South Africans, and for millennials in particular. Once again, its value that township consumers share. “This implies that marketing activations need to be authentic and community-based,” says

Thompson. “All South African consumers love to tell their neighbours about their experiences. Brands can succeed by creating a buzz and supporting it through local radio.”

Social networking goes digital in townships

With the high level of trust in television and radio programmes among township consumers, there is a great opportunity for brands to support in-person activations through editorial content on radio and TV. High smartphone and Internet penetration reveals that digital can be a useful channel for reaching this market, especially for younger people.

Although Internet penetration is lower than the rest of SA, township consumers who access the Internet spend more time online. They do not feel that this is a waste of time or that people share too much private info online – they share information more readily than other South African market segments.

“Most people in the township have built communities where information is readily shared, so they don’t perceive a risk in sharing data online,” says Thompson. “In a sense, they’ve been doing social networking offline for their entire lives and see digital platforms as a natural extension of their usual behaviour.”

For more township marketing insights, download the full report here: <http://www.gfk.com/en-za/insights/report/connecting-with-the-township-consumer/>.

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