

The Colour of Empathy: White on Black

By [Kabelo Kale](#), issued by [Keys Communications](#)

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There is a subconscious flaw in your thinking and decision making, and it's costing you a very important market and audience.

What is Empathy?

Perspective taking, this is the ability to “feel” with someone and being able to put yourself in their place as if you were them and feeling those feelings.



“... we don't understand empathy, and Township Black people's stories, that's why we struggle to relate, and therefore to plan and buy Township media offerings from Black Media Owners, I can relate more from a white media owner telling me the same story as the black media owner, because I relate better to white people's stories and their emotions ...”

“... I am more empathetic with white, even about black stories. Truth is I actually feel a lot less empathy for people who aren't in my culture, who don't share my skin colour, who don't share my language. This is a terrible fact of human nature, and it operates at a subconscious level ...”

“... If you want to win in the media world, you have to educate US about YOUR people, but first you have to help us unlearn all the editing about black people, we need to look at you and see solutions, not poverty and handouts, both at a cognitive and emotional level ...”

The above are extracts from honest discussions and shared articles with some of my white friends, and allies of my struggles as black person, both in business and in life, in South Africa.

Just from this discussion, and on a human level, we learn that Empathy, although well intentioned is a poor guide for reasoning on moral or ethical judgement, even on a business decision level, especially in a society that has crystal

differences in livelihood and behaviour like in South Africa.

In South Africa we are distinctly White and Black, in behaviour and livelihood. It is even more complex when 90% of South Africa is Black, yet decisions are primarily made by the 10% of White people, who also run the key media resources and businesses, which they are desperate to grow and run competitively.

Just from the above extracts you will understand why decisions have become less and less sensitive to the majority, who is black, and in the marketing fraternity where I have more prominent presence, these less empathetic decisions to black people's realities are also self-inflicted wounds to brands and services trying to grow their share of market/volume/value, because they tend to miss the benefits of connecting with the majority black consumer and customer, and therefore suffer in the hands on those who do.

The colour of empathy, as I call it, is costing business a lot of money in the Townships, and in a market where it is becoming less and less about iconic brands, but more about connecting with a large audience over time. Brands and Marketeers are failing themselves and are dying a slow death in the Townships, and therefore in the whole.

In the future, and the future is NOW, the surviving brands are the ones that are in touch with and actually understand the complex realities of the majority black consumer, and reality is that you cannot serve a market you do not understand and are not empathetic towards and cannot offer real solutions that capitalize yet empower black social and economic realities.

I have been head of operations at Keys Communications, Township Media Specialists since 2009, and have firsthand experience on the colour of empathy over the years, I would always be seen from a gaze of poverty and handouts even on days when I offer impeccable and brand problem solving and growth solutions in the boardroom, and as a result very little spend would be made in the important black majority consumer and audience, because of this, those who have connected with this majority black consumer have built strong brands at the expense of those who have not from their lack of empathy and understanding the majority black market and its commercial representatives.

Keys Communications has established an insights department to help brands understand black social and economic realities, and how they can better relate to Township and Black realities.

We invite you to ask us the difficult questions, to help you place yourself in our shoes, and improve your cognitive and emotional understand of the black consumer and market, and unearth opportunity for media planning and placement, creative development and solutions to business problems, and just general business and personal improvement.

Our insights department has also partnered with AskAfrica to provide more quantitative and empirical data to help you with the science behind advertising in the townships and to the black consumer.

Let us help you unedit what you think you know about black people, black market, black consumer, and help you be empathetic in your decision making about the majority black consumer, for the benefit of your brand/product and services, and personal development.

Drop us an email at info@keyscommunications.co.za ask for Kabelo. Please don't forget to check out our website and read up more about us www.keyscommunications.co.za

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