

# Marketers be (a)ware, Generation Y is on its way

By [Staff Reporter](#)

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Given the extent to which those of Generation Y are digitally savvy, they will be far more demanding creatures than either their parents or grandparents, and as a result marketers and brand owners need to re-evaluate every aspect of their approach to capture the attention of their young audience.



This was the clear thread that emerged throughout the presentations on the first day of the Marketing Indaba in Cape Town.

## Meet your future customer

Based on the premise that today's youth is tomorrow's customer, as well as the way they interact with technology today will determine their future behaviour, marketers will have to embrace a different approach and strategy to delight and win customers of the future, said Raymond de Villiers, partner of Tomorrow Today.

He explained that Generation Y was born into an era characterised by the advent of social media in the 1990s. Techno-literate, these "digital natives", as he terms them, are in touch with the world 24/7 through smart phones and mobile devices.

This global awareness means Generation Yers are growing up in an environment where corporate scandals are widely exposed. This doesn't mean that brands aren't important to them, but they do recognise that these brands are the face of corporations, and any possible underlying corruption. A brand commitment to environmentalism and other social issues will also play a role in their choices.

Generation Y thinking is also coloured by their parenting experience, which differs substantially from that of preceding generations. From an early age, they were talked to and not at, and engaged in decisions affecting their life. Yet, paradoxically, De Villiers said parental approval is still an important factor in their choices.

"The biggest challenge for marketers is to unlearn the advertising rules of the past and relearn the new ones in light of this

generation," he said.

## From human-centric to people-centric

So what does the future of marketing and branding look like? According to Greg Tregoning, co-founder of Vega School of Brand Leadership, there needs to be a paradigm shift from people-centric to human-centric communication.

"The difference is that people now have a voice through social media and the consumer is getting involved in conversations," he said.

Brands need to treat people like human beings and he reiterated the point that consumers should be talked *to* and not *at*. "Consumers experience brands in a memorial way, or one that is personally relevant, and this changes the dynamic of individual and corporate communication," he says.

This means that the approach to data used by marketers needs to be rethought as demographic segmentation has become peripheral in market research.

"The youth gets together based on shared culture or sub-culture, and no longer on racial groupings. Social media is merely a part of that culture and not *the* culture," Tregoning explained. Therefore an integrated campaign utilising social media has to be integrated into this culture.

## X marks the spot

"Consumers today don't want a one-night stand, but a lasting relationship through social media," said Koo Govender, CEO of VWW Group. Speaking on the X-factors of winning marketing in today's competitive business world, she listed what she considers the perfect 10 of experiential marketing using the examples of various brand campaigns:

- From unique selling point to emotional selling point

Mercedes Benz and BMW compete in the same luxury car market. The former used the rational "quest for zero defect" as part of their campaign, while the latter appealed to the experiential with "sheer driving pleasure".

- From media plan to media opportunity

This is illustrated by how mobile service provider in Kenya, Orange, used the culture of street dance to promote their brand through an integrated campaign including flash mobs, uploads and a competition in which different regions of the country competed and voted using social media.

- From marketing plan to marketing ideas

Govender explained that a brand needs to be lived from the inside out, in that staff needed to act as brand ambassadors in the brand experience.

- From mid-life crisis to forever young

To reinvent itself from a brand traditionally associated with the Baby Boomers, Burberry launched a campaign using celebrities such as Kate Moss to be aspirational to the younger market.

- From trend-spotter to trend-setter

Given that consumers are time- and convenience-driven and therefore seeking instant gratification, MultiChoice, for example, introduced its unique Box Office, TV Catch-up and PVR products to meet this need.

- From brand stewardship to brand entrepreneurship

This factor implies a shift from being a brand custodian to owning the brand. Nando's does this very well with its memorable and topical adverts, but it took this a step further when launching in the UK. The company established the brand first by positioning their sauces on supermarket shelves before launching their stores. This helped cut through the clutter of other similar brands, Govender said.

- From products to principles

Corporate social investment (CSI) has become a critical element in brand differentiation. Does that business have a heart? The OUTsurance Pointmen programme, where the insurance company sponsors and trains previously disadvantaged people to do duty on busy traffic intersections is one such project. Govender pointed out that marketers can't fool the

audience as they are quick to pick up on insincere sentiments. Therefore it is important that brand alignment with CSI should be closely related to the brand product as is evident in the OUTsurance example.

- From consumer monologue to customer dialogue

This again raises the shift from advertisers speaking at their audience to conversations on brand experience. "Very few people plan a trip nowadays without first consulting a platform such as TripAdvisor to evaluate the experiences of other consumers of the proposed destination," Govender said.

- Creating a sense of community

Brands such as Manchester United do this very well through the web and social platform.

- What if? and what for?

Creating an optimistic attitude and acting a bit crazy also are important in positioning a brand, she concluded.

The 2014 Marketing Indaba concludes in Cape Town today (16 May), before moving to Johannesburg on 28-29 May and Durban on 5-6 June.

**Also see [\[Marketing Indaba: Part 2\] Feeling the love: Building brand loyalty in the digisphere](#) and [\[Marketing Indaba: Part 3\] Channelling the message](#)**

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