Bateleur Brand Planning
Unlock Strategic Foresight
BBBEE: Level 2

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## The Digital Consumer – Social Media Content, Consumption, and Brand Engagement

Understanding the mind of a South African digital consumer requires research. Bateleur Brand Planning's 2024 Vantagepoint Survey provides valuable insights into current affairs, market trends, macroeconomic challenges, opportunities, and consumer behaviour.

Conducted annually, this comprehensive survey offers a detailed analysis of the digital consumer, examining social media content, consumption patterns, and brand engagement. With a robust sample size of 1,936 respondents, the survey's findings are well-substantiated, offering a reliable snapshot of market dynamics. This substantial number of online respondents lends credibility to the research, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are representative and actionable for businesses seeking to navigate the complex South African market landscape. It is important to note that this research was conducted online and may not fully reflect the perspectives of individuals in the informal sector.



### A Typical South African Digital Consumer

The modern South African digital consumer relies heavily on digital tools and AI, seeking highly personalised, efficient, and rapid interactions while placing a strong emphasis on data security (Pillay & Struweg, 2023). As digital communication transforms consumer behaviour, brands must adapt their engagement strategies to remain relevant. This shift highlights the importance of brand strategists providing expert insights into emerging opportunities and challenges to ensure optimal outcomes for their clients.

### Key Traits of a Digital Consumer: Where Do South Africans Turn for Brand and Product Information?



- **Tech-savvy consumer:** Uses smartphones, tablets, and computers to research and purchase products.
- **Information-driven consumer:** 75% of South Africans rely on Google for product research, while 55% turn to social media for real-world user reviews before purchasing".

- **Socially Influenced:** Engages with brands through social media, influencer content, and peer reviews. 51% of consumers engage with brands on social media, with Millennials leading the way at 55%, followed closely by Gen Z at 48%.
- **Omnichannel Shopper:** Moves seamlessly between online and offline shopping experiences.
- **Preference for Convenience:** Prefers e-commerce, instant transactions, and digital payment options over traditional shopping.

### What Grabs Attention? The Content South Africans Love

South African digital consumers are drawn to content that informs, entertains, and inspires. Whether it's a viral meme or an in-depth product review. Engagement is driven by relatability and value.

- **Keeping Up with the World:** Among the 77% of respondents who prioritise staying informed, 52% actively seek content such as breaking news, industry updates, and local events, highlighting strong demand for timely and relevant information.
- **Learning Through Digital Content:** From the 74% who value educational content, 43% engage with posts that teach them something new, whether through life hacks, how-to videos, or expert insights, showcasing a preference for practical and informative content.
- **The Power of Laughter:** Among the 74% of users who enjoy entertaining content, 47% actively engage with humour, including funny videos, trending memes, and clever jokes, reinforcing the role of comedy in driving social media engagement.
- **Emotional Connection Matters:** From the 73% who appreciate heartfelt content, 41% respond strongly to emotional narratives, including heartwarming stories, inspirational messages, and uplifting moments, demonstrating the impact of storytelling in digital spaces.

For brands, this means that content strategy needs to be **dynamic**, **relatable**, and **emotionally engaging** to truly capture attention.



### Social Media Influence on South Africans' Buying Decisions

Gone are the days when a billboard was enough to convince a consumer; today, the digital conversation shapes brand perception and purchase behaviour.

- 66% of South Africans agree that social media is essential for product and service promotion, making platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok crucial for brand visibility.
- 52% of South Africans believe social media significantly shapes public perception, demonstrating its role in consumer decision-making".
- 37% of South Africans actively use social media to check real user reviews before purchasing a product, prioritising peer recommendations over brand messaging.

## A Case study demonstrating the power of social media content: Stanley Cup's Global Surge and Its Resonance in South Africa.

### Global Brand Amplification: Innovative Engagement Strategies

The Stanley Cup brand has experienced remarkable global growth, propelled by innovative marketing strategies that resonate with contemporary consumers. A notable incident contributing to this surge was a viral TikTok video where a user's Stanley Tumbler impressively withstood a car fire, emerging unscathed and still containing ice (Shah, 2024). This event not only showcased the product's durability but also sparked widespread discussions and debates about its authenticity, further amplifying brand visibility.




### Strategic Marketing Initiatives

- Influencer Collaborations: Partnering with influencers has been pivotal in transforming Stanley products from utilitarian items to lifestyle symbols, enhancing their appeal across diverse demographics (Shah, 2024).
- User-Generated Content: Encouraging customers to share their Stanley experiences has created a vibrant community, increasing brand loyalty and organic reach (Shah, 2024).

**South African Market Engagement:** While Stanley products are available through retailers like Camp and Climb at a premium price point, their popularity in South Africa appears to be driven more by global trends and social media buzz than by targeted local marketing efforts.

## Brand Engagement

### The Social Media Boom: Where South Africans Are Engaging

Social media has firmly established itself as South Africa's digital marketplace, shaping how




consumers interact with content, brands, and each other. The digital consumer is highly active and selective, from breaking news and entertainment to product discovery and purchasing decisions. According to our Vantagepoint 2024 Survey, 51% of users engage with brands on social media, proving that direct interaction is a key trust factor. Consumers seek authenticity through real experiences, user reviews, and influencer recommendations.

### The Power of Authenticity: What Builds Trust?

With social media playing a major role in brand discovery and validation, consumers are more discerning than ever about the information they trust.

- Scams and misleading promotions are a growing concern, with 62% of users highlighting deceptive ads as a major issue.
- Consumers prefer user-generated content over polished brand advertisements, as real experiences and word-of-mouth recommendations carry more weight.
- Influencer marketing remains effective, but only when it feels authentic and transparent. South Africans want genuine brand advocates, not just paid endorsements.

### Conclusion

Be **present** where your audience is. **Google** and **social media** are the top sources for product research, and brands should optimise both. Brands should invest in content that adds value. **Consumers want to be informed, entertained, and inspired**. Encourage **real engagement** through **user reviews**, **influencer collaborations**, and **community-driven discussions** to drive brand trust. Brands should maintain authenticity, as consumers are increasingly wary of overly promotional content and inauthentic endorsements.




### A Thank You Note

I just wanted to take a moment to personally thank you for engaging with our newsletter in your busy schedule. It's always exciting to explore insights that shape the way brands connect with South Africans, and your participation is a big part of that. Keep an eye out for our annual VantagePoint Survey, set to take place this 4th Quarter (October- December). Let your voice count!

Best regards,

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