

# Future, thy name is Google

The marketer needs to know how the techno-savvy new generation engages with the media they consume, in order to reach them with brand messages. This was the clear message from the Khuza Awards and Youth Branding conference held at The Zone @ Rosebank, Johannesburg, last week. Stonewall CEO Ben Wagner spoke on new media opportunities that brands have in reaching consumers and what the media of the future might look like.



By Louise Marsland 7 May 2006

First up was a retrospective from Wagner in a masterpiece presentation on the digital landscape and what is out there. Wagner pointed out that the Internet used to be about people publishing content, but blogging has turned that around where people are now giving back content.

Community hubs have grown internationally due to the growth of the Internet and high speed broadband rollout internationally. Locally, South Africans are still struggling with restrictions on broadband, which has led to the launch of new Internet access products such as 3G and Edge in South Africa by the cellphone companies who have picked up Telkom's slack.

Communities are mainly being created around lifestyle choices and hubs worth looking at are ones by mega-brands such as MTV, Nike Women, Nestea Ice. Locally some brands are getting it right, such as Miller's Genuine Draft and FNB, says Wagner, whose company is also relaunching the 5FM website.

## Citizen journalism

The current big trend that is transforming the Internet is blogging. The rise of citizen journalism and consumer activism, and the ability of the Internet to provide a personal opinion platform with easy tools of access, has exploded and is a real challenge to mainstream media.

Blogs (web logs/online diaries) can now be posted with audio (podcasting), with graphics (photo blogs) or with video (vlogs). Boing Boing ([www.boingboing.net](http://www.boingboing.net)) is a blog site that is visited as often as mainstream media sites, says Wagner, adding that a new blog is created by an individual web surfer out there every two seconds - 80 000 new blogs have been created daily since July 2005! Traffic on blogs spikes every time something major happens in the world, as people expect bloggers to go first with personal accounts, pics and video, before mainstream media - as was the case in the Asian Tsunami 18 months ago, violence in Iraq, as well as the hurricane in New Orleans last year.

Other trends are:

- Data is moving beyond the web browser to podcasting, etc, and content is moved onto desktop, rather than going through to your internet browser.
- Mapping: Google maps drill down all over the world right into your own suburb.
- RSS feeds (real simple syndication) - format to publish web content to your desktop so you don't have to search the web for your favourite content.
- Push - desktop becomes a publishing platform, opt-in content served up 24/7.
- Podcasting uses RSS feed principle for audio files.
- Advergaming: product placement in game environments.

## So what does this mean to the marketer?

The marketer needs to know how the techno-savvy new generation engages with the media they consume, in order to reach them with brand messages.

In order to answer the question on how do the youth engage on a daily basis with media, Stonewall took an average (upper LSM) urban youngster and tracked 'his' day:

“ » Wake up» Checks text and voice msgs  
» Goes online, logs into MSN Messenger  
» Listens to live streaming audio of favourite radio station  
» Watches the latest favourite music video online  
» Googles the other top albums of favourite artists  
» Downloads the album to iPod  
» Updates blog about holiday  
» Uploads holiday pics to Flickr  
» Receives email about new movie release, enters competition and sends on to friends ”

Wagner says what the youth are really drawn to, is RELEVANCE. "As marketers, you have to create something that has relevance for the youth. They want to affiliate themselves, to be part of something. Push pull tactics allow them to interact. They also want to gain rewards and empower and enrich their status amongst their peers. Your branding must also feature within their own digital space."

How does this affect the marketer?

1. Wagner says many marketers say that since they are not technology people and since they don't fully understand the technology, they are wary of using it. "Marketers need to embrace the medium by using it and understanding it. Marketers and clients say they are not technology people, but you don't have to be, just use it!"
2. Wagner says marketers also need to employ strategy that encompasses digital communication - build a strategy that has all these things in them.
3. Ensure that your through-the-line activity impacts on digital and visa versa.
4. Ensure buy-in before the medium gets cluttered - the Internet is a train, get on it, blow it up, paint it black, do whatever with it, but engage with it!
5. Separate technology and focus on marketing.
6. Remain informed and well researched.
7. Develop a community through active engagement.
8. Ensure that a metric based methodology is used.

## The future of media is Google...

In conclusion, Wagner played a futuristic-thinking audio clip on what the future may hold for the world's media by the year 2015. The text ran somewhat as follows:

“ All citizens participate in mediascape. 'Press' as you know it has ceased to exist. 20th century news organisations are a lonely remnant of a not too distant past... timeline: 1998: Google was unleashed.  
1999: Blogger, personal publishing tool launches.  
2002: Friendster launched/Google News is edited entirely by computers.  
**2004** will be remembered as the year everything changed... Google acquires Blogger; Google unveils Gmail; Microsoft launches Newsbot - social news bot; Amazon releases A9; Google goes public; Apple podcasting: launch of personal radio.  
2005: Microsoft buys Friendster; Apple launches wi-pod.  
**2006:** Google combines all services into Google Grid, to store and share media of all kinds, store content or publish. It's never been easier for people to make their lives part of the web...  
2007: Microsoft responds with Newsbotster - which allows everyone to comment on what they see...  
2008: Alliance between Google and Amazon spawns GOOGLEZON to challenge Microsoft. Together they use their knowledge of every user to provide total customerisation of news and advertising...  
**2010:** The news wars of 2010 are noteworthy as no actual mainstream news organisations took part, it was between Googlezon and Microsoft...  
Googlezon uses all info, news, and our own content to make news more relevant to us.  
2011: New York Times Company sues Googlezon for stripping content, New York Times loses...”

*2012: Evolving Personalised Info Construct (EPIC): everyone contributes, Epic produces a personal content for each user based on own choices. Epic is merely a collection of trivia, much of it untrue... The New York Times becomes a print-only newsletter for the rich and elderly and goes offline in protest...*

*2015: Using GPRS technology, communities start feeding info to each other online as everyone is connected over the internet.. ”*

## ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

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