

Black diamonds: all that glitters is not gold

A thought-provoking research conducted by TNS Research Surveys has revealed what many marketers have all along ignored - that the black diamonds are not always what they seem to be and therefore they cannot be judged by their superficial cover (posh cars, suburban homes, designer clothes and shoes and many more). Instead, experts warn sellers to have a deep understanding of this market before reaching out to them.

 By [Issa Siki da Silva](#) 18 Aug 2010

Divided into four categories

There are currently three million black diamonds in South Africa divided into four categories - Mzansi youth start-me-ups, young families and established families - all boasting a total purchasing power of R237 million billion*, according to the study, conducted with the help of UCT Unilever.

While 79% of black diamonds are home owners, 7% are renting to buy, 12% are renting but not intending to buy in the next 12 months, and most of Mzansi youth live with their parents, the study says more than 50% of black diamonds do not even read a magazine.

Ramohelo Mokoena, TNS Research senior research executive, said some black diamonds are more affluent than others and have a higher propensity of having luxury goods.

Mokoena demystified society's general impression that most black diamonds own Range Rovers, BMWs, Porsches and Mercs, dropping a bombshell that their cars of choice are Toyota (mostly), VW, BMW, Ford and, lastly, Mercedes.

Middle class, not tenderpreneurs or yuppies

"Remember this is only the middle class; these are not tenderpreneurs or the yuppies," she pointed out.

The study also found that 70% of black diamonds has saving accounts and only 13% has cheque account and just over 10% has credit accounts. At least 51% of them has no insurance, compared to 32% of other middle class.

While 89% own cellphones compared to 84% of other middle class, Mokoena said the service provider of their choice is MTN (43%), with Vodacom getting 38% and 11% going to Cell C.

Most black diamonds (80%) use cellphone prepaid packages, and are less likely to access the Internet at home through a fixed line, with the office being their best place to log in. Mzansi youth, however, were found to have the higher incidence of accessing the Internet on a regular basis.

Search engine of choice

Google has emerged as the number one search engine of choice, according to the study, followed by Yahoo, where most people usually look for information, go for personal administration purposes, and social networking (mostly Mzansi youth). Very few black diamonds do shopping online, though.

Edgars is the number one shopping store for clothes and shoes, followed by Jet, Truworths, Woolworths and Mr Price, while Shoprite, Checkers and Pick n Pay are their favourite shops for groceries.

University of South Africa Professor Kopano Ratele warns marketers to be armed with a solid understanding of black diamonds because money and status seem to be the defining element of recognition and class of this market.

"These people want to be noticed. Wanting to be cool and seen, which at times trumps basic needs (wearing branded expensive items, and buying a latest model BMW and staying in a shack with your parents), are the painful desires that shape the identities of black diamonds," Ratele said emotionally.

"Isn't this irrational?"

"Isn't this irrational?" he asked, adding that some of them buy stuff they can barely afford - all in the name of recognition and status.

Nevertheless, he warned at the end that marketers need to understand them, represent them, enable them, entertain them, ignite them and reach them.

**Corrected at 3pm on 19 August 2010.*

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.
[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>