

An A-to-Z of social media trends to watch

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The social networking phenomenon is moving at meteoric rates, and in 2011, it will evolve quicker than ever before. To avoid becoming a technological dinosaur, here's an A-to-Z of social networking and media trends to watch this year...

BIZ 2011 MARKETING TRENDS

A

Apps (short for "applications") on cellphones such as iPhones, Blackberries and Android phones (open-source phones) and even other gadgets such as iPads and Kindles are so big, Apple CEO Steve Jobs tweeted "Appy new year!" to herald in 2011. In the US, big brands such as Pepsi, Macy's and adidas, among dozens of others, have come up with special apps to talk more directly than ever with their customers.

We haven't seen many corporate apps in South Africa yet, but watch this space.

B

Blogosphere. With more than 100-million blogs in the world, blogs will still be big in 2011, but are becoming more specialised and niche. If you or your company is not blogging yet, it's time to get fingers to keypad, because there are audiences and markets out there to win over with well-written blogs.

C

Corporate tweeting. [According to a study](#) by social media agency Fuseware in 2010, the corporates in SA most tweeted about include Vodacom, Microsoft and Eskom (although these three receive more negative than positive attention).

Many corporates are becoming more active as SA's Twitter community grows daily (Fuseware put it at 55 000 people last March; it's probably safe to say this number has at least doubled by now), but there are many that haven't even woken up to the Twitter phenomenon yet (even Microsoft, which is so talked about, doesn't have a SA-based Twitter account; neither, almost unbelievably, does Eskom).

Corporate tweeting will become more prominent and more professional in 2011, with some corporate Twitter accounts actually working around the clock, including weekends (are you listening, @vodacom and @kulula?)

D

Design on the web will evolve hugely in 2011 as SA web users become more discerning about the websites they visit, and how those websites make them feel. Website owners, too, are becoming more educated, understanding that not all websites are created the same. We're five years behind design in the US and have a lot to catch up.

E

E-commerce. South Africans are flocking online to purchase goods and services like never before, and now spend billions a year online. The spectacular growth trend in e-commerce in the past few years, led at first by our airlines, is likely to continue, as our connectivity to the rest of the world improves, prices drop, and more people have access to the Internet.

Mobile payments from phones are likely to be the next big thing in the e-commerce space in SA.

F

Facebook. Sad, perhaps, but true. [According to Facebook itself](#), it currently has about 500 million active users (around three million or so in SA), 50% of which log in each day, collectively spending over 700 billion minutes per month on the social network. As of 2010, [Facebook now commands more of users' time than Google](#) and more web traffic, and its popularity continues to grow and grow...

G

Group buying. Online group buying is based on the concept of individuals coming together via the Internet to leverage good discounts. The global leader of this is [Groupon](#), which turned down a US\$6 billion purchase offer from Google late last year.

We saw some group buying sites starting up in SA in the last half of 2010, including [Collective Cow](#) [*disclaimer: Tara Turkington is a part owner in Collective Cow*], [Wicount](#), [Twangoo](#) and others. These are offering excellent discounts - often 50% or more off a wide variety of deals from restaurants to hot-air balloon rides and spa treatments.

This space is like to heat up with loads of competition among group buying sites in 2011 - which should be ultimately good for both online consumers and businesses looking to market themselves in an innovative, direct and low-cost way.

H

HTML5. You're going to hear this geeky term a lot, as websites start to take advantage of the latest web publishing language. With it comes better audio and video support, local storage (which will help you to browse your social data while offline, for example) and more targeted geo-location services, among other advantages.

I

iPad. This must-have tablet computer-cum smartphone that weighs next to nothing and costs a lot (around R10 000 in SA at the moment if you can get one) smashed sales records when it was launched last year, [selling over eight million units](#) by the end of 2010.

Expect the prices to come down, and to see more of these nifty little gadgets around and about.

J

Jargon. Yes, this is an industry where acronyms and jargon rule. We're way past "Google me"; now people say "Facebook me". People on Twitter "tweet" and "DM" each other. Blackberry users "BBM" each other. Social bookmarkers "Stumble" their favourite sites.

In 2011, social networking jargon is as sure to grow and evolve as Apples once grew on trees...

K

Kindle. Amazon's lightweight hardware device to read e-books has been one of the greatest business ideas of our time. The sale of e-books surpassed the sale of paper books in 2010, which is a good sign for booklovers living in far-flung places without good bookshops and the world's rainforests alike.

If you don't already own one, start saving - they start at around R1300 and the only place you can get them is www.amazon.com.

L

Location-based social media. Services like [FourSquare](#) and [Google Latitude](#) will plot our social interactions in real-time. People are likely to become less worried about revealing their location in 2011. That said, in places like South Africa, it's worth thinking about giving away your location...

M

Macs of the Apple variety are arguably more stylish, more stable and simpler to use than PCs. Five years ago or so, only designer types carried them under their arms to meetings. Now, [they have more than 10%](#) of the world's market share for personal computers.

N

Newsletters. Good-looking, well-targeted html newsletters delivered by email are still few and far between, yet are a great way for building and engaging audiences that might not otherwise interact with your brand on your website or social networking platforms.

While emailed newsletters are surely set to grow as a media and marketing channel, the rules of engagement are about to get a lot stricter for unscrupulous operators that buy and sell email lists and bomb people with newsletters and emails they never subscribed to. SA's new Consumer Protection Act, if passed, will ensure by law that this is not allowed, and that all mass newsletters and emails will have easy unsubscribe buttons.

O

Optimisation - or the technique of reducing file sizes to as small as possible, while retaining a degree of quality for the user's benefit - is becoming ever-more important in this age of multimedia on the web. It's even more important in Africa, where bandwidth is comparatively very expensive, and Internet access is limited. If your videos and pictures aren't optimised, don't even bother uploading them.

P

Phones used to ring down the passage, bearing the crackly voice of a far-off relative. Now, there are more than 40-million cellphones in South Africa, they're in our pockets, and marketing budgets are going to start following them more than ever before in 2011.

Writes Angelo Coppola on behalf of SA's [BuzzCity mobile advertising network](#), "[In 2011], marketing budgets will continue to shift towards digital. This makes sense as the audience on mobile continues to grow as handsets get better and cheaper, and data rates continue to fall... There will be an increase in brands and agencies using more mobile tools - SMS, mobile display ads, applications, in-game ads, search and location-based services - to enable them to engage with their target audiences for branding, customer acquisition and retention efforts."

Q

Qzone is arguably the [biggest social network in China](#) (it claims more than 300 million users). If you've never heard of it, don't feel bad - Wikipedia currently lists more than [100 major social networks](#), most of which you have probably never heard of either. (Bigadda, Hyves, Skyrock? Told you so.) By the end of 2011, there will be even more.

R

Reconnection. Social media allow us to reconnect with people we were once closer to such as school and university friends and past colleagues. It's now easier than ever to keep in touch, even if it's only a few lines once a year on LinkedIn, a happy birthday post on a friend's Facebook wall, or sharing photos of a trip long since taken on Flickr.

Social media speaks to a basic human instinct to connect and reconnect with others: this is surely the rocket fuel behind its rise in the past decade or so, and it doesn't look like it's running anywhere near empty just yet.

S

Smartphones and more smartphones. These do more than just make and receive calls: you can email on them, work in Word or Excel, and they support applications such as Twitter for Blackberry and YouTube for iPhones. Our Internet experience is growing ever-more mobile, so smartphones are getting smarter all the time.

T

Twitter is already one of the top 10 most popular websites in SA, and the Twittiverse - the universe of tweeters on Twitter - will grow hugely in SA in 2011. This is especially so if we do reasonably well in the upcoming Cricket World Cup.

The 2010 FIFA World Cup was Twitter's biggest ever event; while the global cricket following is smaller than soccer's, South Africans are crazy about their sport. Some good tweeps to follow during the #cricket: *The Star's* chief sports writer, Kevin McCallum ([@KevinMcCallum](#)), sports presenter Kass Naidoo ([@KassNaidoo](#)), Cricket South Africa ([@OfficialCSA](#)) and SA cricket captain Graeme Smith ([@GraemeSmith49](#)).

U

u. Written just like that. Social networking is all about u. It's personal, it's direct; today the advertising and information finds u, not like in the old days when u read a paper or watched TV and u had to go find the information.

V

Vlogging. Video-blogging (taking videos and uploading them directly to blogs instead of - or as well as - writing the blogs or taking still photographs for them) will start to gain real traction in SA as bandwidth, and video cameras/camera phones, become cheaper.

W

Wikipedia, the online collaborate encyclopaedia, now has [more than 17 million articles](#) (only 3.5 million of these are in English) and will continue to grow. Though Wikipedia critics abound, studies show that it's more accurate than *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and is in the top 10 of the world's most visited websites.

In 2011, Wikipedia turns 10 - it was founded in 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger. Prediction: Wikipedia will reach 20 million articles by the end of the year.

X

Xbox is still the most popular video gaming platform and has become a popular medium for direct marketing and product placement. [Barack Obama used in-game advertising](#) in Xbox 360 racing game *Paradise Burnout* while campaigning for US president in 2008, and tough-guy heroes such as Snake in *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker* drink Mountain Dew and eat Doritos.

This is a controversial marketing medium, but one that's likely to mature further in 2011 and beyond.

Y

YouTube is turning six on Monday, 14 February 2011. The popular video sharing network is now the world's second most popular search engine (after Google, which bought YouTube in 2006 for US\$1.65 million).

The stats are incredible: [according to YouTube itself](#), the site attracts more than two billion views per day, with 24 hours of video uploaded every minute. More video is uploaded to YouTube in 60 days than the three major US networks created in 60 years.

No social media campaign today is complete without a YouTube component. SA has also had its five minutes of fame on YouTube, with the [Battle of the Kruger](#) video showing a herd of buffaloes rescue a baby from lions and a crocodile reaching almost 60-million views to date.

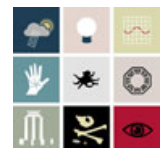
To see YouTube's impact for yourself, I bet everyone reading this has seen at least one of the videos spliced together here to make up some of the most popular YouTube videos of all time: [100 GREATEST HITS OF YOUTUBE IN 4 MINUTES](#). It will become even more popular in 2011.

Z

Zuckerberg. Facebook founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg was *Time's* person of the year in 2010. The Social Network portrays Zuckerberg as scheming and nasty, but the *Time* interview makes him much more personable.

Whatever you think of him, it's hard to think of a 26-year-old (he was just a 19-year-old Harvard student when he created Facebook) who's changed the world more. (Oh, and in case you wondered, he has more than 2.5 million fans on Facebook...) Yip, 2011 will see Mark Zuckerberg becoming even more of a household name than he already is.

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