

BLACK DAD CONSUMERS: TECH-SAVVY, MOBILE- FIRST, AND A MAJOR MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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When it comes to Black fathers and commerce, two seemingly unrelated data points stand out: 1) they over-index on influencers and celebrities, and 2) they are more likely to shop on mobile than the average consumer.[1]

The thread that draws these two together is a hidden one: marketers are extremely bad at targeting Black dads (and possibly reluctant too). The vast majority of above-the-line advertising creative simply does not reflect our outlooks and desires. It may be inclusive in terms of casting, but it doesn't feature the music we listen to, the ideas and values we share, the unique experiences we have as parents, and more. It's just not made for us.

Mobile makes much more sense to us. According to recent research by Nielsen, Black people are much more tech-savvy and likely to try out new technology than the average consumer, with nearly all Black households owning at least one smartphone. Browsing on mobile, we not only find the content that resonates but we also signal to automated marketing systems what kinds of things we are interested in. In other words, we are self-selecting our own marketing, not being intelligently targeted with creative ads designed for us.



This is a huge missed opportunity for brands, especially as the holidays approach. Black households may not have as big a share of the economic pie as they should, but they still represent a \$1.3 trillion market. For their part, Black dads over-index on their openness to trying new products, which makes them great targets for CPG and other brands. Moreover, they are involved dads, taking part in their kids' lives more than almost any other group. For example, data from the US National Health Statistics tells us that non-coresident Black dads are:

- More likely to have played with their kids (75%) in the last week than the average (60%)
- More likely to have read to them (53%) than average (48%)
- More likely to have talked to them about their days (79%) than average (63%)

These findings hold broadly across a wide range of activities and reflect my own experience. As a father to Oliva, age 5, I've found being a dad to be a voyage of excitement, vulnerability, and commitment. Excitement in the sense of how selfless I can be for my daughter and the lengths I will go to make her laugh. Vulnerability, because I learn more about myself from her every day, which helps me identify my own fears. And commitment, because I learned at a young age that it takes a village to raise a child, and that when you're focused on doing that,

traditional gender roles often fly out the window. That's why when it comes to shopping, I'm engaged and, frankly, enjoy taking part in it.

All of this means that Black dads should be on brands' radars this holiday season. And this isn't hard: the data exists for any brand that is willing to take the effort and reap the rewards. We can bring Black dads into the conversation and find out what motivates them, gleaning real insights and then creating content that clicks with them. How can we get it done?

Start with data. Just as with any consumer group, we have to bring together the necessary data to gain an informed point of view on Black dads. Let's get rid of any stereotypes and preconceived notions. Data should fuel insights to help us understand what inspires Black dads and what they want for themselves and their kids. This is neither difficult nor revolutionary; it just hasn't been done in a systematic way.

Get creative. One of the biggest barriers to addressing this audience is that people in the industry are too afraid to make a mistake. As a result, they have not gained the experience necessary to provide good creative content to reach this audience. And remember, this is a mobile-first audience. So, let's build social experiences that show black dads how CPG products and services can better support both their family's and community's unmet needs.



Add in commerce. Knowing what people want is nearly as important as knowing how they want to buy it. Any strategy designed to reach Black dads needs to have a commerce component. This is a tech-fluent, mobile first audience, so it's important to make mobile commerce easy and seamless, and to do so in the very places where they are most likely to be. Hint: that's not necessarily Amazon, but could be shoppable experiences inside influencer and creator content.

Tap into empathy. Data can get you so far, but empathy has to take you the rest of the way. Being a dad is tough. Brands need to pay attention to the particular stresses and opportunities — not to mention moments of joy — that Black dads experience.

Put simply, Black fathers represent a huge, untapped market, and they're just about to go on a big buying spree for their kids. Brands have all the necessary tools and building blocks to connect with them intelligently and empathetically. But to find success, they need to bring together data, insight, technology, and a sense of shared understanding. The good news is that there is plenty of time left before the holidays to get your campaigns started. As Notorious BIG once put it, "If you don't know, now you know."

Published in Campaign US, November 2022

^[1] Given the low level of published research on Black dads, the data cited in this report has been supplemented by custom inquiries by the VMLY&R Commerce team using the Amerilink and Simmons databases. All data is verifiable on request.

