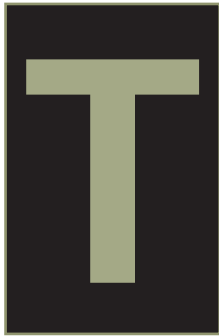


Unchanging man

Marketers need to remember the fundamental principles that contribute towards making man what he is – and will always be (whatever creed or colour).



The first decade of South Africa's democracy has brought with it many firsts and many opportunities for all of its people – including marketers. The ascendance to power of a black majority ANC, with its justified, largely successful policies of redressing past imbalances through economic empowerment, affirmative action, access to social services,

diversity and inclusiveness, has provided a previously hidden pot of gold for marketers – the 'emerging market'. And, like all new discoveries, this discovery has many amorous descriptive names – the 'black market', 'previously disadvantaged' market (pdi) or 'historically disadvantaged' market (hdi).

The fine art of not noticing

However, to those ordinary South Africans who are classified as being part of this so-called 'emerging market' (a pdi or an hdi) – the discovery and proclamation of this 'emerging market' is often a source of intrigue and bemusement. Let's face it, it must have been quite a feat to not have noticed the existence of at least 75 percent of the country's people, who by 2000 were contributing 56 percent of South Africa's personal disposable income. And even more intricate for marketers and their financial counterparts must have been the oversight or inability to extract or notice the source of income from inter alia, maize meal, paraffin and candles, funeral policies, and mini buses (products largely associated with this 'emerging market').

A decade into our democracy, South Africa's marketers and advertisers are still trying to unravel the mystery of the 'emerging market' – who are they, where do they live, what do they do, and what motivates their consumption habits? While to some Muzi Kuzwayo's *Marketing through Mud and Dust* was a revelation, providing illuminating insights about the majority of South Africans – aka 'emerging market' – to the subjects themselves, it was an authentic, anecdotal thesis of everyday black South African life explained to the uninitiated.

No rocket science

The slow pace of change in the marketing industry is the major impediment to the holistic integration, understanding of and mutual profitability from South African consumers – in totality. Economic ownership without operational ownership is just as destructive and

ineffective as the previous status quo – as the decision making rests in generally inexperienced hands and textbook minds.

Marketing is no rocket science. It has not (and probably won't) changed much since Philip Kotler, widely accepted as the father of marketing, contextualized and encoded the practice in the 50s. What's continually written about as trends in the industry – integration, CRM, experiential marketing, viral marketing, etc – are merely tactical solutions to address the fundamental question posed simply by Coca Cola's former chief marketing officer, "How to get more people to buy more of your product more often for more money."

As the late doyen of advertising, Bill Bernbach explained, "It took millions of years for man's instincts to develop. It will take millions more for them to even vary. A communicator must be concerned with unchanging man, with his obsessive drive to survive, to be admired, to succeed, to love, to take care of his own." And that will not be accomplished without an industry that's diverse and committed to understanding the differentiating insights that drive all consumers – black, white, coloured and Indian.

Gut feeling

The only definitive measure of marketers' efforts – a growing trend worth focusing on – is an understanding of the economic drivers of the value of brands and the resultant metric of measure. Brands are valuable, and a metric commonly known as brand valuation will emerge as the definitive measure of the return of investment on shareholders' money.

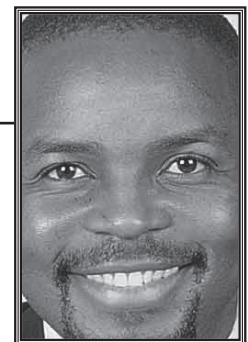
Importantly, and as Marty Neumeier explained in *Brand Gap*, a brand is "a person's gut feeling about a product, service or company. It's a gut feeling because we're emotional, intuitive beings, despite our best efforts to be rational."

Understanding, respect and reciprocity

In South Africa the consumer, an indigenous inhabitant of this continent, is generally young

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and black and until recently, largely ignored. And that won't change much for the next decade. The only innovations that will matter will not be centered on how to creatively name and classify them, but how to understand and respect their history and distinctively address their diverse needs by creating products and services that are mutually profitable. When it comes to marketing in South Africa, so much has changed, yet so little has changed. Hopefully the next decade will usher in a new breed of marketers who are obsessed with maximizing shareholders' value by exploiting all opportunities that South Africa's diverse, yet largely black market presents, without prejudice – intentional or incidental.

The future will be brighter when marketing and marketers – those who are passionate about understanding consumers – take their rightful place around boardrooms in corporate South Africa. ■

“Economic ownership without operational ownership is just as destructive and ineffective as the previous status quo, as the decision-making rests in generally inexperienced hands and textbook minds.”

Take-away

- It's amazing what human beings (marketers) can turn a blind eye to. Open your eyes. Ask what is it that you're not seeing....and why?
- Man is essentially unchanging. Gut feel is all important. He is emotional and intuitive despite his best efforts to be rational. Be concerned with his obsessive drives to survive, to be admired, to succeed, to love and to take care of his own.
- It's not about creatively naming and classifying markets. It's about understanding individuals; respecting just who they are, where they are at and where they have come from. It's about creating products that are mutually 'profitable' – the power of reciprocity.