

Social media's impact on youth marketing, media

 By [Bradley Maseko](#)

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Social networking and smartphones will play an all-important role in the youth marketing and media trends for 2011, as they have become part of the youth lifestyle and culture. The following trends will make it easy to see why they are and will continue to be a dominant force in the youth market for the year 2011 and beyond.

BIZ 2011 MARKETING TRENDS

1. Social media

Seen by most as the biggest shift since the industrial revolution, social media has become an important aspect of the youth culture. 2011 will see more youth becoming addicted to social networking and more companies targeting the

youth through this means, due to its great viral effect.

It makes it also easy to understand why *Time* magazine named Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg man of the year for 2010.

2. Smartphones

Standard phones cannot fully cater to the online and social networking craving of the youth and, as more companies and universities introduce policies that limit the use of social networking sites during the day/working hours, this has led to more youth jumping onto the smartphone bandwagon as a means of countering these restrictions.

The increase in the number of smartphone users has also been greatly fuelled by the decrease in prices, which has made the phones more affordable for the youth.

3. Apps

More youth are discovering that they can do more with their phones and this interest has given rise to the downloading of different applications. Different brands have different apps ranging from business applications to entertainment, but the one thing apps have in common is the fact that they make it easier and more exciting to use phones.

With Apple alone having over 300 000 applications to choose from and it having opened its Apple Mac application store on 6 January 2011 - with over one million apps downloaded in one day - and with all the new apps for the tablets, we can expect 2011 to be a year of apps.

4. BBM

BBM - BlackBerry Messenger - has taken the youth market by storm, and it is easy to see why RIM is one of the fastest growing companies in the world. The youth love sharing and staying connected and this is what BBM does, enabling them to share through instant messaging (IM).

The idea behind BBM is to make it easier to share with friends, BUT, since it must be BlackBerry to BlackBerry, we can expect to see a rise in the number of youth making use of BBM, since by word of mouth more and more youth are convince their peers to join the family.

5. Mobile commerce

The rise in the number of youth using smartphones, and constantly logging onto the Internet through their phones, will see more and more companies seeking to engage and interact with the youth through their cellphone devices. Messages sent through other forms of media may easily be lost in the clutter or never seen, while those through the cellphone are direct and will definitely be opened by the cellphone owner.

The youth are getting big on cellphone banking and making payments via their cellphones, so 2011 will see more youth doing mobile transactions.

6. Mobile learning

The increase in the number of youth with smartphones and the increase in the time spent online will lead to more institutions and educational heads looking into conveying some of their educational material through cellphones, as a way of making education relevant to the youth culture and lifestyle.

7. Online advertising

Traditional media platforms, such as television, radio and magazines, are under great threat from the Internet and its online community. As more people spend more time online, companies and brands are being forced to target them through this form of media.

2011 will see a continued rise in online advertising, targeting the youth, from both local and international perspectives. Consequently, we can expect to see an increase in online advertising spend targeting the youth.

8. Corporate social websites

We are going to see a rise in website integration for companies or brands that are targeting the youth market. Previously, websites were all about the company; however, the new shift has seen a change to cater to the dialogue with the youth and encourage them mostly to "follow" through Twitter feeds and "connect" through Facebook fan pages.

9. Blogging

The youth of today are very opinionated; they want to be able to express themselves. More often than not, this expression gives rise to word of mouth.

2011 will see the rise in the number of youth bloggers, who will post opinions about products and brands, and, with this kind of social activism on the rise, this is really going to keep a lot of companies on their feet.

10. Tablets

For the early adopters and those that can afford it, the likes of the Apple iPad and the Blackberry Playbook are going to be the must-have tech gadgets.

With Hewlett-Packard announcing its own webOS-based PalmPad, we can be sure to expect a decrease in price of the gadgets on the local market and more youth being able to afford and taking up these gadgets.

The newest version of the Android 3.0 Honeycomb was developed for devices such as tablets and is going to make them a pleasure to use.

11. Wifi hot spots

Wifi hotspots will attract more youth as they strive to stay connected, even when they are out and about. We are

therefore going to see more cafes and restaurants catering to this by enabling wifi on their premises - it's no longer just what you have on your menu, but rather if you can stay connected while you eat and/or drink.

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