

Ipsos and UCT Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing partner to uncover the potential of the sub-Saharan Africa middle class

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The continent of Africa is largely viewed as the next big opportunity for business growth yet details remain sketchy, from articles denying its very existence to dramatic generalisation of what this market is all about.

In a research project aimed to scope out and “de-average” members of the misunderstood middle class in sub-Saharan Africa, UCT Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing (UUISM) and Ipsos have partnered in a multi-city study. “The study follows a very exciting and unique process,” states Nanzala Mwaura, Director of Client Relations in SSA. “We are using a very exploratory, investigative approach and we are open to going where the research takes us.” The research will comprise qualitative, quantitative and ethnographic methodologies. One of the highlights of the study will be the use of mobile qualitative solutions which allows us to interact with our respondents as they go about their daily lives. The topics that we will explore will cover the full spectrum of our respondents’ lives – education, income, health, insurance, entertainment, to name a few.

“Africa has become home to a growing middle class, thanks to improved economic policies, regional cooperation and integration and increases in the quality of government and institutions,” states Professor John Simpson from UUISM. “Increased understanding, a shared definition and insights from this market will be invaluable to a number of organisations working across the continent,” he continues. The study’s sponsors include Unilever, Tiger Brands, Pepsico and Yum. This project is made possible by the long-standing relationship between Ipsos and Unilever.

Ipsos is a global research company with a major African footprint and are well positioned to carry out the research and work collaboratively across the region, with years of experience in doing this. “We are very enthusiastic about working with UUISM, and look forward to bringing this market to life upon completion. The output will incorporate findings from all stages of the research, video profiles and definitions not just of the middle class, but of all the segments within it,” says Nanzala. The team at Ipsos comprises a number of research staff from very diverse backgrounds and possess a lot of knowledge of the continent. The central project team will be based in South Africa.

“This is one of the largest projects that we’ve ever initiated and by partnering with Ipsos, we are able to cover more ground than working apart, both geographically speaking and in terms of the types of insights we glean,” says Paul Egan, UUISM project manager. The study covers west, east and southern Africa and research will be carried out in 10 cities in Africa.



"We expect to uncover the golden threads that tie up all these people across these cities and we expect to identify the aspects that make them so different too. The first phase of the research will cover the opportunity and definition of the middle class in sub-Saharan Africa, and the second to uncover deeper attitudes and behaviours among the emerging middle class."

The project should be complete by the 3rd Quarter in 2016.

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