

# Big data goes back to basics

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*Massive cultural diversity and income disparity across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) poses a challenge for businesses trying to make sense of the growing volume of data coming out of the region. DAN's solution? Combining big data with old-school field surveys, reveals [DAN](#) Chief Data Scientist, Paul Stemmet*



That's right, field surveys. DAN SSA has conducted a "face-to-face" survey comprising more than 20,000 interviews in four African countries, resulting in the collection of more than 1,500 data points relating to, among other factors, interviewees' lifestyles, opinions, interests, media usage, occupation and views on products, services and marketing.

## Why?

The survey results add context and depth to big data, which allows DAN to generate invaluable business and marketing insights for clients.

Paul Stemmet explains that the information generated by the survey allows companies to get a better picture of their strengths and weakness. The information can be used to extrapolate sales trends, which in turn can be used to guide sales interventions, supply management and the pricing of services, as well as the development of new products and services.

"For one of our clients, the information revealed that most of their profitability was built on expensive products aimed at an ageing market that would no longer exist in 20 years. It was found that the younger market not only preferred a cheaper brand, but most of them never upgraded to the more expensive brand because they became loyal to the other brand," Paul says.

## A strategic move

The information collected can also be used to improve marketing strategies by identifying:

- 1) The probability of an individual buying a service or product and the monetary value of a successful client conversion;
- 2) The best marketing channel to use – be it radio, print media, email, web or specific social media platforms – as well as the time of day these individuals should be targeted.

“You don’t want to be a nuisance by bothering people with advertisements when they are busy. New technology instead allows you to target a group when they will be most receptive to the information. This may be based on the time of day an individual might be most likely to check social media or newsfeeds for updates, be it in the morning right after they wake up or commuting home from work,” Paul says.

## Data as matchmaker

The data collected can also be used to adjust marketing material according to customer preferences and, in effect, improve an advertisement’s success rate. “Companies can use different marketing material to target different colour preferences, hobbies and interests that resonate with specific individuals. “If a person’s favourite colour is red, then it makes sense to use the red dress when you are selling clothes or a red car if you are a car manufacturer,” Paul says.

But big data is also starting to add value to consumers’ lives, according to Paul, by resulting in people being less bothered by irrelevant advertisements and online searches better matching products with what people are looking for – even before they consciously know they are looking for it.

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