

10 communication trends for SA



By [Gisele Wertheim-Aymes](#)

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When we look at trends for 2010, it's important to understand their starting point is not here today, but that they are a result of a prolonged period of activity initiated some time ago and now progressed to being tangible, impenetrable and definitely not faddish.



Unquestionably, 2010 will be a more positive year for the South African media, marketing and communications industry, not least of which will be the fruition of many years of passion and commitment to host of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

1. **It's a WWW world:** with the continued ascent of the third (PC) and fourth screens (mobile), more eyeballs and more money will be invested in this channel to market than ever before, with ad revenue growth rates around 20-25% year-on-year and user adoption rising dramatically with more accessible and cheaper broadband access in South Africa. Growing affordability of smart phones will put www in more South African pockets than ever before.
2. **Rise and rise of social media:** companies which took the time in the past year and made the investment in social media will better leverage it in 2010 and start realising greater benefits. Those who didn't have lots of catching up to do (if they can), as social media continues to proliferate and entrench in daily consumption habits of millions of South Africans.
3. **Augmented reality:** will give customers the ability to find and buy products that they are interested in from wherever they are. More transactions go mobile with a virtual shop in the pocket. Banks in South Africa will continue to lead the way with innovative payment and gateway solutions and more product offerings. Just look at how they offer customers solutions to transact online plus in mobile with virtual cash!
4. **Consumer activism:** expect more customer activism. Consumers are realising they have a voice and with this comes more risqué behaviour and brashness, including fair dollops of brand-bashing, as increasingly open and transparent conversations about brands and companies take place particularly online.

The nature of the web seems to encourage more forthright speak and consumers are giving more importance to word of mouth recommendations and raw dissuasion than other communications.

5. **PR prioritisation:** if ever there were a time to take the role of PR and corporate Communications seriously, it's in 2010. Companies will have to recognise the growing importance of PR. Look at how Queensland Tourism in Australia used PR last year to launch and sustain a highly successful global marketing campaign for "[The best job in the world](#)".

Companies will also need to hear and participate in the global online conversation that is taking place and have clear policies and teams to monitor and formulate response strategies. Growth in online reputation management monitoring and services as companies need to listen to social media conversations join the customer conversation and get tweeting!

6. **Collaboration:** marketers will expect more collaboration from their suppliers (creative, media, promotion, research, and design, PR et al) to deliver more relevant communication strategies for their brands that cross over all channels of communication seamlessly and relevantly in this fast changing world. This will impact on remuneration models and need for more measurement and ROI.

Definitely expect mainstream agencies to claw back into their folds areas of media strategy and web design and fulfilment.

7. **Advertising rate inflation:** a downward trend for most media with the exception of radio and print. Radio listenership remains stagnant, but rates increase dramatically. Print circulations decline, but rate increases do not accommodate this, so print media will be in for another tough year.

TV is still offering the best ROI for now, but this may change when SABC's new management team refocuses on profitability and the positive turn in recessionary conditions pushes overall TV inventory demand back to higher levels. Cinema audiences, although niche, have firmed, but will be dependent on Hollywood blockbusters for a good year.

Out of home (OOH) will grow because of innovation, affordability, inventory and creative solutions. During 2010, most media owners will try and make hay while the sun shines, hiking up rates dramatically over this time. The question is how many marketers will pay the premium, really?

8. **Gadgetfication:** more and more South Africans will buy smart phones, netbooks, Apple Macs, and of course e-readers such as the Kindle - using e-books at the expense of printed versions, bypassing brick and mortar stores and printed copies.
9. **Hybridisation:** media groups will attempt to sustain their brand prominence by hybridising their media and extending into new territory.

In the US, *Marie Claire* has launched a reality TV show that gives the public an insider's view of the day-to-day workings of this major magazine. *Vogue* has also hit the news with its film documentary *The September Issue* just released in South Africa, which shows the team under the legendary editor-in-chief Anna Wintour compiling their largest fashion issue ever.

Locally, the line between Twitter, mobile news alerts, Facebook and radio broadcasting is blurring, with customers offered various options on how to receive news or interact with their favourite radio personality.

A great example of this is [Gareth Cliff](#), the irrepressible 5FM jock who has 25 211 followers, putting him on the leader board for one of the most-followed South African personalities on Twitter.

10. **Business unusual:** the world is starting to slowly emerge from recession and South Africa too is no exception. Fundamental shifts in consumer attitudes and company margins have occurred over the past two years and this will

influence the way forward.

In 2010 companies must recognise the need to be more honest, transparent and real to consumers. There will be little room to fake it and get away with it.

Importantly, this year is a really special year for South Africans as we host the 2010 FIFA World Cup. This will bring unprecedented volumes of new international visitors and media attention to our shores in a brief concentrated period of time, provide new experiences and open new gateways for the future.

Learn from it, be proud and, most of all, enjoy it!

ABOUT GISELE WERTHEIM-AYMES

Gisèle WertheimAymés has worked in the media industry in South Africa for over two decades. She is a director of a medical company, owner and publishing editor of Longevity Media (www.longevitymag.co.za) and a shareholder in Stuff Group SA, publishers of *Stuff* (www.Stuff.co.za) - the world's best-selling gadget magazine. Email her at gisele@longevitymag.co.za and follow her on Twitter at @giselewaymes.

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