

: Shopping preferences and social media in townships

 By [Jason Stewart](#)

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There is much more of a focus on saving and spending wisely than there was three years ago. Yet this has balanced out with another trend in purchasing select 'status brands'. Both trends are prevalent in townships too. (video)

How we make purchasing decisions

We make decisions based on what other people say, as well as how we experience a product. There is a major fear amongst consumers (especially in the township) of wasting money on a product that may fail on delivering - hence why 92% of consumers cite word of mouth as the best source for new product ideas. This results in very little initial experimentation, with consumers rather sticking to what they know and trust. For example, many people would rather walk for 20 minutes to buy airtime from Pep than buy immediately from a trader on the roadside. If there is a problem with the airtime, they know Pep will solve it, but the trader won't - so there's effectively too much of a risk to not buy from Pep.

For good reason, consumers rate 'what their friends have to say' as the main driver for trying out new products. No one wants to be the guinea pig and this is where economics affects the 'early adoption' rate that we see in more affluent markets. There is a major flip side to this, however, when we bring status goods into the equation. The more exclusive, new, and 'unused by others' a brand is, the more status it seems to have - but only if the right people are endorsing it!

For a brand to succeed in both scenarios, it must focus on generating endorsements and recommendations from trusted community influencers. Without word of mouth backing, any ATL communication is ultimately watered down to a point of being wasted.

Social media and the township

There is generally a lot of excitement when this topic comes up, but the reality is that economics and infrastructure are still lagging too far behind our capabilities. Within five years, we should be in a different space with government earmarking 2020 as the target date for SA to have full internet accessibility.

Our recommendation is to start playing around on social media, experimenting and seeing what traction you can generate in your target market. The youth space allows for much more penetration and they do have the expectation of brand engagement online. Remember, however, that online engagement with the Township market is different to online engagement with a suburban, higher LSM.

For more:

- Bizcommunity: [Township Marketing]: [Township Status](#)

- Bizcommunity: [Township Marketing]: [Brand Communication](#)
- Bizcommunity: [Township Marketing]: [Getting the township and people to talk](#)

ABOUT JASON STEWART

Jason Stewart is the co-founder and MD of HaveYouHeard (www.haveyouheard.co.za), a communications agency immersed in culture to influence it. With 11 years' trading experience and offices in Johannesburg, Cape Town and London, HaveYouHeard uncovers unique insights to create innovative ideas that influence the audience by bringing the brands it partners with to the centre of culture.

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