

'Don't @ Me' says South African township residents to big brands

Seventy-five percent of South African township residents prefer WhatsApp as a medium of communication compared to Facebook (17%), Instagram (2%) and Twitter (1%) according to a new report by digital agency Rogerwilco, Survey54 and Marketing Mix Conferences.



Source: Tom Fisk from [Pexels](#)

The 2021 South African Township Marketing Report is based on responses from over 1,000 individuals living in townships and aims to plug the gap between the audience that represents hundreds of billions of Rands in aggregate, and the information that exists about them.

“Almost half of South Africa’s urban population lives in townships and informal settlements, yet very little data exists for marketers to speak to the needs and wants of this substantial audience,” says Rogerwilco brand strategist Kasirayi Mashiri. “So, we went to find out where - and on what – these consumers spend their income, what their preferred payment methods are, what influences their shopping behaviours and the types of communications they prefer to receive from marketers.”

Terry Murphy, publisher, MarketingMix notes that in addition to the way brands communicate, 70% of respondents prefer English as the language of communication with SMS marketing being the least likely to convince township residents to make purchasing decisions.

“This report also provides much-needed insights on ways to engage with township residents with recommendations from friends and family - cited by 15% - followed closely by newspaper inserts (13%) making the top of the list.”

On the topic of influencers, township residents were almost twice as likely to be swayed by those holding positions of authority such as elders, religious leaders and teachers in their communities (11%) than they were by celebrity influencers. “This calls into question the budgets spent on influencers and how impactful they are to a brand’s bottom line,” continues Mashiri.

Other sections of the report highlight that cash is still the preferred form of payment (73%), the historic role that Spaza shops play in the community and the uphill battle they face against supermarket chains, the importance of black tax and the challenges banks and online shopping brands face to fully integrate into Township society.

Concludes Mashiri, “While this research paper is not intended to be an in-depth analysis of the township environment, it should provide some level of insight that empowers marketers to refine their activities to better engage one of the most misunderstood audience segments in South Africa.”

Download the full [2021 South African Township Marketing Report](#).

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