

Your 2015: The consumer, content and collaboration

 By Louise Marsland

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It's all about me, you and what we want. Now. No waiting around. This is the year the consumer and content will dominate and brands learn the meaning of true collaboration.

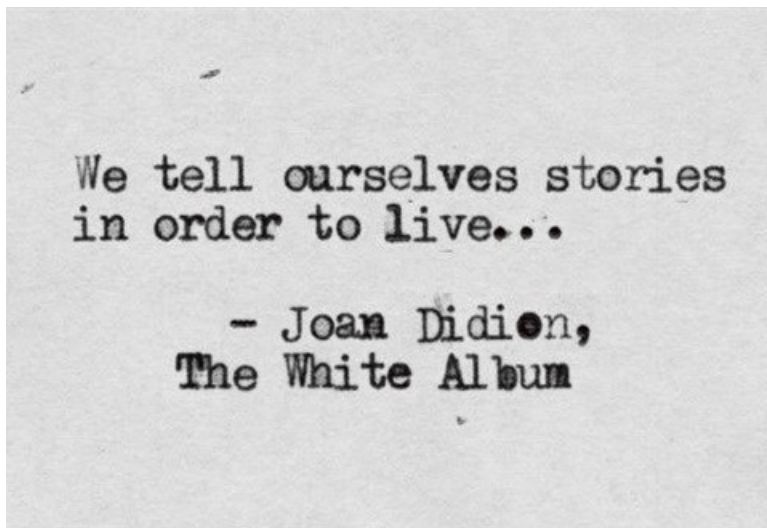
It is about tapping into the stories we all have to tell: individuals, brands, countries, continents. Our past, our present and the future we want. It is about our legacy, our craft and working together

These are our top South African media, marketing, advertising communications trends for 2015 from all our interviews with the leadership of our local industry, research and the past year, following consumer and industry trends both locally and internationally.

This is what you need to keep on your agenda for this year (for more detail on each trend and links, click through to each trend category and the industry leader contributions):

1. ADVERTISING: [Transformation](#)

The industry has had more than a decade since the first parliamentary hearings into lack of transformation in the South African advertising industry took place, to get its house in order. This year there are no more excuses as the Triple BEE codes take effect and pressure is put on agencies by their clients as regulations bite. It will be an industry "game changer" for 2015, warns Ogilvy & Mather South Africa CEO, [Abey Mokgwatsane](#). A second trend for South Africa is true digital integration. We've lagged at international awards shows in recent years because we have fallen behind in this trend.



[Brandingstrategyinsider.com](http://brandingstrategyinsider.com)

Pattern: Human society is experiencing a fundamental shift in culture as the speed of change and technological innovation trumps even industrialisation. Everything is up for review: our political and economic systems, religion, gender, family structure, race relations, culture, society... It is a time like no other to renew, refresh beliefs, start something.

Influence: Become the creative powerhouse of Africa, producing unique, global, culturally-relevant work that truly reflects an understanding of consumer culture and nuance. Every global ad agency network is trying to gain traction in Africa. Let's show them how it's really done. The African way.

2. AFRICA: [Land of Opportunity](#)

One billion consumers. Burgeoning, aspirant middle class numbering 15 million in 11 of Africa's largest economies. Youngest population. Increasingly urbanised and connected via mobile. Africa's gross domestic product will grow by 50% to US\$3.7tn over the next five years and Africa's consumer facing industries are expected to grow by more than \$400bn by 2020. 93% have access to a cellphone and 334 million new smartphone subscribers are predicted in the next three years. A secondary trend is mobile adoption. The timing needs to be right for brands launching into Africa and affordability is key. Listen to Africa.

Pattern: Growth. GDP per capita has grown 26% in the past decade. Incomes are rising. African consumers, many of whom have very little, are used to 'hacking life', coming up with innovative, makeshift solutions to problems. We are the original 'Maker Economy'. Mobile adoption is accelerating and the demand for home grown entertainment and content is insatiable. There is a new pride in African culture - look at the wholesale rejection on the continent of the latest sycophantic boy band/old rocker collaboration of that tired old ditty 'Do they know it's Christmas' to raise money for the fight against Ebola.

Influence: 'Made in Africa' - create home grown brands for Africa. We need to come up with solutions to our own challenges. Brands need to collaborate with consumers to find those solutions. A Nielsen analysis found that products developed or tailored specifically for Africa's consumers achieve a success rate of 40%, well above the standard 10%. It's our time. Now get on with it already.

3. BRANDING: [Brand Personalisation](#)

This is the era where humans are plugging into technology with wearables and brands are trying to become more human by listening to their consumers and taking on board the influence of the crowd. Brand personalisation is a current mega-trend which is fuelled by brand storytelling and purpose-filled branding. Brands want to be seen to be good. We want them to do good.

Pattern: Mass production, stereotyping, lifestyle measures, profiling is no longer enough to understand each individual consumer. Data is the answer, analytics, the solution. "Your brand is no longer what you say it is. Your brand is what your customers tell each other it is," says Euphoria Telecom's CEO, George Golding.

Influence: Be really good: do good. Make a difference. Solve problems. Save the world. Be true to your consumer. Tell the truth. Keep your promises. People actually care about such things. Really.

4. CONSUMER RESEARCH: [The Experience Brand](#)

Conspicuous consumption is a trend damped down somewhat by the recession. Consumers have cut back radically on spending during the recession, particularly since food and petrol prices began rising locally. Consumers are buying less stuff, but they still want brands to charm and entertain them, find solutions to societal ills. This time it is all about the experience a brand gives, how it makes their consumers feel, the positive impact on their lives. We may still have a dominant mall culture in South Africa, but we also go there to be entertained, which feeds into this trend.

Pattern: Consumers are gravitating towards source - they want to know the origin of ingredients, suppliers, the brand back story. It is why newer, craft brands or brands that hark back to their artisanal roots are doing well.

Influence: This feeds into the society we need to create after this apocalyptic recession, political and economic upheaval. Brands that come up with solutions to real problems, will win their hearts and leave a lasting impression.

5. DIGITAL: [Mergers & Acquisitions](#)

As the media and agency land grab continues in Africa by the global agency and media networks, 2015 is the year the big mergers and acquisitions of 2014 need to prove themselves and perform. The measure will be in the integrated work that wins awards.

Pattern: The acquisition assault is not yet over, as the global networks pay attention to other media types such as out of home (Continental has been bought by JCDecaux, it was announced in December); merchandising (WPP acquired Smollen) and experiential (again, WPP, bought EXP.)

Influence: Competition will be fierce locally as there are only so many clients to go around, but it does present an unparalleled opportunity for many of the younger, formerly digital-only agencies to head up North to opportunity that awaits in Africa. And of course there are some global brands that they will probably get to work on too, given that the talent in our local industry is right up at the top there with the best in the world, creatively and digitally.

6. MARKETING: [Content Marketing](#)

This will also be the 'year of content' without a doubt on the nitty gritty of campaign implementation. Almost every one of our contributors to this trends report has referenced content as a trend. The trick will be producing content that consumers want to engage with, share, and which will generate leads. Because this is also the year content marketing becomes [content selling](#). Great content can build a compelling business case for potential customers, can be targeted and results measured.

Pattern: Yes, there is a difference between brand storytelling and content marketing. Brand storytelling is defined best by [Aesop agency](#): "In essence, it's the application of narrative thinking and storytelling techniques to define brands, inform strategy and structure creative activity". According to the [Content Marketing Institute](#). "Content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action."

Influence: Curating content is still a sought-after skill. Opportunities abound for brands which become owners of their own content channels as the media industry continues to implode and audiences fragment between different media and channels; and social media platforms keep changing the rules. Brands have to work hard to engage their consumers for longer than 30 seconds in the places they are both comfortable with.

7. MEDIA: [Programmatic Media Buying](#)

Programmatic Media Buying is being seen globally as the media buying tool that acts as a magic bullet to solve all online advertising issues. eMarketer predicts that advertisers in the US will spend \$3.36bn on "real-time bidding," up from \$2bn in 2012. "Programmatic is a catchall term that many people are using to categorise everything from behavioural and intent-based targeting to real-time bidding and exchange-based buying of inventory," Peter Naylor, former EVP at NBC Universal, tells AdWeek. "Programmatic is advertising's newer, better mousetrap." There you have it. But marketers still need a demand-generation strategy. It is not email marketing.

Pattern: The fact is, that marketers will continue to be confused by it, media owners will champion it, and media planners will rail against it. And it will dominate 2015.

Influence: Anyone who actually understands it and can coherently explain it, will be our industry person of the year.

Thankfully, AdWeek has done a [Programmatic for Dummies series](#). I can recommend it!

8. SOCIAL MEDIA: [Hashtag Social Activism](#)

Social activism is a growing trend as our world becomes more connected and physical boundaries disappear. "Hashtag activism" is a way for people to rally around a cause, an issue, or a "Bashtag" in which a person or organisation are trolled instead.

Pattern: In the early days of social media, brands made mistakes and were often on the receiving end of trolls, rightly or wrongly so. It is our current narrative as a society - this global trend to transparency and 'having our say' on everyone and everything, including brands.

Influence: Social media amplifies issues and people's concerns and causes. So social listening strategy and tools are key for brands to gain traction in this volatile space.

9. STRATEGY: [Brand Storytelling](#)

Brand storytelling across every channel, be it earned, paid or owned media, will dominate 2015. The same buzzwords will be thrown around: authenticity, transparency, narrative, content, collaborative, etc. It is the storytelling era: "People don't have 30 seconds to be interrupted - but they always have 30 seconds to hear a great story," reports [SayQuarterly.com](#).

Pattern: The influence exerted on brands is immense. In this wired, networked, socially-cohesive world, where truth is everything - from fake-real reality shows to social media - people's lives, including their fantasy lives, are on show and that includes brands. In order to friend your consumer, you need to share too. Your values, your history, your craft, your 'family'. Brands will stop faking stories of fictitious founders and kindly uncles, or embellishing the narrative. It's time for the rawness of real life.

Influence: Brands that crack that rich narrative, provide the awesome stories and surround them with considered and informed content marketing strategies, will win 2015. No doubt.

Brands getting it right, including the ad everyone references, and everyone wishes they'd done: [Coke Rainbow](#). Some more examples from [eConsultancy](#).

10. YOUTH: [The Millennial Effect](#)

We have been bombarded the last couple of years with reports and surveys on the current Millennial generation, also known as the 'boomerang' or '3G' generation (three generations) because they are having to move back in with their parents due to the recession - joining their grandparents who can't cope on their pensions. The most important point about millennials, no matter where they fall into the large age grouping - they are our first generation of truly digital citizens and they are currently in the workforce. They are the ones who have to fix things: economically, politically, culturally. So that is why what they do and say carries incredible weight. They have to try give us a future. And they do have a need to want to leave their mark on the world.

Pattern: A key trend is that they are pushing back against brand marketing - but do believe brands have the power to influence change and are supporting the ones which do make a difference. They expect a lot from brands; bravery, collaboration, authenticity. This is a generation hard hit by the recession and financial uncertainty they have witnessed or experienced. They are delaying many of the customary rites of adulthood as a result: marriage, parenthood, career.

Influence: Brands need to help millennials navigate this rapidly changing world. Work with them in creating new solutions to societal ills. They are the most educated generation in history, they see you, really see you. There is no space for brand confusion. Work with them. Ask them what they need. They will tell you. (A side eye here to Generation Z, the teenagers

still at school, who seem much nicer, more empathic, philosophical, tolerant and entrepreneurial than their older millennial siblings. We expect big things from them in the next decade).

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