

FCB's 20 macro trends for 2015

 By [David Smythe](#)

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"Africa's consumer facing industries are expected to grow by more than \$400 billion by 2020."

Brand storytelling, purpose-driven brand building and increasing choice are some of the mega-trends for 2015 identified by FCB Cape Town's strategy team in this exclusive presentation published on Bizcommunity.com first.

FCB strategy director, David Smythe, told Bizcommunity.com that they spent the last quarter of 2014, isolating 20 macro trends, which will shape 2015 and beyond, in four key areas: Social; Economic; Tech; and Marketing. "We have taken a fairly optimistic view and of the three most powerful that we have highlighted, two of them play directly into the marketing space and one into the tech space."

Brand storytellers and curators

The first one is the role brands play as engaging storytellers, qualifiers and curators, says Smythe.

"The relationship consumers are having now with brands has shifted fundamentally. Brands that tell credible stories to the target market will be positioned better in the future, rather than brands that ram functional messaging down the consumers' throats. Storytelling is a very powerful way to get across brand messaging."

More brands will start playing in this space and this trend is expected to play out over the next five years.

Purpose-driven brand building

Secondly, at the top of the marketing check list is purpose-driven brand building. "What that links to is the fact that consumers expect brands to stand up and hold a credible place in society," says Smythe.

The sub-trends linked to that are:

- Consumers expect brands to sacrifice on their behalf, i.e., brands stripping out ingredients; and sacrificing a portion of their profits to help causes. Millennials in particular are expecting brands to play in this space.
- Radical openness is another trend in this regard isolated by the FCB strategy team. "Brands are expected to be candid these days... about how they managed their supply chains, source ingredients, their suppliers. It is in the brand's best interests to be as open with consumers as possible, IP and trademarks notwithstanding. Brands have a responsibility to build trust with their consumers," Smythe explains.

- The pursuit of 'healthiness'. Helping consumers create healthier lifestyles is also linked to purpose-driven brand building.

Connectivity creates choice

The third key trend highlighted by FCB falls into the tech space and it is all about how connectivity opens up choice for consumers.

"It is a simple human truth: we are incredibly globalised and the world is a connected space. There is an abundance of choice open to consumers and they are really putting brands under the microscope before they make their choices."

In the presentation, titled "The Road Ahead", the 20 trends are listed as follows for 2015 and beyond:

- 1. SOCIAL:** Connectivity opens up choices and consumers no longer go for brand name only when making their purchases.
- 2. ECONOMIC:** The rise of the African consumer - Africa's consumer-facing industries are expected to grow by more than \$400bn by 2020. Brands need to build locally relevant, quality products with strong value.
- 3. ECONOMIC:** The continued rise of the East includes the development of a rural middle class, which is fuelling consumer demand.
- 4. TECH:** Technology continues to define convenience as information and knowledge impact on shoppers and online retail growth becomes a prerequisite for transacting with consumers in the next two to five years.
- 5. SOCIAL:** Guilt-free status/brand sacrifice: consumers are looking for brands to make sacrifices for them so that they don't have to.
- 6. MARKETING:** Community is increasingly the new trusted source and peer-based networks continue to exert influence on purchase decision-making.
- 7. SOCIAL:** The rising creative class are influencers and problem-solvers and want their brands to focus on finding innovative solutions to global problems.
- 8. TECH:** e-Mobility is a mega-trend that will gather momentum as societal demand for sustainable energy solutions gathers momentum.
- 9. SOCIAL:** The pursuit of healthiness. Consumers want products that aid their health and enable them to make smart, sustainable choices.
- 10. MARKETING:** The diminishing importance of brand heritage means that international brands have to adopt a local flavour.
- 11. SOCIAL:** Radical openness means consumers want to know everything about the products they use and consume: ingredients, sourcing, manufacture, distribution. Smart organisations and brands will build bridges to their consumers rather than walls.
- 12. MARKETING:** Brands as engaging storytellers, qualifiers and curators reflect a powerful trend.
- 13. MARKETING:** Value and price justification means true innovation must hold real tangible value.
- 14. SOCIAL:** The ageing consumer - brands are ignoring the ageing consumer because perhaps marketing to them isn't 'sexy' enough, but they are extremely loyal consumers and the baby boomer generation have an enormous amount of discretionary spend in some cases.
- 15. TECH:** e-Listening. Brands need to invest in the right tools to track what their customers are saying about them online.
- 16. TECH:** Retail develops a sixth sense as data becomes a prominent trend. Learning how to analyse it correctly produces endless possibilities.
- 17. SOCIAL:** Millennials 'push back' as the financial insecurity created by the global recession creates scepticism towards brand marketing. Brands need to collaborate with this generation to reach them.
- 18. MARKETING:** Purpose driven brand building gives brands a bigger reason for being and it is what matters to consumers, fuelling deeper connections between the consumer and their brands.
- 19. MARKETING:** Poly-cultural luxury sees the emergence of home-grown luxury brands.
- 20. MARKETING:** Neuromarketing comes of age as psychology and the science of the brain is used in analysing

consumers and behavioural patterns.

Smythe concludes: "I think brands need to become far more focussed and clients need to become far more focussed. When times were good, brands were able to employ enormous innovations, have brand programmes over the year... now marketing budgets have shrunk; they need to do things properly, rather than stretching resources too thin."

[View the full presentation for further reference \(pdf\).](#)

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**David Smythe was interviewed by Louise Burgers, specialist editor of Biz Trends 2015.*

ABOUT DAVID SMYTHE

David Smythe is strategy director of FCB Cape Town.

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