

Why trends matter

 By Louise Marsland

19 May 2014

I was asked recently what I would write about when I ran out of trends. But that is the point, trends are ongoing, they don't have a beginning and an end. What is paramount is that you stay on top of the ones relevant to you.

It is important firstly, to distinguish between trends, megatrends and fads; and secondly, understand why trends are important.

Xerox PARC scientist Alan Kay said in 1971: "The best way to predict the future is to invent it." Management guru Peter Drucker is attributed with adding the word "create" to the famous quote, saying: "The best way to predict the future is to create it." Whoever said it first and when, it still resonates today as trends help predict the future to some extent.

Fads are fashion, flighty, here today, gone tomorrow, like Paris Hilton. Although even she hung around long enough to launch the trend of 'pretty, unremarkable socialites getting famous with a sex tape and reality show' which has led to the Kardashian phenomenon - really. Even the reputable Fast Company has provided [communications lessons from Queen Kim K](#). But is it a trend? Undoubtedly, hate it or hate it more, the glamorzons of reality TV feed into our atavistic need to escape our own reality, particularly during recessions.

Micro trends lead to behavioural change and there is no doubt that populist society, encouraged by the media, feeds off reality TV.

The storytelling culture is here to stay

But is it a megatrend? Megatrends can span decades, and there is no doubt that our fascination with the so-called 'real' lives of celebrities and wanna-be celebrities has also driven the social media culture where everyone wants their five minutes of fame. This sometimes invasive peek at our lives and storytelling culture is here to stay, with brands now understanding that they too have to tap into this culture to reach and touch their consumers.

As brand development and marketing insight consultancy, [Added Value](#), explains: "Understanding how trends work enables marketers and brand custodians to differentiate between short-term fads and trends, the latter having the potential to impact long-term consumer behaviour."

And that is the crux: we need to understand the trends relevant to our various industry sectors, economically, and as they impact on consumer behaviour. Trends emerge from various cultural drivers and can be tracked across continents, say Added Value. TRENDAFRICA's specialist contributor, Dr Inka Crosswaite, a cultural insight and semiotics specialist, points out that megatrends have a profound impact on society, and they and the micro trends that emerge as a result, shape society and brands for years to come.

Speed of change

I gave two trends talks recently, the first to designers at the quarterly Plascon Trends Talk; and the second to communicators at the monthly PR-Net forum in Cape Town. The feedback I got at both forums is that people are feeling overwhelmed by the speed of technological change and the impact not only on their businesses, but their lives.

The most common complaint is that there just doesn't seem to be enough time to get up to speed with all the new apps and technology and information coming at them. Or to even learn how your fancy new smartphone works properly! (Okay, that's probably just me).

What we need to do as writers, analysts and speakers is break down the glut of information and research and trends out there into digestible chunks. To highlight the most significant parts. As a journalist I've always obviously been a proponent of brilliant content, but it is also how we promote and package that content to reach the right people at their most receptive, that is as important as the content itself.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMOG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.

■ Teaching trade: the importance of empowering the female entrepreneur - 17 Dec 2019

■ New monetisation models for media are needed - 16 Dec 2019

■ #AfricaCom: The many VOD markets - 25 Nov 2019

■ #AfricaCom: TV content future will be shaped by OTT - 20 Nov 2019

■ Africa's growth rests on economic empowerment of women - 1 Nov 2019

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>