

Mass market challenges need mass-market people

By [Zibusiso Mkhwanazi](#)

30 Aug 2019

What do clients want the most from us? To help them connect better with mass markets with mass buying power.



Image credit: Nathan Dumlao on Unsplash.

And one would think that after seven years of having run a wholly black-owned agency like Avatar that the industry would be further down the road with understanding these demographics – but the assumptions often result in many campaigns missing the mark.

The mass market is not only black people. It is South Africa in its diversity. And the diversity needs to start with the people you have sitting in your agency.

Understanding **culture** and what culturally good communication is, is key to conceptualising campaigns that resonate well. You can only understand that if the agency has live insights from people as diverse as South Africa.



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Culture in the context of data

This brings us to the data and artificial intelligence (AI) conversation, specifically in a country like South Africa. It is imperative to thoroughly understand data, yes, but also its limitations. Data can't explain culture if the people interpreting the

data do not have context.

And there are language barriers for aspects of AI to be truly effective in a mass-market environment.

Think of the nuances of different communities – Zulu in Johannesburg is different from Zulu in KZN not only in dialect but practice. Xhosa is both a language and a nation but other nations such as abaThembu also speak the Xhosa language but have different cultural practices.



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It becomes much more interesting when data and culture come together and geographical location gets to influence customised messaging. Once done, the infusion of digital to measure effectiveness will further improve the campaign as you roll out.

And **conceptualisation**? Communication has to **start** in mass-market language and culture and then expand out. By so doing, your campaigns become less noise and more entertainment.

Campaigns that start in English (strategically and creatively) and are then translated to be culturally relevant are near impossible to crack.

It's the same as the old days of digital when campaigns started for TV and were then adapted for digital. Now they are conceptualised for mobile-first.

The same approach needs to be used for the mass market if there is to be the growth of your brand, product or service. We need to originate the mass market first.

Diversity = diverse insights

But language remains a stumbling block and we have produced English mass-market commercials for brands like Caltex with the "Let's go somewhere" campaign – which was targeted at the township metropolitan market.

This is where digital gets to play a big part – making that work as relevant as possible to different audiences. After all, can you imagine expecting a campaign to resonate with Irish, Scottish and English audiences just because it is in English?

Mass market is sophisticated simplicity. To the point, entertaining and inspiring. Over 31 million people in South Africa have access to the internet, which gives you a big enough sample to work with. Social media has driven penetration into rural areas and will grow further as per the president's commitment to reducing data costs in SA.



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That doesn't mean it's only about digital and mobile-first. We recently ran a campaign for a major political party, which reminded us that old-school mass-market tools and tactics, as simple as branded t-shirts, can still be relevant today.

Fuse that with good data and insight and it is amazing how they unite people around a cause.

My advice? Look at your agency. The people. If there is diversity there, then there will be diverse insights that will deliver your campaign and, more importantly, an understanding of the cultural nuances that will entertain, inspire and motivate.

ABOUT ZIBUSISO MKHWANAZI

Zibusiso Mkhwanazi is the founder and Group CEO of M&N Brands a holding company with diversified investments in leading advertising, media and communication businesses. M&N Brands, owns Avatar JHB, Avatar CPT, Avatar DBN, Avatar Media Agency, Avatar PR, Mela Events, Mela Projects. The group has acquired the The Make Beautiful Agency in their most recent acquisition to form part of their Integrated Advertising Division as well as Zkhiphani.com to form part of M&N Publishing...

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