

# Shifting attitudes towards the body

By  Danette Breitenbach

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Would you want to be a Cyborg in the near future? A Cyborg is defined as a human enhanced by technology; that is a person whose physiological functioning is aided by a mechanical or electronic device. If you answered yes you are in the minority, as most people are not ready to be a Cyborg.

"Most people are not really at this point but they do see technology as an aid to maintaining every day health," says Lou Boxall-Davies, Chief Strategic Officer, Havas SA. She was presenting the findings of the latest Havas Worldwide Prosumer Report; iBody, which examines shifting Prosumer attitudes towards the body including attitudes toward beauty, physical health and well-being as well as technological advances and the role brands have to play to be relevant in this consumers' life.

Of interest to local brands is that the Report clearly shows that South Africans are more body conscious than other markets. "Across the globe, we are seeing an unprecedented movement towards body ownership and most people have a good attitude about their bodies, including South Africans, as well as a sense of confidence," says Boxall-Davies.



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It is a good time to be in the beauty and health business, with fewer people ignoring the benefits of an active lifestyle and healthy diet. They are also making these choices because they understand the impact of them, not because the media is telling them to.

"Strong is the new skinny. People are exercising because they want to be healthier, physically fit and live longer. People are also taking lessons from the East in an approach to health that is a more natural and sustainable approach."

When asked most people say yes to the following:

- Are you researching health?
- Exercising more?
- Getting a good night's sleep?
- Taking a vitamin and supplements

We are starting to see a shift on an individual level, says Boxall-Davies. "We are also seeing beauty fatigue; that is people are growing tired of the strict standards of beauty and that outer beauty is more valued than what is in our hearts and minds."

Despite this, she says that the majority of people are still buying into the image of beauty portrayed in the media. "A tension exists between this and what we value."

People are researching what they eat and how this impacts on their lifestyle. "Sugar is the new baddie, for example. South Africans in particular have embraced new approaches to different food choices and are ahead of the curve compared to the rest of the world."

Technology also plays a role in health. **South Africans buy into three technologies:**

- A test that measures an unborn child's risk of developing a serious illness
- Digital devices that monitor your health
- A pill to lose weight.

**What they do not buy into is:**

- Technology that lets you choose the sex and physical characteristics of a baby
- Technology that provides the unborn baby with intelligence
- Pill to boost the IQ of the baby prior to birth.

"Essentially South Africans are saying, do not mess too much with what we have. But when asked if they had the option to be immortal, 47% of South Africans in the Study said yes. South Africans are also ahead of the curve in terms of utilising technology to maintain everyday health, using digital devices in this regard. They (9% of SA prosumers) also say that digital devices that monitor every aspect of your health would be good for society.

The implications the report holds for brands says Boxall-Davies if they are to engage with consumers in this space include five key things.

"Brands will have to provide experiences, expertise and products to make people feel healthier. They will also have to motivate and facilitate connections between people facing similar challenges."

We have seen the beginning of these already. For example, Park Runs, Fit Chef, Discovery, *Lose It* magazine.

The well-being experience will also have to be personalised, while brands can also educate and engage consumers on healthy behaviour. Brands will also have to continue to support their consumers in their journey after they have made their purchase.

For example Nike products, with tracking apps and devices as well as running clubs.

"Brands also need to create more inclusive roles of beauty and move away from the so called normal. Dove is a brand that

comes to mind that works in this space."

Brands associated with so-called bad habits such as sugary drinks and takeaways, will have to find ways to work in this space. Boxall-Davies says that we are seeing a number of enlightened brands already doing this."

For example, Coca-Cola and its active lifestyle programmes with its Together We Move events. The programmes are a demonstration that when a brand does something with integrity it resonates. Brands will have to be more open and responsible.

*For more than a decade, Havas Worldwide has been tracking the roughly 15% to 20% of consumers who are influencing trends and shaping markets around the globe.*

Key characteristics:

- Embrace innovation
  - Constantly seek out information and new experiences
  - Enthusiastic adopters of new media and technologies
  - "Human media" who transport attitudes and ideas
  - Marketing savvy and demanding of brand partners
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- Highly influential and sought-after for opinions and recommendations

In this study, 20% of the sample qualify as Prosumer.

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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