

Generation Y Not

 By Jason Levin & Jessica Oosthuizen

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South Africa's young consumers are more savvy and demanding than ever before. Not surprisingly, marketers have to work harder and smarter to make their brands compelling to kids, teens and young adults. 2012 stands for pace, progress, challenge and increased 'prosumer' power. Here are 10 whats and hows, ending with some of the hottest youth brands to look out for this year.



1. Net working

The internet is not a novelty to millennials; it's part of their daily lives. However, for many brands, digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter represent new outposts from which to connect to young urbanites.

But parking off on Facebook is not going to create brand appeal. In 2012, we see brands having to work hard to uncover new ways to networking socially. A good starting point is to understand that meaningful relationships with brands are developed offline and the web is just a tool for enhancing this experience.

Adidas's "Get On The Bus" campaign was touted as a Facebook hit but only because the real-life experience was hot enough to get them there.

2. Boundaries

2 258 907 people are linked by their association with "[Yelling at Inanimate Objects](#)", a group on Facebook. However, the more crowded their lives become with 'web clutter', the more resilient and resistant young urbanites become to *brand* and other non-peer communication (on and off the web) that doesn't meet their needs or appeal to them immediately.

This year, there's zero tolerance for pushy brands.

3. Just do more

Brands that jump on the CSI bandwagon to rally up brownie points with a once-off campaign won't cut it anymore. Young people can smell a wannabe do-gooder campaign a mile off and they'll easily see through pseudo-green veneer.

Long-term sustainable brand engagements are more meaningful than ad hoc big-budget attention-seeking gigs. Young people don't just want brands to make more effort to impress them - they expect them to.

4. Boredroom brainstorm

Since 2009 [we've reported](#) on the evolution of the consumer towards the [prosumer](#) (producer + consumer). Urban youth want brands to facilitate *their* experiences, rather than impose brand monologues on them.

International trend analyst Josh Dhaliwal refers to the "The End of the Big Idea" because it overrides the customer's own narrative.

The "big idea" approach is no longer a plausible marketing solution for drumming up interest from teens who want to dictate their experience of the brand. Brands have to work harder and smarter to consult and connect to humbly become a peer of their consumers.

5. I'm an (Afri)can

Eighteen years of democracy in South Africa has created kids and teens fuelled by the promise of realising their potential. A cluster of highly successful entrepreneurs have emerged and are idolised by "can-do" kids who want to do exactly the same.

[In 2011](#) we reported on the growing chasm between what kids aspire to own and achieve and the necessary hard skills like numeracy which are undeveloped. The challenge here is to provide kids with the resources they need to realise their dreams.

According to the [Sunday Times Generation Next 2011](#) study, education is the number one thing that young South Africans would focus on if they were president. In 2012, we see more brands coming on board to invest in education to assist in the success of 'Generation Y Not?'.

6. Tweet success

Socialite Nonhle Thema made headlines when she declared she'd only release carefully thought out tweets in 2012. With over a million followers, what she says holds sway.

Twitter has provided millennials with an open forum from which to share their thoughts and views, and has given birth to a whole new breed of thought leaders. However, there isn't a simple recipe for success, and many brands fail in their attempts to rally up popularity with Twitter. "You have to already like what they're about before you follow them on Twitter," says Hloni, 16.

7. Mobile money gateway

"What happens if my battery dies?" is a common response to why young South Africans don't use their cellphones to make payments.

Twenty-pluses might find it hard to believe, but for teens a low battery is panic-inducing, and is one of the many deterrents to cell banking (along with their suspicions that hackers will tap into their mobiles and steal their cash). Even though they're inseparable from their phones, cash remains the preferred payment method among local teens and young adults.

Elsewhere in Africa, though, mobile payment services have enjoyed major success. M-Pesa in Kenya has over 14 million users and is currently the world's most successful mobile payments system.

The time is ripe for a mobile payment service in this country that's convincing enough for all, including youth, to adopt.

8. The broadest of bases

It's not news that SA is characterised by high levels of inequality ([our Gini coefficient](#) is way above average at 57.8%, according to the UN). However, real world income has very little to do with the level of expectation expressed by young consumers, and the bottom of the pyramid is getting a lot more attention.

Elsewhere in the world, other developing countries are looking at ways to cater to this market, whose aspirations far exceed their cash-on-hand. The Philippines and other emerging countries are developing trendy low-income housing

from converted shipping containers while, locally, products such as DStv Compact are making satellite TV accessible to millions more.

9. The Dark Side

Like the chicken and egg, did the influx of vampire-inspired movies and TV shows induce an appetite for the "dark side" or were TV producers just responding to an appetite for the supernatural? Either way, there's been a steady decline of vanilla-style TV content as teen viewers demand more grit and darkness from the small screen.

The post-recessionary consumer has tired of inflated brand promises and idealised nuclear family narratives, but they're easily engrossed by storylines so far-removed from their real lives that it provides real fantastical escape.

Hot List

1. **Niche eating and quirky foods:** Young adults from high-end suburbs seek out quirky organic eateries that offer farm-fresh goods and home-grown delicacies. The Neighbourgoods Market has become a hit in Cape Town and launched in Joburg late last year. A far cry from the teens, who spend most weekends malling and crowding out KFCs.
2. **(Other) tablets:** iPads have become "lust'ware" for youth in the last year or two. In 2012, we see other competitors - Samsung's Galaxy Tab, Lenovo's Tablet, and the Blackberry's Playbook - working hard to get their share of the (apple) pie.
3. **Group exercise:** Whether it's fun runs, yoga classes or boot-camps in the park, group exercising will pick up the pace. Add digital, and this takes off for youth. Mobile apps such as Endomondo and Nike+ provide the tools needed to track training progress and compete with friends (*and now there's [Nike+ Fuelband](#) - managing ed*). Thumbs up to the Department of Basic Education that plans to implement extramural sport at all schools by the beginning of 2013.
4. **Local celebrities:** Local celebs are gaining international traction. In mid-2011, local band Goldfish ([@GoldFishLive](#)) joined David Guetta and other DJ superstars in Ibiza and home-grown swimming champ Charlene Wittstock made international headlines when she became Princess Charlene of Monaco. Most recently comedian Trevor Noah ([@Trevornoah](#)) was a hit on the Tonight Show broadcast in the US.
5. **Retro-fresh:** Retro gets a new look in 2012. Original streetwear brands spice things up with bold colour schemes. Watch these brands: boxfresh, Supreme Being and Superdry. This year, old school is very new school.
6. **Gaming:** Hot items on the gaming front this year are Sims 3 Pets, Need for Speed The Run, and new Singstar variants (Singstar Afrikaanse Treffers flew off the shelves in 2011).

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