



The African Consumer Segment

Commissioned by

Martin Mohammed, The African Chamber of Commerce



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Research and Insights Prepared by

New American Dimensions & Dr. Bruce Corrie of Concordia University

Executive Summary

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Background & Purpose

- ❖ Immigrants from East and West Africa are growing steadily in the United States. With this trend, there is an expected change in the behavioral patterns of this market which could impact their consumption of goods and services and thus, provide a myriad of marketing opportunities.
- ❖ With this in mind, New American Dimensions, The African Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Bruce Corrie, and Aguilar Productions teamed up to undertake a research project to gain an in-depth understanding of East and West African immigrants in the U.S. Of particular interest in this study are the following:
 - Relocation patterns: reasons for coming to the U.S. and length of U.S. residency
 - Language proficiency: in English and their native languages
 - Values and self-identity
 - Shipping habits and brand selection criteria
 - Financial planning and investment
 - Ownership of electronic products
 - Use of English-language and African-language media
 - Demographic characteristics
- ❖ **This document serves as an executive summary to the full detailed report. For a complimentary copy of the detailed report, please contact Sharmila Fowler, SVP Sales & Marketing at New American Dimensions at (630) 839-9425 or via email at sfowler@newamericandimensions.com.**

Priorities

African immigrants are ambitious and hard working.

Many told stories of extreme challenges met during their immigration process, whether fueled by discrimination, financial crises, or social alienation. These respondents work hard to achieve their goals and will not stop until they've reached their definitions of success.

Several mention having two jobs to get ahead, and most prioritizing buying a home as soon as one can to take care of the family and own property.

Family is a key priority.

Respondents voiced absolute commitment to their families and children and noted that this was a top African value. Some faulted the way Americans and African Americans, in particular, allow their families to break up. Discipline is seen as part of the family focus, and parents were keen on very strict disciplines, differentiating themselves from American parents through this belief.

Family also means utter respect for parents and elders. Listening and obeying parents does not stop at 18, but continues indefinitely in African families who manage to hold on to their African traditions. Some remark that they benefit from the freedom of not living near their parents, but overall, most miss their families who live far away, whether in Africa or in another country, or another part of the US.

Education is another top priority.

Many respondents immigrated for education in the US and continue to prioritize it, whether that means returning to school for advanced degrees, financing their wives' college educations, or enforcing it as a priority for their children.

Respondents commented on the ease of getting funding for education in the US and what a tremendous opportunity people have to be educated at fantastic universities.

Priorities

Education leads to workplace success.

The highest goal among African immigrants is for their children to achieve higher education (college or master's degree). Almost all Los Angeles immigrants value this goal.

Many Africans believe that their education, skills, and talents are valued in the workplace. More immigrants from D.C. and Minneapolis tend to feel this way. Note that these respondents are highly educated and are more apt to be in professional occupations.

Africans strive to meet their goals, but with community in mind.

In the end, respondents revealed their thoughts on what it means to be successful, and emphasized the need to give back to their community. Most send money to relatives back home on a regular basis, but when talking about success, they meant giving on a larger scale. The ability to contribute would make them successful, as would family, contentment, and freedom.

While many believe that America is a land of opportunity, few trust the financial systems in America. About two-fifths find it easy to adjust to the American way of life and are active in community issues. Older immigrants tend to adjust better and to participate more in community affairs.

Values and Identity

African Immigrants are African.

When classifying their identities, most respondents admit that they are African or from their specific countries of origin first. This is particularly true of New Yorkers, the newest of these immigrants as well as those of Washington DC. A few who have been in the US longer say they are American, but those in between straddle the two cultural identities. Circumstances make several respondents feel more or less African. Some point out that they are more African with African friends and family, while other point out that when they've returned to Africa, they realize how American they've become.

African Immigrants stay in touch with their culture.

Most respondents value keeping their connection with family and friends in their native country as evidenced by high email usage and international calls placed. Rated next are the values that pertain to maintaining native traditions and enjoying native food, music and entertainment.

Africans and African Americans differ greatly.

Half of the respondents say that Africans are completely different from African-Americans or Blacks. In fact, only a few disagreed to this assessment, which indicates that most respondents feel separate from, and uniquely different from Blacks. More New Yorkers feel this way.

Respondents point out the fissure between themselves and African Americans, listing many influences: connection to country of origin, no slave history, choice to come to the US, no history of discrimination, emphasis on education, emphasis on keeping the family unit together, work ethic, and world view.

And, few experience racism against them, another phenomenon that differentiates them from Blacks.

Shopping Behavior

Some look for brand names, all look for advice.

When making a large purchase, Africans want to do their research and most importantly, get a recommendation from a trusted friend or relative. Although the quantitative data showed that most like to shop around and find the right products and price points for them.

For many respondents, especially in NY, brand is key, even on household items like detergent and air freshener. For others, brand only impacts major purchases, such as high-end electronics/technology and automobiles. About a third of respondents claim to be exclusive shoppers – that is, buying only the lowest-priced brands, or mostly African brands, or brands popular in their home country, or only well know brands. Many of them try brands outside of these criteria.

Religion plays a role in decision-making.

About than half prefer African food and products that agree with their religious values.

Shopping Behavior

Types of shops visited varies by market.

Supermarkets (Ralph's, Byerly's, Safeway, Publix, Cub) lead the list of food and grocery stores while discount stores (Ross, TJ Mass, Marshalls) are best favored clothing stores overall.

More L.A. and Minneapolis respondents like to shop at supermarkets while New Yorkers tend to favor neighborhood grocery stores.

Those from D.C. are discount store shoppers; those from Minneapolis like low-end department stores (JC Penney, Kohl's) while L.A. shoppers favor high-end department stores (Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom), probably due to the influence of the film industry in that area since L.A. respondents have significantly less income than D.C. respondents..

Lifestyle

Africans are interested in learning more about financial planning and investing.

They feel they are behind in this area and need to catch up

The preferred way to “learn” about this topic is to research it on the internet and also rely on word of mouth.

Key topics to brush up on include personal investing and credit.

Basic checking and savings accounts rates are high (80%) however, home mortgage incidence is much lower (23%). DC respondents as well as Christians own more of these types of products. NYC has the lowest rates.

Auto insurance is the most popular among insurance products, followed by medical insurance. This is not surprising since auto insurance is mandated by law and many companies offer medical as a benefit. More D.C. and Minneapolis immigrants own most of these insurance products compared to their counterparts. The same could be said of older respondents and Christians.

Africans tend to own electronic gadgets.

Most household own a personal computer followed by a DVD player. Almost all respondents own a cell phone. Significantly less New Yorkers own all the types of household and personal electronic products. Christians tend to own more electronic products (household or personal) compared to Muslims.

Media Consumption

African immigrant media consumption tends to focus on international content in English.

Africans prefer to consume international news on CNN, BBC, NPR Al Jazeera, and others.

African immigrants use a lot more English-language than African-language media, spending a weekly average of 26 hours on English media versus 5 hours of African media.

High English consumption is partially due to availability of in-language media.

Africans are disappointed with the representation of themselves in the U.S. media.

Respondents expressed disappointment with both news and fictional work when it comes to their people, countries, and continent. They are looking for depictions of *real* people, not tribesmen, AIDS sufferers, militants, or those starving and poor. Respondents believe there is another story to their homeland that people do not hear, and unless people have that exposure, stereotypes will continue to be the only reference available to Americans.

Digital Media use varies.

LA respondents tend to be the heaviest users of other media forms: internet social groups such as Facebook and English-language movies,.

On the other hand, New York has the highest count of people who never use Internet social groups, English-language movies and internet purchases.

Quantitative Market Differences

- ❖ Each market has distinct demographic compositions. As such, respondents from each of the market in this study exhibit patterns of responses that are different from each other.
- ❖ Immigrants from Los Angeles:
 - Predominantly from Ethiopia in East Africa. The Ethiopian native language is Amharic
 - Has a high proportion of Christians
 - Significantly more males than females
 - Has a high proportion of respondents who came to the U.S. for education purpose
 - They have lived the longest in the U.S
- ❖ Immigrants from New York:
 - Consist of both East and West Africans.
 - East Africans are mostly from Kenya, Tanzania and Sudan
 - West African are mostly from Ghana, Senegal, Mali and Cote d'Ivoire
 - Many speak the Swahili language
 - A high proportion of Islam adherents
 - Many of them came to the U.S. to pursue business interests
 - The most recent immigrants among Africans

(continued)

Quantitative Market Differences

❖ Immigrants from Washington DC:

- Consist mostly West Africans from Nigeria and Ghana
- Many of them speak Yoruba, the native Nigerian language
- Predominantly Christian
- Have a higher proportion of older immigrants, in the 45-60 age bracket
- They also have the longest residency in the U.S. (like L.A. immigrants)
- They have the highest educational attainment
- D.C. has the highest proportion of respondents who occupy professional occupations
- They earn the highest annual gross household income
- They the most number of home ownerships
- Most travelled

❖ Immigrants from Minneapolis:

- Consist mostly of East Africans from Somalia, then from Kenya and Liberia
- Many of them speak Somail; many are also Muslims
- Like those in Washington DC, many of them hold professional occupations
- Second to Washington DC in home ownership

Full Detailed Report Available Upon Request



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