

18 trends for 2018

 By [Louise Marsland](#)

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Every year I produce Bizcommunity.com's top trends for the year ahead, based on the predictions of our expert thought leaders, from the media and marketing communications industry in South Africa and Africa who contributed to our trends annual project; as well as my own trends research. This is our 'year of accountability' as brands, government and individuals are held accountable for their actions.



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TREND 1: Agile video content

Our experts are calling it a “video storm” that is about to hit South Africa and Africa. 90% of all internet traffic will be video based in 2019. Mobile video viewing increased by 35% in 2017 and is forecast to grow another 25% in 2018 and 29% in 2019. 92% of mobile viewers share videos. The mobile video explosion will largely be driven by millennials. Brands need to cater for this “insatiable need for agile, high-quality video content”, says [Brett Morris](#), FCB CEO.

TREND 2: Storytellers will rule the creative world

We need to tell our true stories. Human stories. “Good content gains attention, but great content drives behaviour,” says digital strategist and creative head, [Desiree Gullan](#), of G&G Digital agency. An emotional connection with a brand is a lasting connection. Look at how the #MeToo movement gained traction, it went viral because it resonated with women across the world. Storytelling also transcends every medium – from traditional media to being enhanced by AR and VR applications.

TREND 3: The rise of Afrofuturism

We’ve been hearing about “Africa Rising” for decades but Africa’s growing middle class should be the focus of the coming year. They are mobile savvy, aspirational and driven by ambition and a need to improve their and their families’ circumstances. Facebook Africa’s regional director, [Nunu Ntshingila](#), says: “By 2020, more people will have mobile phones than running water or electricity at home.” This is about African Pride, Afro-optimism and growing trade collaboration across the continent – brands need to tap into this.” Afrofuturism was also a key trend at Design Indaba 2018, with many speakers declaring Africa’s time is now.

TREND 4: Artificial intelligence is our new reality

Artificial intelligence is firmly on the agenda of business as companies grapple with the automation, convenience and cost savings that AI brings. It will change our world fundamentally and it is important to have the debates about ethics and job losses and a reordering of society in the future, as it is predicted that AI bots will power 85% of all customer service interaction by 2020 and “AI is playing a huge part in how businesses are communicating with potential prospects online through social media”, as [Bianca Quinn-Diavastos](#), Jetweb MD, points out.

TREND 5: Extended reality (XR)

The mixing of realities such as artificial intelligence with augmented reality and virtual reality, will lead to extended reality, says [Johan Walters](#), head of NMPi Labs, and AI “enhanced mix realities will be the way we first experience human/machine contact”. He adds: “The user case for XR extends from science, to gaming, and gives brands countless ways to engage with their customer through genuinely immersive experiences.”

TREND 6: Business needs to ‘woke’ up

[Dion Chang](#), founder of Flux Trends and trend guru, says business needs to wake up: “There are tectonic plates of change grinding beneath our feet, and for those businesses which don't tread carefully, there's a very real risk of falling into the abyss of political incorrectness and obsolescence.” Being 'woke' is all about being aware of the social climate around you and behaving responsibly. Social media has handed power to consumers and they will hold business accountable in this “age of damage” as described by the global CEO of Havas, David Jones.

TREND 7: A new advertising agency model

The current agency model has been on the decline for a while as agencies have focussed as much on revenue and coming up with business solutions for their clients, while under pressure from the super business consultancies that are dominating the market. “More and more agencies will move away from being called advertising agencies as their output will be far reaching as well as channel agnostic,” said [Karabo Denalane](#), CEO, TBWA\Hunt Lascaris. The end result will also include the return to hot creative boutique agencies. And [Gau Narayanan](#), Net#work BBDO MD, added: “Advertising is a people driven business, where ideas must remain the currency.”

TREND 8: Building reputational resilience

The past year has seen too many brand scandals to mention and reputation management as a communications discipline is a key cog in any brand toolbox now. Crisis brand management and media training are now critical as social media slaughters any brand that is not prepared to manage a crisis when it occurs. As communications consultant, [Daniel Munslow](#), says: “It will be the organisations that understand, protect and enhance their reputational assets that will maintain shareholder value and brand equity in the long run.”

TREND 9: Social listening

[Janine Lloyd](#), CEO, PR Expert, says that in order to add value to clients, communicators need to use social listening tools to analyse what is being said about clients on social media, as well as keep track of the trends. Content producer, [Samantha Page](#), says the media is under attack and needs to promote credible journalism as an antidote to fake news, tirelessly. And we the public needs to be critically aware of how fake news and propaganda is spread across our social media platforms so we don't fall prey to agendas we are not aware of.

TREND 10: Disrupting the consumer

[Dion Chang](#) believes issues of identity are directing brand behaviour. “Our identity issues are becoming pivotal, as are finding brands and businesses that match and resonate with that identity.” Brands and organisations that are able to tap into

the current social consciousness will thrive, but those that are not savvy and on top of what is now “woke”, will see a gradual loss of sales, market share and reputation. As [Gil Sperling](#), CTO of Popimedia, adds: “Brands should strongly consider taking consumers on a journey – through the entire consideration cycle. It gives brands power and control, and allows them to build a longer, stronger relationship. And, as video becomes the *de facto* engagement tool, it’s critical for marketers to build beautiful content.”



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TREND 11: Media channel agnostic

“Agnostic planning” has infiltrated media agencies. This media channel agnostic creative approach is aimed at ensuring that a creative concept fits perfectly onto channels that resonate with consumers and delivers on reach and frequency objectives first, says [Graham Deneys](#), strategy director Carat Cape Town, Sub-Saharan Africa. Consumers are dictating the relevant channels and margins demand performance.

TREND 12: Consumer activism

The rise of consumer activism must be respected by brands, as consumers demand accountability and authenticity from brands and organisations. If you want to appear more human to your consumer, then you need to embrace the values they hold dear. [Amanda Dlamini](#), strategic planning manager at Y&R, says today’s consumers place stricter demands on brand custodians to be attuned to societal sensitivities. “Creative agencies need to hire and retain culturally diverse talent and also listen to their points of view in order to truly embrace diversity.”

TREND 13: Data fusion

The ad industry will embrace data or insights because CMOs are becoming more data focused and analytics driven, says [Natalie Otte and Ilse Dinner](#) of Kantar Millward Brown, South Africa. It’s all about the personal relationship with the consumer and brands will collect data to build on consumer connections. “Data is the last competitive advantage and, ‘intelligent’ marketing will lead to greater ROI,” according to Otte and Dinner. Although with the Cambridge Analytica/Facebook fiasco, brands may need to be more transparent about the collection of that data. And from 2018, it’s all about data fusion, says [Peter Langschmidt](#), head of Echo: “Data fusion involves integrating multiple data sources to produce more consistent, accurate, and useful information than that provided by any individual data source.”

TREND 14: Youth take centre stage

From the millennials to generation Z, the youth are changing the world. Witness what is happening in the states with gun control issues and the incredible speeches from children, aged nine to 15 years. As trend analyst [Dion Chang](#) says, generation Z don’t want history to repeat itself. They are a social media generation, defined by experiences more than the products they buy or who they will work for. “Increasingly, for this generation, it is less about fitting in and more about making individual choices that reflect their identity,” explains Chang.

TREND 15: Mobile first in Africa

By 2020, more people will have mobile phones than running water or electricity at home. The new generation will connect solely online through mobile, says Nunu Ntshingila, regional director of Facebook Africa. “Facebook data underscores the importance of mobile, with 97% in Sub-Saharan Africa accessing the platform on mobile each month. Now is the moment to get well acquainted with these mobile citizens. They will drive global growth for businesses in Africa and will increasingly shape our world.”

TREND 16: Own your content channel

With the fake news phenomena threatening to become a mega trend, the dichotomy is that brands may well end up being trusted more than mainstream media channels, as there is a relationship of trust and brand loyalty that brands have spent serious money on nurturing. The media backlash over fake news may well lead to brands continuing to establish and own their own content channels, moving off social media platforms or reducing their exposure to fake news targeting.

TREND 17: It's storytime for brands on social media

It has been predicted that Instagram will kill Twitter. And as [Dean Oelschig](#), Halo MD, explains, smart people in Los Angeles have just launched an Instagram agency. The reason is the rise of video content and particularly, mobile video. "The micro-production of content, tailored to niche audiences, is becoming possible thanks to the sophistication of AI and smart data. Augmented reality (see: iPhone X) will form part of the mainstream content production landscape. I also expect to see a rise in live streaming and video sharing across WhatsApp for Business (launching in 2018) and Instagram Stories, which already has 250 million users."

TREND 18: THINK. Slow down

In a world that is speeding up, Joe public executive creative director, [Pepe Marais](#), advocates slowing down to think, to simplify, to be more considered with where you spend your budget, where you push your creativity and which media you use. Create more value, by doing less, and rather do more craft to put the art back into advertising, and love of more what you are doing and why you are doing it.



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