

Reflecting upon media and marketing trends in 2010



By Ashraf Garda: [@ashrafgarda1](#)

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Over the past year I have had the privilege to engage with South Africans and the world on many platforms - the marketing and media show Media@safrn on Sundays, weekday sports-anchoring, regular stand-ins (hosting the Morning Talk show and occasionally presenting SABC3's Special Assignment), being used as a 2010 FIFA World Cup analyst on CNN, Al Jazeera, CBC Canada and SABC2's Morning Live.

And, of course, engaging one-on-one on the many functions I have MCed, and not forgetting Twitter and Facebook.

These are 10 of the many trends that I observed and/or experienced during 2010.

1. Do *not* switch your cellphone off

Having done lots of MCing this past year, I have firsthand experience of reminding the audience to keep their mobiles "on" and not switched off. [Twitter](#)'s invasion of the event space is evidenced by pronouncements such "Please use hashtag blah blah and your Twitter comments will be running on the screen to my right." This trend has allowed thousands of news junkies to follow events in real time by remote control.

2. Prophet Muhammad voteline

I ran a voteline on my Media@SAfrn show about [Zapiro's Prophet Muhammad cartoons](#). Typically we receive 100 or 200 SMS votes. Not this time! We had to shut the system down 48 hours after the voteline closed as the votes just stubbornly kept rolling in -it was upwards of 50 000 . This from no more than four on-air prompts by me.

Of course, the Prophet Muhammad supporters rallied, using their own cellphone address books, Facebook , Twitter, word-of-mouth to push for a " yes" vote. This was viral-issue-driven marketing at its best and the phenomenal response proves that social networking is the new toyi-toyi.

3. Car mirror socks

Agency Black River FC got the [car mirror socks campaign](#) rolling, with client MINI making the early gains. Very quickly, it gathered an unparallel momentum that cut across all cars, brands and brand types.

I glowed with patriotism at the sight of seeing some three out of four cars on our roads displaying the South African flag. Closer to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, fans carried two flags, South Africa and their adopted country. Forget the

vuvuzela (it has been around for a while); the car mirror socks proved to be one of the most endearing symbols of the 2010 world cup.

4. ***The New Age***

This has to be a first where a newspaper is "the news". [The New Age](#) financier Atul Gupta was defiant when he chatted to me earlier in the earlier; his pockets are deep enough to bankroll losses for years.

Well, there have been appointments, resignations and appointments and, finally, the launch on last week Monday, 6 December 2010, and, no, the world has not crashed and thus far, there has no front page PR piece on President Zuma or Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe.

Surprisingly, the paper hit the streets in December as if to prove a point and, in the appointment of the refreshingly transparent Henry Jeffreys as editor and Nazeem Howa as CEO, it is possible that the much-maligned newspaper will turn a new leaf in 2011.

5. **Trevor Noah's Cell C**

The ad campaign has been refreshingly innovative, although some question the morality of creative deception to start with, and it has elevated [Trevor Noah](#) from just funny man to brand ambassador with some serious clout. Kagiso Lediga has now gotten the Nando's [Cell C parody](#) gig and I expect adaptations of this new advertising genre in the New Year.

However, I am yet to be convinced that Cell C will emerge stronger from this. Will Trevor Noah be the only one laughing all the way to the bank?

6. **Chilean miners makes Chile hot**

Another great experiential marketing campaign success was that of the [Chilean miners](#). I think Chile's President Sebastian Pinera fully grasped the value of PR and he said all the right things in self-promotion.

Marketers should use this event as a case study of how to punch above your weight, whether you are an individual, corporate or country. It didn't matter what else the country did or did not do -Chile and not South Africa became the poster boys for triumph over adversity this year.

7. **SABC's Rob Nicholson**

The SABC has been a troubled organisation for some years. But acting CEO [Robin Nicholson](#) has proved inspirational. I may do some presenting on various radio and TV platforms but I must confess to knowing very little about the inner workings of the organisation.

Yet Nicholson was refreshingly open when I interviewed him about the state of the SABC on my Sunday media@SAfm show. Nicholson's pronouncement "We have to return to making the on-air product and not the boardroom the centre of SABC's activities" impressed and he added that "relevance of our news content will be judged not by me but by our viewers or listeners; if we do not produce credible relevant news they will switch off." Enough said!

8. **South Africa for Ghana**

For experiential marketing, planned/unplanned Soccer City's world cup quarter final between Ghana and Uruguay was my no 1. The number of Afrikaners that backed the West Africans was remarkable!

I remember sitting behind the goals in the midst of some 20 supporters, all white, the vast majority Afrikaans-speaking, just about all of them dressed in Ghanaian regalia, the others wearing traditional Zulu costumes.

This game spoke volumes of the single-mindedness of South Africans of all persuasions to be Africa United. Xenophobia was relegated to where it should be - close to the bottom of our vocabulary list.

9. Wikileaks

All year, the South African media wrestled with the ruling party about the looming media appeals tribunal. We've been vocal, militant, desperate, defiant and, above all, determined to uphold the freedom of expression. In doing so, we used the best practice of the "free world". This tug of war will continue in 2011.

Yet by the turn of the year, that bastion of the free press, the US, went to war against [Wikileaks](#), and now stands accused of hypocrisy and double standards. What must be China and Iran be thinking?

That battle is still being fought, but I have to question the world's lukewarm response to Washington's clamping down on freedom of the press. Surely we cannot now use "The States" as the yardstick to champion our own media fights?

10. Convergence

Lastly, I need to rethink whether I should call myself a radio or TV presenter - when I am on air, that is!

Convergence is the new buzzword in the industry.

For my Sunday show, I simultaneously talk on air, send out tweets, quote Facebook responses, receive SMSes and take phone calls. Even listeners are directed to my Facebook page to get another look at the television ads we discuss on air.

I will spend my holidays in Malaysia and Singapore thinking of a new title; somehow presenter just doesn't quite describe what I do.

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I host the Special Assignment Investigative Journalism show Thursday 9.30pm on SABC 3 - and I present the Media@safrms show - Sundays 9-11am as well as Afternoon Talk on SAfrms Radio weekdays 2-4 pm.

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