

**H**ow do we define markets in the South African context where society is being transformed in so many ways? What will the markets and buying patterns of the current generations look like in ten years time?

These are critical questions that companies are generally not asking or not researching deeply enough when it comes to their marketing strategies. According to Dudu Thabede, Managing Director of BrandSmart, a specialist marketing consultation company, insights into these type of questions have a key role to play in ensuring communications that are relevant.

"In the past market segmentation, particularly along the lines of LSM or race, made it easy," she says. "People were neatly packaged and targeted accordingly, but this was simplistic. Studies that we have conducted recently clearly indicate that people do not want to be boxed in. Racial classifications are becoming less relevant, with class becoming more defining than race. Even within class strata, people are developing multiple identities as a result of the many influences in their lives and these inform the choices they make as consumers and as social beings. With so many influences impacting on society, marketers need a different approach – one driven by insights that are exposed by in-depth consumer studies."

Research has always played a significant part in BrandSmart's offering to their clients and they believe it is vital to enable marketers to play a meaningful role in the transformation of South Africa. "Society in South Africa today is unlike anywhere else," comments Vusi Vuma, of ALTV, a trends and insight consultancy that works closely with BrandSmart. "Because it is formed and is evolving out of many strands, with many more different elements when compared to other markets around the world, the old tools have become inappropriate. We need new tools to examine the patterns that are emerging and unfold the many layers that make up each person."

Much has been made of South Africa as the Rainbow Nation but what does that mean for brands and for communication? The country has eleven official languages and many more besides

and with each of those goes a certain culture, but the lines are being blurred as globalisation, urbanisation, rapid social mobility and many other forces impact society. For example, English has become the medium of communication in many settings. As such people have had to adopt English; how has that influenced their culture?

"Many talk of culture as if it is static," notes Vuma. "But cultures are continually being influenced by one another. With class becoming more defining than race and consumers comfortable with multiple identities, we need to look at how this affects companies and their business. It means that they need to become much more intimate with their consumers and understand their lifestyles – how they live and the things that drive them. From a leadership perspective, it is important for companies to understand the impact for the future – what will come out of this?"

For Thabede, a critical factor for marketing companies is that the teams involved need to be transformed. "Communications is about influencing behaviour," she notes. "This means we need to look at society as a whole and that means making use of a much wider range of skills. It shouldn't be unusual to find a sociologist or psychologist, for example, on a communication agency team. All of these insights will be crucial for us to develop communications in the future."

Some Marketing approaches tend to have very short horizons, illustrated at the moment with a fixation on 2010. Whilst it is important to work towards meeting a specific date, what happens beyond this date should also be carefully scrutinised. "Short term communications strategies have a tactical place in the mix, but true relevance can only be measured down the line," says Thabede.

A lot of this has to do with value systems. "It is important for us to understand the value systems of our country," says Vuma. "Countries like the US can map their society's response to certain issues over time but we do not have that sort of data. There is a need to start doing research that goes beyond the commercial and looks at how our society is structured and the social impact



Front left to right: Alistair Mathie, Dudu Thabede, Kershnee Pillay  
Back left to right: Shimane Rammego, Oscar Monama, Kabelo Mohono, Tsepo Motlala, Vusi Vuma

# challenging marketing norms

by Cheryl Bannatyne

How do we define markets in the South African context where society is being transformed in so many ways? What will the markets and buying patterns of the current generations look like in ten years time?

of that. What does family mean to South African today? How do we look at one another? Do we think that success is about hard work or about luck?"

These types of understanding have huge implications especially for the relatively new and very challenging approach of social marketing, which seeks to target and change behaviour for the good of society.

"Essentially the success of the advertising industry, and every industry, is heavily dependent on the health and longevity of the society in which it exists," says Tsepo Motlala, MD of Cue Social Marketing, a company of The Jupiter Drawing Room Group and one of BrandSmart's strategic partners. "If any industry wants to survive into the future, it needs to be concerned about the welfare of the society in which it operates. This is challenging because we are asking companies that have relatively short-term goals – driven by year end figures – to look at the longer-term effect."

"With social marketing we are trying to create responsible, higher self-esteem South Africans who are able to make the right choices about their own lives. For the sake of South Africa's competitiveness, it is important that South Africans truly believe in themselves and can dig out a spiritual foundation upon which to build a certain level of pride."


"It is important that we look at how this can be applied in respect of issues we are dealing with on a day-to-day basis," notes Thabede. "For example we have high incidence of road accidents, road rage, child abuse as well as women abuse. In schools we are seeing a sudden upswing in children assaulting and even

killing one another. What interests us is how we can apply social marketing to ensure that it starts addressing things such as the value of life."

Added to this Motlala emphasises the fact that many South Africans are still struggling to gain 'freedom from' things like poverty, and have not yet been released into 'freedom to', a position the average American, for example, enjoys as part of their creative psyche.

BrandSmart recognises that South Africa has a great constitution. Both government and business leaders can enable the full leveraging of this through effective social marketing. A particular focus for them is increasing the awareness of and raising the status of professions such as teaching, as well as marketing trades to young people.

"Young people do not see teaching as a hip career opportunity; we will not take off as a country unless we can address this," says Vuma. "As an agency involved in strategic communication we are looking at how we can help communicate the value of the profession to young people. The same applies to the area of defence – there are great career options but young people do not consider it because their understanding of the army does not encourage them to see it as an opportunity."

There is a huge role for marketers to play in the transformation of South Africa and the BrandSmart team is rising to that challenge with a skills set that matches the challenges and seeks innovative approaches that bring understanding and therefore change. 

For more information visit [www.brandsmart.co.za](http://www.brandsmart.co.za)