

# What's up for Generation Y?

 By [Jason Levin](#) 18 Jan 2011

For most young South Africans, 2010 was marked by the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, what does 2011 hold for Generation Y and what trends will take-off in the months ahead? Connectivity remains key in young people's lives and, with even more technologies and mobile apps at their disposal, their appetite for social status grows.



Successful brands will have to become more resourceful in creating meaningful connections with this market in order to remain relevant and compelling.

## 1. Universe made for me:

High levels of entitlement have shaped young urbanites' consumer headspace. Their increased consumption of and access to a wide variety of media technologies has provided them with the tools and self-belief that they can control their lives. A limitless supply of free information at their disposal has shifted their attitudes towards paid-for content and instead created a generation of young consumers who feel entitled to an "all access" pass to the resources they want.

Brands that establish ways to maintain active conversations with their young consumers and involve them in the concept development have a greater chance of meeting the demands of the millennial consumer and staying relevant.

## 2. Game on:

This year, gaming becomes the new frontier for brand engagement. The proliferation of cellphone usage has provided urban youth with access to a pocket-sized gaming device. Add this to the growing number of young urbanites who have access to gaming consoles and it's possible to see why brands want a piece of the action.

And we're not referring to in-gaming product placement but rather a move towards consumer participation with the brand that unfolds within the gaming genre. ARG (alternate reality gaming) or LARPing (live action role playing) are the latest buzz words in the digital marketing fraternity as brands develop more interactive ways to connect with young urbanites by creating real-world gaming scenarios [Science fiction novel *Halting State* by Charles Stross will help you make sense of this - managing ed]

## 3. TAC obsession/attack of the cellphone:

[In 2010](#) we first reported on this trend of Tracking, Checking and Alerting and in 2011 we see this trend

pick up speed.

Whether they're tween girls MXiting their friends till midnight or young adults updating their Facebook and Twitter statuses throughout the day on their Blackberries - young urbanites are fixated with their cellphones.

This trend should not be misinterpreted as an open invitation for brands to channel all their communication into mobile content, but rather it presents marketers with a new playing field for connecting with the tech-savvy consumer.

#### **4. Facebook fallacy:**

For many companies, Facebook promises instant access to the youth market and many of them have launched their own fan page or group in an effort to leverage their brand status. However, youth interest in Facebook is driven by extending connections with friends, not brands.

Brands that crack the code on social networks establish worthwhile conversations with their target market and actively maintain these relationships so that their online presence is meaningful and relevant.

The fact that the six-member social media team which manages the Starbucks brand is considered small by international standards should give local brands a heads-up on what managing their online reputation involves.

#### **5. Four-year chasm widening:**

Following the release of another set of un-ideal matric results after an academic year that was hard-hit by teacher strikes, the year ahead will be marked by growing concerns among young South Africans towards the quality of the education available to them.

But, their unease towards their future prospects is matched by big expectations towards becoming successful and having access to material wealth (Being a CEO is polled as the Coolest Job in 2010).

The result of this is a growing divide between what kids aspire to reach and what their skills-set realistically enables them to achieve. Brands who want to make a real difference will look at ways of investing in the education sector in order to assist empowering young minds to actualise their potential.

#### **6. 'Don't touch me on my studio':**

Popular culture 'accidents' can infiltrate youth vocabulary overnight like "Don't touch me on my studio" which saw Chris Maroleng's TV interview get converted into over 93 000 YouTube hits and a variety of hip-hop remixes.

Similarly, South African Police national commissioner Bheki Cele's "Stomach in, Chest out" statement became the lyrics for DJ Excess's song and subsequently featured on 5FM's Ulti-Mix at Six compilations CD.

These unplanned incidents spread like wild-fire among peer groups and social networks. But the reality is that, while these incidents become media windfalls, they're not easily reproduced by brands. We are

shifting into an era where the boundaries between producers and consumers are blurred.

## 7. The killer app:

To date, over three million BlackBerries have been sold locally and a fair chunk of those handsets belong to under-23s. By launching its free messaging service called BBM, BlackBerry created an irresistible app that largely drives sales of the product in this market - students brag about being hooked on BBM.

However, in 2011 we see a new player compete for marketshare called WhatsApp Messenger. This cross-platform app enables free messaging exchanging between different smartphone users.

Nevertheless, word on the street is that it's the "pleb version of BBM", making its accessibility less cool to BBM fans. Time will tell whether WhatsApp kicks BBM off its post and whether local contender MX manages to leverage its appeal with an older market.

Also to watch this year is the uptake of the location-based apps such as Foursquare which invites fans to check into places where they like to hang out, and rewards them for their ongoing feedback.

## 8. Now wow!:

Exponential growth and access to technology has reduced time-frame intervals to milliseconds. "Living in the moment" has new meaning to millennials, who seek out ways to celebrate and maximise every hour of their day. Brands that get too caught up with planning youth strategies 12 months ahead will risk being unable to interact in the moment as an opportunity to engage arises.

In an effort to be truly free of the hassles and commitment associated with running their lives, teens and young adults will look at ways to momentarily "snap out of it".

UK mobile brand T-mobile has succeeded in introducing a measure of spontaneity into its communication, with flashmobs such as the one executed in Heathrow in November last year which resulted in over 6.3 million YouTube views.

## 9. Youth premiumisation:

As the spending power of teens grows, so too does the commercial interest in this market. In 2011, we see brands extending their offerings with premium ranges that cater exclusively to youth.

Last year the *Sunday Times* Generation Next study reported that local youth spend is R95.3 billion. This caters to a new level of peer power, where 10-year-olds are able to articulate their brand opinion and negotiate with their parents to purchase particular brands over others.

International brands are already capitalising on this growing trend by creating premium product extensions aimed at the youth market, such as the Barbie Pocket Learner which was designed to resemble the BlackBerry for little girls.

Locally, mega-brand McDonalds will switch to [McCafés](#) in all high-end urban areas.

## 10. D.I.E\* green (\*do it easy):

From an international perspective, going green has shifted from periphery non-profit organisations into the mainstream as consumers adjust their buying habits in line with this trend. The reality is that the majority of young South Africans are not truly green-minded.

In 2010, the *Sunday Times* Generation Next study uncovered that, while 55% of young South Africans believe in recycling, 77% of hardly ever or never follow-through because it requires too much effort. This presents brands with the opportunity to make a difference in 2011: make going green easy and simple.

In 2010 we saw a number of successful socially responsible campaigns such as the Levi Strauss SA "Get Rid of your Jeans for Good" campaign, which invited customers to donate any pair of jeans to their local Levi's store to get a discount off a new pair.

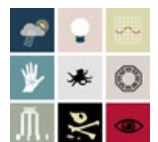
In 2011 we expect to see more 'Do It Easy' green campaigns come to the fore.

## 11. The Hot List:

1. **BlackBerry:** having catapulted out of the office and into the youth space last year, we'll see this must-have smartphone continue to rise in popularity.
2. **Tablets:** these are the next big thing in gadgetry. Apple iPads and BlackBerry's Playbook top the list this year, with other brands competing to create their own.
3. **Toyota Aygo:** Toyota's affordable, sexy, diminutive Aygo is set to become the ideal set of wheels when it's launched in March 2011.
4. **Consoles:** Nintendo releases its 3DS gaming console early this year, which adds a new dimension to the portable gaming experience. But the pricey Xbox 360 Kinect hasn't scored a thumbs-up.
5. **Little Big Planet 2:** move over Sims, Little Big Planet gives under-16 gamers more scope to get involved in creating their own games
6. **Headhoncho:** South Africa's freshest streetwear brand will get a lot of attention in 2011
7. **Comeback artists:** the music scene will be marked by comeback albums from artists such as Blink-182, Backstreet Boys, New Kids on The Block, Avril Lavigne, Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake
8. **Fantasy:** vampires, dragons and wizards continue to attract widespread appeal, with notable anticipation for the next in the Twilight series: New Dawn.
9. **Super heroes:** whether it's the X-Men, Thor or die-hard Spiderman, these superheroes will return to the big screen this year
10. **Healthy convenience:** healthy eating on-the-go gets easier with products such as McNab's energy bars, McDonald's shake salads and the roll-out of Pick n Pay Express Stores.

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## ABOUT JASON LEVIN

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