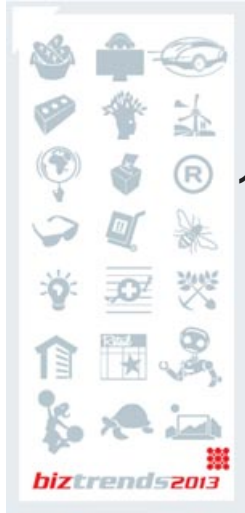


Out-of-the-box branding

 By [HKLM Exco Team](#)

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No, the concepts of "tribalism", "gamification" and "engagement" aren't a promo for the latest computer game, but are in fact the trends that will characterise the way companies and consumers interact in 2013.



The branding industry is constantly developing and, while the following trends are evolutions rather than dynamic, short-term changes, we believe the following 10 areas will define the brandscape over the next year.

1. Integrated branding for brand survival

Integrated branding strategies, where all the elements are cohesive, complementary and consistent, will be crucial to brand survival - let alone success. All elements, from advertising campaigns and staff training to digital footprints and shareholder relations, have to be created and implemented as integral parts of a holistic branding strategy, otherwise there's real danger of the brand promise being broken.

And a broken promise can be a death knell.

2. Forecourt retail - the new frontier

Garage forecourts will be the new branding battleground. Oil companies will make increased use of sophisticated modelling and research methodologies to redesign their retail spaces and their shopper marketing strategies to capture and keep customers.

3. Retail tribalism

Retail is theatre and, if the paying customers aren't happy with the production, they'll walk out. We'll see a greater focus on retail tribalism, where brand owners and retailers build loyalty and strengthen bonds by offering customers value-added services in-store, at the point of purchase.

4. Product tribalism

Loyalty is built when consumers experience consistent delivery on the brand promise. Larger businesses can absorb adverse consumer reaction to inconsistencies more easily than smaller ones, and brand managers across the board will be focusing their efforts on consistently fulfilling customers' expectations and delivering on their brand promises.

5. Employee engagement

Just as a choir can't sing in unison if the members don't know the words, neither can companies have a strong culture of service and loyalty if their employees don't know what's expected of them.

Employee motivation campaigns will be much more focused and designed specifically to meet brand objectives, plus organisations will be more actively committed to training their staff to be brand champions and empowering them to take responsibility for integrating the brand values into their workplace policies, practices, attitudes and behaviours.

6. Gamification

Innovative thinking is required when it comes to finding ways for organisations to communicate and connect with their culturally diverse workforces. More and more organisations will use workplace entertainment and gamification to spread their brand message, engage and motivate their employees, and build loyalty and commitment.

7. 3D design and corporate art

Workplace design can be the differential between mediocrity and success - and we will see a strong focus in this area as more and more organisations realise its importance as a marketing tool.

3D design will become increasingly prevalent in all aspects, from interiors and signage to displays and exhibitions, as workplaces take shape as important brand communications platforms.

8. Transparency and integrated reporting

Beneath the surface of corporate South Africa, many brands are in disarray. There's often little correlation between a company's business strategy and its brand strategy and ineffective structures - and a lack of focus on sustaining brand awareness is a serious barrier to growth.

However, there has been a wake-up call and we will see a much greater commitment to integrating the various departments within the organisation and aligning them all seamlessly with both the brand and the business strategies.

9. Technology talks

Technology will play an even greater role in brand-building, delivering fast, smart and effective communication with target audiences. Developments in mobile devices will break new ground in the retail space and the brands that are prepared to 'techno-pioneer' will prosper.

A word of caution, however: with consumers being constantly bombarded with measurable layers of information, it will be the simple, compelling messages that will resonate.

10. Cometh the hour, cometh Africa

Africa's resurgence will continue - and so, too, will the continent's branding success stories. Experience shows that success doesn't come from imposing brands on a new market, but rather from adapting brand strategies to meet the needs and environments of this unique and complex continent.

11. Africa's consumers flex their muscles

A tsunami of Chinese, Indian, Arab, South African and genuinely global brands will continue to wash over the African market place in 2013.

The African consumer is better informed than ever before and, as a result, far more discerning. The key issue remains quality and consistency - in product, in service and in experience.

Surveys continue to show that African consumers will favour local brands over the tsunami on the condition that global quality standards are met, with the flip side of this being that they are far less willing to act as a dumping ground for sub-standard products from over the seas.

12. Rise of the corporate brands

Corporate communication is poised to surge in scale and activity. Non-consumer-orientated businesses need to communicate better because the market now necessitates it; they want to communicate better because it's clear that communication has become a source of competitive advantage in categories where it hasn't been previously.

Corporate brands have traditionally been hostages to their reputations, rather than masters of them. Businesses that can adapt to become responsive and make meaningful connections will benefit significantly.

13. Brands as media houses

As content is the fuel of social media and other forms of digital engagement, brands that have traditionally stood at arms' length from the content in their communication are now becoming content authors, curators and managers - even if this often outsourced. Watch the growth in *content agencies*.

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