

THE BLACK DIAMOND

“Rome wasn’t built in a day.” A little hard to believe when you consider the number of shopping centres that have mushroomed overnight. In recent years, South Africa has seen a rapid growth in the number of shopping centres being developed in and around cities. In addition, the profile of the typical South African shopper has shifted to include a diverse mix of cultures and nationalities – a stark contrast from the previous traditional white affluent shopper.

Recently, the black middle class has enjoyed growth in spending power and have extended their reach into engaging in recreational activities centred on shopping centres. Black incomes have also risen, and still continue to rise faster than that of white incomes. The black middle class is said to be larger than the white middle class and is characterised by working professionals, people who can afford university education, and people who own cars and/or homes.

Eager and not shying away from enjoying products and services that were previously made exclusive to white consumers, the black middle class or ‘Black Diamonds’ as they are often called, is a market that is untapped, ever-growing and lucrative. Annemarie Breytenbach, a [PhD student](#) in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), conducted research to determine the perceptions of black consumers regarding shopping centre attractiveness.

The findings from the research indicated that the consumers visit shopping centres on a regular basis for shopping, but more frequently for socialising and entertainment. The traditional view of males and females – differing in their shopping behaviour – does not seem to hold true; as no differences in the perceptions of the genders could be found. Furthermore, the findings revealed entertainment and facilities make the strongest contribution in explaining the overall attractiveness of the shopping centre.

The findings of the research can be used to assist management and marketers of shopping centres to manage and market these centres more effectively in serving the black middle class. Firstly, marketing strategies could focus on black shoppers as a target market, instead of targeting females exclusively. Secondly, as entertainment and facilities were identified as having the biggest contribution towards overall attractiveness, this should be the focus of the shopping centre when marketing to black shoppers. This focus could also be utilised as ‘traffic generators’ for the shopping centre.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Doctoral Degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2014 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Annemarie Breytenbach and [Prof. M. Wiese](#).