

# What's the big deal with culture?

 By Tanya Pato

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Culture plays a vital role in shaping the way a company markets its brand.



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Understanding the cultural nuances of a target audience can make or break a marketing campaign. The importance of culture in marketing strategy has increased, as our understanding of its effect on consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions also increased.

## Who is the target?

Before getting into this topic, it is important to understand that culture is not just about national or ethnic identity, but it also encompasses social, economic, and demographic factors. These cultural factors can have a significant impact on how a brand is perceived and received by a targeted audience.

For example, a marketing campaign that emphasizes family values and tradition may resonate well with a conservative, older demographic, while a campaign that emphasizes individualism and innovation may be more appealing to a younger, more progressive demographic.

In order to effectively market a brand, companies must take into account cultural differences in values, beliefs, and behaviour. Generating these insights and having cultural awareness and intelligence, is particularly important in culturally diverse countries such as South Africa.

The choices impacted by these insights range from the foundation of the creative idea behind a marketing campaign, to anything from the images, environment and cast to the language and tone used in the advertising campaign. For example, in some cultures, it is considered impolite to directly promote a product or service, so a more subtle approach may be necessary.



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On the other hand, in other cultures, direct and assertive marketing tactics may be more effective.

Culture also plays a role in determining what types of products and services are in demand. Different cultures may have different needs and wants, and a product that is popular in one cultural group may not be as well received in another. For example, while fast food is popular in the United States, it may not be as popular in cultures that place a greater emphasis on healthy eating. Companies must take into account these cultural differences when developing new products and services.

## Melting pot

Another important aspect of culture in marketing is understanding how to communicate with different audiences. In today's globalised world, companies must be able to communicate effectively with customers and partners from different cultures, and this is equally as important in the cultural melting pot that is South Africa.

This includes understanding cultural norms for communication, such as the use of formal vs. informal language including slang, and the importance of nonverbal cues like gestures and facial expressions. In addition, companies must also be aware of cultural sensitivities and how their marketing campaigns may be perceived.

For example, using imagery or language that is considered offensive in one culture can cause significant damage to a company's reputation, and there are quite a number of these examples in South Africa from recent times. Therefore, it is important to conduct thorough research and testing before launching a marketing campaign to ensure that it is culturally appropriate.

## Brand identity

Lastly, understanding culture is also crucial for developing a strong brand identity. A company's brand should reflect the values and beliefs of its target audience, and should be communicated in a way that is consistent with cultural norms. A company that is able to create a brand that resonates with its target audience at a cultural level, will have a competitive advantage over companies that do not take culture into account.

In conclusion, culture plays a critical role in shaping consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions. Companies that take the time to understand and incorporate cultural factors into their marketing strategies will be more successful in reaching and engaging their target audiences in South Africa.

Understanding culture can help companies develop effective marketing campaigns, create products and services that meet the needs of different cultures, communicate effectively with customers and partners, and create a strong brand identity.

## ABOUT TANYA PATO

Tanya Pato is a cultural intelligence expert and navigator, who partners with businesses and brands to navigate the ever-changing world by providing deep insights and understanding of culture, which allows them to enhance their human interaction and connection.

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