

# With apologies to Cindy Lauper: boys and girls just wanna have fun

 By [Mike Abel](#)

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It's been a trying time aboard the good ship *GFC* (Global Financial Crisis). But like all sailors on the sea of life, if rough becomes the new normal, the seasickness begins to ebb and we can start moving away from being "bent-double" over the side of the boat and assume steadier footing through these turbulent waters.



It's not as if the Greeks have stopped drinking Ouzo or smashing plates. Or that Silvio Berlusconi has holed himself up in a monastery, or the Americans have stopped going to baseball games, or Uncle Bob has stopped intimidating those flame-grilled chicken lovin' folk, so why should we be the party poopers?

Bring it on, I say, which leads me into the first trend for 2012, The Year of the Windscreen (versus Rear-View Mirror):

## 1. The Windscreen

As an industry, this year is going to be about opportunity, braver choices and decisions. We could already see, at the end of last year, some major accounts with established and historic agency relationships, going out to pitch.

Gone are the days of relying on the tried and trusted past. Clients are once again un-battoning the hatches and looking for powerful business relationships that cut to solving the very real challenges they face, as opposed to the old "lipstick on a pig" so-called solutions. Bolder and bigger RELEVANT ideas will win the day.

## 2. The 3<sup>rd</sup> P

The rise and rise of Etail. Distribution (Place) and selling platforms are shifting at a rapid rate. Unless traditional retailers offer an enhanced experience or better value, the non-intermediated and most convenient form of purchase will win.

Retail outlets need to raise the game, speed up service, delight and reward if they are to keep customers in their brick and mortar outlets. Your marketing strategies need to determine why you actually have physical outlets and how to amplify the reward and enhance the stickiness.

Customers know that physical shops are a great way of "researching" what they want to buy, but if they can get it at a better price online - or with less hassle, that's where they're going to go. And Etailers have just as big (if not bigger) an opportunity to do personalisation and high-touch selling - so beware of relying on your supposed "loyalty cards" as the panacea.

## 3. Mobile everything

About seven years ago, I gave a keynote address around the future of cellphones which I titled "And you can even make calls from it !". As the title indicates, my observation at the time was that, in-between it being my alarm clock, diary and email manager, child entertainer in restaurants (ie the games), banking and stock trading device as well as travelling thesaurus and encyclopaedia, I would also occasionally make calls from it. 2012 is going to see a radical

increase in mobile marketing spend.

With over 92% handset penetration, the channel is finally coming of age and it is mindless to not include it as part of your mix in targeting certain markets.

Its use as a transactional tool is also going to grow exponentially over the next few years, where ultimately it will replace the need for traditional plastic. I, like many, now use the barcode to check in at the airport.

On a lighter note (or not...), beware the phone hackers and taking naughty pics.

#### 4. Is an app apt?

As smartphone penetration increases with more affordable handsets hitting the market, businesses will realise the potential of investing in a bespoke app for their brand.

We've already seen FNB take a pioneering path with its [banking app](#) which is available across leading smartphone platforms. It's using the app as both a tool to simplify things for existing customers but also as a means of opening new accounts with new customers.

With technologies such as [HTML5](#) streamlining the mobile app development process, we should see more local South African brand apps surfacing.

### 5. Brand gate-crashing

It can't be disputed that there's been a disproportionate emphasis given to social media in the digital "mix" over the past few years and, as a result, consumers are faced with the prospect of their social media activity becoming increasingly cluttered by brands trying to engage with them. I think we'll start to see consumers "unLiking" a lot more brands as they offer nothing useful through their social media endeavour.

Consumers are becoming increasingly discerning about the things they really do "Like" and follow in the social channels. Social media fatigue is setting in so brands will need to shift emphasis to exploring mobile as a "traditional" marketing opportunity, as well as perhaps revisiting what experience they're offering customers through their own website.

#### 6. You may lose some friends

How many people on Facebook are your real friends? We seem to have an ever-growing list of extraneous attachments who - whether you met them briefly in a meeting, were in Grade 4 with them, or they've fixed your luo - they've somehow joined your "inner-circle". This is the year to say "Ciao!"

So, in looking at "The Year of the Windscreen" you need to decide whether you have the right partners to solve these problems in a fresh and imaginative way, for if not, you'll be the bug - not the driver.

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