

Beyond the superficial knowledge - insights over observations

 By [Bogosi Mtshegwa](#)

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I'm convinced that advertising agencies and indeed marketers are struggling to make the distinction between an observation and an insight, particularly when it comes to the so-called 'black market'.

An observation is simply taking note of what you see right in front of you, and this rarely requires an in-depth interrogation of what is being observed. An insight, on the other hand, is a deeper understanding of what is being observed or experienced, so you start to look beyond what you see. This was put more succinctly by a fellow strategic planner I have come to respect through conversations. She said: an insight is the 'why' to which you can no longer ask why.

With that said, an insight doesn't only look deeper, but it also interrogates other perspectives, meaning that much better understanding can also be achieved by shifting focus towards other perspectives by looking at not only what is deeper, but also what lies on the periphery.

The famous 'black market'

This is no revelation or epiphany by any chance, it has been my viewpoint for as long as I can remember: Local marketers and advertisers have not fully grasped this market. We simply lack the insights into it. What we are very good at is observing it. It is a no-brainer that the black market is not homogeneous, and this is succinctly put by TrendER Insights in its [2016 Trend Report](#), which speaks of what it calls: 'The Black Rainbow'.

The premise, simply put, is that there is no 'one size fits all' for this market, and that one needs to go deeper into understanding it. This may sound obvious in theory, but putting it into action seems to be very difficult.

Observation vs. deeper understanding (Asking why until you no longer can)

As black people, we go to church, and we are not shy of expressing ourselves through rhythmic movements that are synchronised with the sound of music. Yes we dance, but that's not the only thing we know or are capable of. As DSTV succinctly put it, 'there are levels to this thing'.

I am not my ability to dance (by the way' I personally cannot dance – not every black person can or even wants to dance.)

I am not my religion nor culture (I may go to church, but that's not who I am, no matter how deeply religious I am, nor does is colour of skin a default signifier of me practising certain black cultures – I say 'cultures' in plural, because there can be

as many cultures as there are black people.)

I don't have a lot, but I sure don't dance to get a discount at the till, nor do I dance for food, and guess what, not even for the famous incentive – 'air time', nor do I dance for sweets or lollipops – there are layers to who I am, and one single aspect does not define who I am.

Oh, nor do my kids and I dance for rice. Rice is a staple food that is famously enjoyed on Sundays as part of my seven colours. That's all. Being aware of this observation does not mean that you know me. The representation of the churches are not even authentic nor real. For example, the church uniforms used most recently in a rice advert, don't look like any of the South African churches' uniforms. One may argue that the reason for the American-like church feel may be to not infringe on any of the local churches' toes and perhaps brands don't want to represent one church or religious group over others. That's fine, but what about authenticity? Or are agencies just being creative?



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Now I am not privy to the business or marketing challenges that this rice brand faces, but based on the creative message, it seems as though the objective is to increase consumption by extending product usage beyond Sunday, by encouraging consumers to eat rice during the week, even on a Tuesday. What they are trying to do is very clear, but another church reference with black people dancing and the reaction, like our president Jacob Zuma said, is: 'Come on!'

Perhaps it is the black market for a reason – not many can see it, and therefore not many understand it.

No more dancing

It is disparaging and frankly disappointing that black people are still dancing or going to church (or that a church reference is made) in our adverts in 2016. As a strategic planner, it is disheartening to see such communications where most of the communication representing black people springs from one observation, for example, that black people have rhythm and can therefore dance. Levels. There needs to be deep drilling into these layers, and in this way, more precious gems need to be dug.

What lies beneath the diamond? That's what needs to be asked when targeting the so-called black market.

If the logic is true for most – if not all – creative expressions and processes, that strategy inspires the creative outcome, and the expressing that 'you are what you eat', this begs the question: what is it that the strategic planning people/teams are feeding their creative teams? Whatever it is, the insight needs to give the creative teams goosebumps before the creative work can do so to people with which they wish to resonate.

With that said, no more dancing, please.

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ABOUT BOGOSI MOTSHEGWA

Bogosi Mtshegwa is a strategic planner at Thinkerneur, a brand strategy consulting firm and is Advisory Council Member at Vega School of Design | Brand | Business. He is a brand consultant who specialises in but is not limited to, brand, digital and communication strategy.

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