

New Ask Afrika TGI research reveals why consumers buy what they do

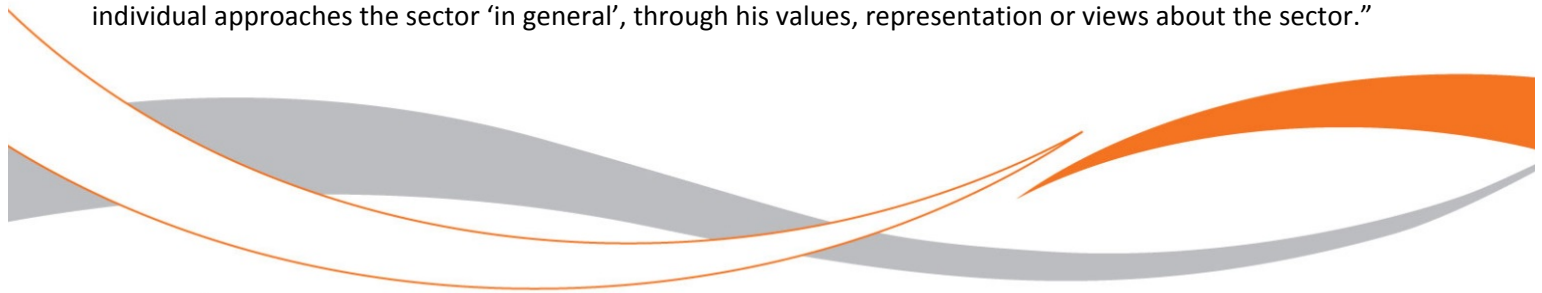
Consumers use three levels of consciousness when making product choices and they are only fully aware of one. Our choice drivers can be understood by the best in class explanatory models combined with the power of TGI (*Target Group Index*). Maria Petousis, *Director of TGI at Ask Afrika*, unpacked “*The Why Code - why do consumers buy what they do?*” at Ask Afrika’s TGI Consumer Perspectives 2013A workshops for media and brand owners on Wednesday.

The modern day consumer, colloquially called, “*Homo Connectus*” in the presentation, has a variety of choices; these are the result of needs, possibilities and preferences. Petousis explained “*The Why Code*” in terms of three modules. The first module is *rational and conscious choices*; the second module is *values and lifestyle choices* and the third module is *background and social DNA*. She commented, “These three modules are going to take us on a journey in the consumers’ minds, from their most conscious motives to their least conscious ones.”

Petousis elaborated, “Classic Economists were the first to analyse consumers’ behaviours as a choice. They explored conditions and mechanisms behind needs and confronted them to the constraints or possibilities likely to impact people’s actual behaviours: price of the products and disposable income. However, this was formulated in a context where goods available were mainly commodities and people were more concerned with production issues.”

She continued, “While we now know consumers are not making only rational and conscious choices, it would be wrong to say that all their choices are all purely unconscious. So we need to focus on the purchasing process including all factors which consciously influence consumption. This will allow understanding how the consumer makes his decisions in the final stage of purchase. This first level of rationale will allow our clients to know what concrete mix of marketing levers to deploy according to their targets.” Examples of rationale would be: price, a review, guarantees and special offers.

Petousis explained the second module, “Another way of identifying the motivation of the consumer is to use lifestyles. Here, we study how lifestyles are linked with specific consumption sectors and how they can help reveal semi-conscious motivation. The purpose is to qualify the semi-conscious motivations that make up the consumer involvement in the sector. In this level, we do not focus on the process of purchase. It does not concern the characteristic, perception or expectations of the commercial offer but the way that one individual approaches the sector ‘in general’, through his values, representation or views about the sector.”



She used an example of how men and women differ in their value systems when it comes to cars. Among men cars are seen as a love story and a way to attract attention, whereas among women a car is seen as a path to independence and a way to express themselves. These are semi-conscious motivations that can explain the relationship of an individual with a specific sector. They are key elements to understand consumption behaviour.

Petousis the elaborated on the third module, "Coming to our last level, covering unconscious motivations, we decided to rely on the theory of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. His theory provides us with a comprehensive understanding of the origin of preferences and tastes."

She explained this by use of four socio-economic groups which had two axes: economic capital and cultural capital. There were two groups at the extremes that had globally high economic and cultural capital or both low economic and cultural capital. Then there are those in the middle who are either culturally dominant or economically dominant. Consumers can be placed on this matrix, in the quadrants between the two axes to get a clearer idea of their social DNA and thus targeted according to a specific combination of their economic and cultural capital.

All three of these modules or levels need to be addressed when trying to understand the complexity of the consumer. There is a direct correlation between the depth of understanding that the marketer has of their target group and the effectiveness of their campaign.

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About Ask Afrika:

Over a period of almost two decades, Ask Afrika has grown to be the largest independent South African market research company. The company focuses on local relevance, benchmarked against the global context. Apart from its large South African footprint, Ask Africa also operates in a dozen African continental territories. Their exclusive product suite includes the Orange Index, Trust Barometer, Radio Moods, TGI Icon Brand and TGI (the Target Group Index).

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