

Digital marketing 2013: Lessons from the past

 By [Amy Johnson](#)

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At midnight on 31 December 2012, champagne was popped and the year 2013 was ushered in. The start of a new year always brings about change, or at least the resolve to change. In the business world, it's no different. Marketing strategists and account managers will be on the lookout for trends that they can implement into their digital marketing strategy for the New Year. So what are these trends? What are the best practice tips to implement them? And how are they arrived at?

A trend, by definition, describes a general direction in which an existing element is developing or changing. To look at what the future holds for 2013, we have to examine where we left off in 2012. What were the major developments in marketing and what does this mean for business' digital marketing campaigns going forward into the New Year?

1. Mobile integration continues to take centre stage in South Africa

Ogilvy's ["Be the Coach" campaign](#) for Carling Black Label brilliantly illustrated the integral role that mobile should take in South African digital marketing campaigns. The campaign centred on the Carling Black Label Cup and involved fans by giving them the chance to utilise social media and their mobile phones to vote for which players they would like to play in the match final between Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates. The 'one beer, one vote' campaign generated over 10 million votes via the mobile platform, 40,000 live substitution SMSs, 450% traffic increase to the brand's Facebook Page and a 600% Twitter following increase during its first run, and secured over 20 million entries during its second run in 2012. As most of the target audience were predominantly feature phone users, the campaign ensured accessibility with SMS entries, mobi-sites, USSD, and other social networks like Facebook and Twitter.

This has proven to be one of the biggest local mobile campaigns to generate results in terms of interaction, sales, market share and earned media coverage. Given South Africa's burgeoning mobile market, mobile integration should be high on the priority list for 2013.

2. Customer service in the digital space

If any brand taught us something about online customer service in 2012, it is FNB and their [digital customer service representative RB Jacobs](#) (found at @RBJacobs on Twitter). The South African bank has the largest Facebook presence among local banks and continues to see a rapid increase in its Twitter following, averaging 5,000 new followers every three months. This isn't surprising when you witness the personalised RB Jacobs profile shooting out replies to interested, concerned and vexed customers every minute of the day.

With many PR disasters having already been played out in the digital space, it's plain to see why customer service, diplomacy and communication skills are a necessity in any long-term digital marketing strategy.

3. Niche network adoption

The big names in social media continue to be dominated by the likes of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. However, as users start to share information differently, they have begun to explore niche networks where they can accurately discover specific interests. Platforms such as Pinterest, Instagram and Foodspotting are coming to the fore, and brands are advised to get their foot in the door early. [Yuppiechef](#), for instance, is one such brand that has identified Pinterest as a suitable platform for marketing and, consequently, has taken its products into an image-rich space where its fans can collaborate to create a lifestyle around the brand.

4. Networking with influencers

It's not what you know - or even what you offer - it's about who you know in the digital space. The past year continued to see brands leverage their relationships with bloggers and industry leaders to ensure that their products remained in the public eye. Of course, there has been some scrutiny of paid blogger endorsements, but giveaways and genuine interest from industry leaders will continue to play an important role in digital marketing going forward in 2013. One such campaign that illustrates this point well was the [Marmite blogger campaign of 2012](#) which saw 10 of South Africa's most prominent bloggers receive a personalised Marmite bottle and blogger pack, thereby encouraging them to write about the brand, and bringing it into the public eye in a significant way.

Brands are encouraged to look at developing relationships with key industry role players in 2013, as these relationships are invaluable at key points in any digital marketing campaign.

Keep on trend

The digital marketing trends for 2013 will build on what we've already seen developing during 2012 - more integration, better customer service and a focus on mobile strategy. With these points in mind, keep your finger on the pulse, be innovative, measure audience response and conquer the digital space.

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