

# Townships are the new black



By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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The township is no longer a foreign land far away and its story is no longer one of the haves and have-nots.

That story is done and dusted. Townships are rocking and they have been for a while, but not everyone has cottoned on yet... that things are happening there.



To win in the townships, brands must appreciate the aspirations as well as pressures on disposable income. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

This was one of the main findings from the Ask Afrika TGI 2013 B, a single-source sample of 15,000, in 8,000 communities that measures 19 brands, products and services. It has been running in South Africa for a decade.

Paida Mugudubi, Commercial Director, Ask Afrika, presented key findings, which included insights on South African in the global context, the local landscape, the media and digital landscape and lastly townships recently in Johannesburg.

"TGI 2013 B is undertaken to allow for an in-depth understanding of South African consumers so we can better resonant with them when selling to them," Mugudubi said, adding that the current climate is testing citizens' trust and has a strong bearing on the consumer psyche. "It is transforming the roles of traditional and new media.

We need to view communities through different lens. Basic brand demographics do not cut it anymore."

## One size does *not* fit all

Therefore, to understand township consumers you have to realise that the one size fits all is outdated. Township consumers do not behave the same. How they behave is also dependent on where they are and the proximity of malls etc. Townships are a melting pot of cultures and sub cultures and a comfortable coexistence between the formal and informal sector.

It has become critical to understand these consumers beyond the insight that LSMs offer us, says Mugudubi. "When we then talk about the middle market it is big. The sheer density of townships is staggering and we need to understand the potential spend of this consumer."

Township consumers are shifting to the middle malls. The per capita spending is lower, but the turnover is tremendously boosted by the large numbers. The footfall in townships is much bigger than in other areas. Township consumers are savvy in a different way in that when making a purchase, they look from a cultural perspective at what they buy.

She says their consumer confidence is aligned to those living in cities. "The city dwellers and townships dweller are pretty much aligned, but township consumers trust less. Over half of township consumers state that products they buy do not perform as well as the advertisements claim they do."

## The soapie influence

Soapies are central to township communities and influences what happens around them. It is on television but it is a reflection of what is real in these communities. Across the board, Word of Mouth is still the most trusted medium. It is embedded in the strong family and cultural connections. Township consumers are also heavy users of television and radio.

To win in the townships, brands must appreciate the aspirations as well as pressures on disposable income. Brands that perform on claims of quality will win. Trust is critical. "We must understand what community means in the township context;

it is not just about the people living next door to you, but about churches, running clubs, etc. It is multi-layered," says Mugudubi.

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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