

# 5 thoughts to bear in mind when targeting women this Women's Month

 By [Cindy Diamond](#)

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With Women's Day coming up this week (9 August), we are receiving the annual barrage of feel-good corporate PR, advertising and social media campaigns celebrating and targeting female consumers. Yet all too many campaigns miss the mark because marketers are still locked into old-fashioned ideas about what women buy and why they do so.



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Here are a few of our observations about marketing to South African women in a changing society that has made some rapid advances towards gender equality over the past two decades or so:

## 1. Women move the consumer market

Women worldwide are the driving force in the consumer market, and South Africa is no exception. There are 20 million women in South Africa, of which two in five of them run households. An Ipsos study of women in seven African countries, including South Africa, found that 89% of African women are the decision-makers or co-decision-makers for all household purchases.

With female participation in the workforce on the rise at all levels, up to the C-suite, women's influence and purchasing power will only grow in the years to come. Marketers simply cannot afford to misunderstand women consumers or underestimate the importance of the female market to their businesses.

## 2. Pinking and shrinking won't endear you to women

All too many brands still follow the strategy of 'pinking and shrinking' when it comes to designing and marketing products to women. Make a smaller version of your product and painting in pink or soft pastels, then slapping a 'pink tax' on it is no longer acceptable. Brands should spend time on market research to understand how women use their products and services in the real world, create value propositions that address their needs and challenges, and then market them in a way that shows they get it.

## 3. Don't appropriate feminism if you don't mean it

Women's Day sees many marketing campaigns that go awry because brands make insincere, patronising and tone-deaf nods towards feminism and women. If you are going to appropriate feminist slogans and female-friendly positioning in your adverts or PR, be sure that you understand what they stand for and that your own organisation is making the right internal moves towards to gender parity.

#### **4. Personalisation is key**

Women make up more than half the human population, so it should not be surprising that they are a pretty diverse bunch of people. Not all of them are moms, not all of them want to be, not all of them are the primary housekeeper and childcare provider in the house, not all of them are obsessed with their appearance.

Some women like sports and video games and computers more than they like makeup and interior design and salad. From interests to race to home language to career choice to income level, there are multiple facets that will colour a South African woman's sense of identity and purchasing behaviour. Marketers should personalise their marketing and segment the female customer base carefully to cater to the diversity of the market.

#### **5. Watch the gender mix on your team**

When a brand unleashes a particularly poorly thought-through campaign targeted at women, the first question critics on social media will ask is: "Really? Did a woman not see this?" The answer all too often is no (Or even worse, she did and no one listened to her). South African marketers must get a diverse mix of voices around the table and listen to them to make sure their campaigns are in tune with the nature of South Africa's population.

Global research shows that the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and return on investment grow incrementally as more platforms are added to the marketing mix, so a multi-channel approach is vital when appealing to women. Among South African women, 82% listen to the radio, 80% view TV, and 65% engage in digital activities in a week. The question is how to put those channels together in an integrated campaign and use them to maximise both reach and frequency. Market research and your own customer data can help guide the way.

#### **ABOUT CINDY DIAMOND**

With almost 20 years of experience in media, Mediamark Group Sales Director Cindy Diamond leads top sales teams tasked to craft multichannel advertising solutions for brands. Cindy is one of the founders of Mediamark and has been instrumental in its transformation from a radio sales house to a media results company drawing on the benefits of radio, digital, tv, content and events, including activations.

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