Social media marketing and the youth

By Bradley Maseko

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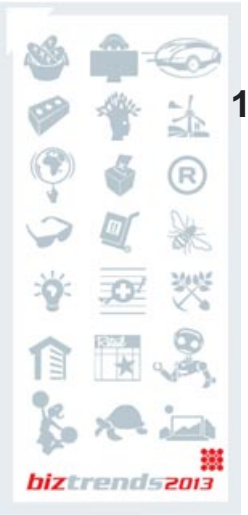
The following is a breakdown of social media marketing trends for 2013.This year I take a look at both *external* (the youth market) and *internal* (business marketing efforts) trends that I predict will play a crucial role in further cementing the role of social media marketing in the overall marketing strategies for most brands and businesses seeking to effectively engage the youth market through social media platforms.



External

1. Visual content

2012 was a year of being unique and expressing oneself through social media, and this will spill over into 2013. Visual content social networking sites such as Instagram and Pinterest successfully captured the attention of the youth in 2012. According to analytics firm Nielson, Pinterest grew its audience from 2.5 million people to 25 million between July 2011 and February 2012, while *The Business Insider* states that more than 5 million photos are uploaded on Instagram every day.

Visual content will continue to appeal more to the youth in 2013; likewise, more brands will go visual to cater to them.

- ### Social TV

The manner in which the youth consume TV has changed greatly due to the impact of social media on the daily lives of most youth. Twitter, with over 2.4 million users in SA and over 15 million tweets a month, has been playing a crucial role; most youth mention their favourite shows and monitor what is trending or being discussed by their peers. Ultimately, this social media interaction is driving them to watch TV either out of interest or curiosity, while at the same time interacting with others on their social networking platforms about what they are watching.

Social media is therefore creating that much-needed active audience for TV. 2013 will, without doubt, see youth sharing more about TV shows on social networks, thereby further strengthening the TV and social media relationship.

- ### Social consciousness

Most worthy causes are now trying to harness the power of social media outreach, as it now becomes increasingly difficult to separate the virtual world from the real world. Real-world interaction, in most instances, becomes boring to most youth as they feel limited to that which is in front of them. As a result, this is shaping a virtual lifestyle for youth who have always wanted to be involved in charity/community work. Through social media, there will be an increased involvement in worthy causes as the youth share information with their peers about causes they are passionate about.

- ### Current affairs

Social media is leading to an increased interest in current affairs, with legal, political and economic issues being constantly discussed. Due to the "fear of missing out" (FOMO), most youth are following trending stories and paying attention to updates from their peers. This is the on-the-go generation who has information at the tip of

their fingers and a greater need to want to voice their opinions.

Social media is, therefore, becoming a platform whereby youth are not only keeping up-to-date with current affairs but also having their say on important issues that affect them, as seen in June 2012 when the DA conducted a live chat on Mxit in which 38 000 young people registered for a chat session on the youth wage subsidy.

Internal

1. Social media education

Businesses will want to learn more about how to use the different social media platforms to achieve their objectives. With new unique social networking platforms emerging every year and appealing to different target markets in different ways, it has become evident that more needs to be taught to the people responsible for social media within the different organisations. 2013 will therefore see an increase in the number of businesses that will take their employees for social media workshops and courses to help them better understand how to engage their target markets and set effective social media strategies.

2. Social analytics

As social media takes a more defined position in the overall marketing efforts for brands and business, there will be a greater call for increased investment/budget allocations. Subsequently, this will lead to an overall increased call for comprehensive tracking and measurement solutions to help maximise ROI for businesses. Now more than ever, businesses will see the need to gather social media data and analyse it to make business decisions.

3. Social commerce

The 2012 annual social media landscape reported that over 5.4 million South Africans were using Facebook, 2.4 million Twitter and 9.3 million Mixt; brands will want to capitalise on these figures and use social media to drive traffic to business websites and ultimately create sales. A survey, conducted by Cisco in 2012, states that nearly 60% of South Africans are willing to share their email addresses with stores and online sites in order to receive notices about discounts and sales.

Thus we can certainly expect to see businesses using this to their advantage and increasing the use of coupons and promotions and other selling efforts via social media in 2013. For example: in November 2012, Shoprite announced a world-first instant shopping discounts on cellphones, using Facebook as one of the available platforms. The effective use of social media to increase financial transactions by the youth will certainly be the ultimate idea for most brands.

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