

Embracing human complexity to drive brand innovation

 By [Stephanie Matterson](#), issued by [KLA](#)

30 Mar 2020

In today's fast-paced, digitally driven world, we are constantly under pressure to simplify and streamline our views, sentiments and beliefs. Indeed, in the age of the emoticon, complexity and depth of meaning or emotion is shunned in favour of speed and easily digested information.



Stephanie Matterson, MD of KLA

In your own context, have you found yourself providing an explanation or opinion that is so superficial that it bears very little resemblance to the truth – only because you were under pressure to be quick and succinct? Or, you simply shut down and avoided the answer altogether – which prevented a deeper understanding or connection in that scenario.

Having been in the business of understanding consumers for the past two decades and analysing patterns and anticipating trends, I believe that we are in an unprecedented stage in our history which demands that we create circumstances that allow complexity to surface.

Consumers stories are not straightforward, and even they themselves are not too sure how they feel. There is complexity in how they view the world and in what influences their choices.

Missing out on meaning

Sadly though, instead of allowing this complexity to surface, marketers tend to take comfort in data and metrics - increasingly wanting information faster and cheaper – and staying away from the deep and the complex. They avoid the things that can be difficult to measure and that sometimes feel hard to cluster under statistical models. Some experts refer to this preference as the 'quantification bias': namely, the unconscious belief of valuing the measurable over the immeasurable.

Introducing 'thick data'

Tricia Wang, a technology ethnographer, talks about our fixation on big data or quantified data in order to understand the consumer – and argues that real understanding lives in our ability to marry this data with 'thick data'.

By thick data she is referring to data from humans: stories, observations, and emotions that cannot be quantified but which deliver depth of meaning. Importantly, what makes this data so thick and valuable is the experience of understanding the human narrative.

Capturing the emergent trends

Critically for marketers, integrating big and thick data allows us to form a complete picture - seeing the emergent human dynamics as well as the established.

The cost of missing emergent trends, Wang argues, is what happened to Nokia... and the value of seeing them is what happened to Netflix.

So, whilst dynamic and fast-changing markets demand that we keep ahead of the curve with faster, cheaper data, we must not overlook thick data and the underlying human narrative.

This means that as marketers, we need to create the right circumstances to uncover the complexity and the emergent that

will often be the route to winning. Indeed, it is in finding the sweet spot between complexity and efficiency that brands and businesses will drive innovation and gain invaluable competitive advantage. For more information, visit www.kla.co.za.

ABOUT STEPHANIE MATTERSON

Stephanie Matterson is Managing Director at KLA. She took over the reins of market research agency KLA, which now forms part of Kagiso Media, in 2004. With a background as a practising lawyer, Matterson initially started work for KLA in a consulting role. Matterson has more than 17 years' experience in the market research industry.

▪ Embracing human complexity to drive brand innovation - 30 Mar 2020
▪ [BizTrends 2016] The critical South African consumer - 3 Feb 2016

[View my profile and articles...](#)

- **Consumer insights company, KLA delves into voter sentiment ahead of the SA elections** 17 May 2024
- **Consumer insights agency, KLA, reveals the Quarterly Buzz results for Q1 2024** 7 May 2024
- **Insights on vaping in South Africa** 27 Mar 2024
- **The rise of podcasting in South Africa – a growing opportunity for brands** 20 Mar 2024
- **Consumer insights agency, KLA, reveals the results of the 4th Quarterly Buzz report** 15 Feb 2024

[KLA](#)



We're a full-service market research agency known for taking on client's challenges and working alongside them to find solutions. So, when your business needs intelligence that moves the needle, at KLA, we get it!

[Profile](#) | [News](#) | [Contact](#) | [Twitter](#) | [RSS Feed](#)

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