

TREND: Brand personalisation

CreativeBloq.com calls it 'human era' branding, this time when the focus is all on the individual and their patterns and brands discover their 'human' side out of need. Brand personalisation, brand storytelling and purpose-fuelled branding all feed into this mega-trend for 2015.

"We've seen a fundamental shift from 'institutional era' to 'human era' brands. Today's admired brands are flatter and less centralised than those before them. They listen to the world around them and are open to their customers' input. Their delivery is more intimate and personalised, and also more inclusive. They realise that customers seek not just to buy something, but to buy into something," reports Creativebloq.com in '[5 big branding trends for 2015](#)'.

[Gaby de Abreu](#), creative director, Switch Brand Communication, calls it "mindboggling". "In brand communication, 'knowing your target market' will cease to be about drawing an average everyman in outline, but will rather be about speaking to every individual customer who comes into contact with your products. It's mindboggling.

"We have to tailor mass production to the individual. We can't just understand our target audience, broadly speaking, but have to try to find ways of speaking directly to every individual that makes up that audience. It's a daunting task, and one that requires us to be experts not only in branding, design and copywriting, but also in the media, social sciences and psychology, to solve problems in a global market of products and ideas," explains De Abreu.



Pavel Losevsky via [123RF](#)

The reason consumers are seeking out purpose-filled brands - that stand for something - is because they have the power to choose what to use and consume and the social conscience and social platforms to make their influence count.

"Consumers have developed a buying conscience and seek brands that vindicate their purchasing decision. Everyone is looking for more fulfilment and ways to improve their lives. This also applies to their choice of brands," says [Ann Nurock](#), a former CEO of Grey South Africa and Grey Canada, and now South African partner in Relationship Audits and Management, which aids agencies and corporate brands on increasing the value, trust and thought leadership of their business relationships.

Higher brand purpose is a brand promise that truly improves the lives of the consumers it aims to reach, says Nurock. This also feeds into the current storytelling trend, as "how a brand conveys the narrative matters. Its success is dependent on its authenticity and relevance to the consumers".

For [Giles Shepherd](#), chief executive, Brand Alive Group, understanding the power of the individual was a game changer in 2014 for both external and internal brand communications. "What's new is the realisation that the best form of promotion of the business is getting customers to passionately advocate the brand, due to the positive experiences they are having."

Shepherd's advice to brands is that they keep their brand promises: "Remember that brands are conversations, and those conversations are instant and global. Things won't always go well, but if you manage the conversation with integrity, even a bad situation can work in your favour."

[George Golding](#), CEO, Euphoria Telecom, adds that brand power will continue to shift from the corporation into the customer's hands. "Your brand is no longer what you say it is. Your brand is what your customers tell each other it is. Ethical, transparent brands have begun to gain favour with consumers and this trend will continue to gain traction and momentum. The greatest brands of the future will be the ethical brands that deliver on what they promise."

Golding wants to see more South African brands standing by their brand promise in 2015, instead of just advertising it. "Brands need to start doing what they say, removing complexities and simplifying our daily lives. If your product has value, customers do not need to be tricked into buying it."

**Trends curated by [Louise Marsland](#), specialist editor of Biz Trends 2015.*

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