

Social media marketing and the youth

 By [Bradley Maseko](#)

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The following is a breakdown of 12 social media marketing trends for 2012 with regards to how businesses will target the youth market. The emphasis for businesses/brands in 2012 will be to avoid becoming subject to the "Social Media Burnout Effect".



These trends are derived through an analysis of the different trends and insights obtained by Brandedyouth from our several Youth Psyche Studies. These were conducted during the course of 2011 and looked at the use of social media among youth in South Africa.

1. Location-based marketing

There will be a need to take advantage of the current trend of checking into establishments via social networks (foursquare etc), and, as a result, we can expect a massive rise in geo-targeted mobile campaigns. It will become more than just checking in, as many establishments will start offering rewards for the positive recommendations or reviews received.

2. Social media gamification

With over 70% of all mobile downloads being games, most businesses and brands have realised that gaming is an important aspect of the youth culture and have taken a creative look at creating social media games that make their brands more fun and engaging. Businesses will thus invest in the idea of linking the virtual world and physical world through offering rewards in social media games that can then be collected physically.

3. Integrated social media ad campaigns

In 2011, we saw some big brands launch successful ad campaigns solely through different social media platforms, the most common being Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. While Facebook is an obvious favourite, the number of SA youth on Twitter is rapidly increasing. This is surely going to attract more brands to launch their campaigns through social media, as this not only scores high on fun and engagement but guarantees an active audience willing to share experiences.

4. Social media youth sourcing

Brands will turn to social networking platforms to encourage open innovation from the youth. Platforms will become a source of research, development and marketing strategies. This will lead to a greater form of relationship between youth consumers and brands, as recommendations and reviews shift from being more than just "peer-to-peer" and elevate to "audience-to-brand".

5. Social media brand advocates

Since the youth trust peer recommendation over any form of advertising and while the ethnographic approach worked quite well before the attention of the youth went online, the landscape has changed and it will therefore be necessary for brands to identify loyal and influential evangelists on the different social media platforms, who will share content with their groups and friends and thus be rewarded for their efforts.

6. Social media monitoring

More businesses will realise the impact that online conversations have, not only as a means of safeguarding their reputations but also for mining insights. Social media has given the consumer the power to voice their opinions and businesses will take keen interest in monitoring what is being said in these conversations in a bid to learn more about the youth psyche through keeping up with their latest trends and individual preferences and also to control any form of brand-bashing.

7. Social media relevance

Every 60 seconds, over 600 000 Facebook statuses are updated, over 98 000 tweets are sent and over 600 videos are uploaded on YouTube. Social media has become a noisy playground with too much clutter, thus more compelling engagements are needed to attract the attention of the youth. Businesses will focus on creating more relevant content that cannot only be shared but also add value to the brand or product. Lack of relevance will simply drive the youth away.

8. Increased video sharing and vlogging

Cisco now predicts that 80% of all internet traffic will be video by 2015. More businesses will start paying attention to the fact that most youth, while on social media platforms, prefer watching short videos and going through photos, rather than reading. There will therefore be a need to share more brand experiences and product launches through short videos/photos that will be easy for the youth to understand, enjoy and share with their peers.

9. Corporate blogging

This will come in the form of businesses and brands taking a step to be more human in a bid to foster a connection with their target markets, as the youth want to see the human side of the business. Businesses will take a non-fiction attempt at advertising, focusing on telling the story and showing the people behind the brand and products in a neutral tone. Blogs will help to engage youth in conversation, and help in building relationships. Attempts at direct advertising on corporate blogs will thus defeat the purpose of showing the human aspect.

10. Social television

There will be an increase in investment to focus on engagement with the youth through integrating live TV shows and competitions with social media. The ability of real-time interaction appeals to the youth market through having the power to influence or vote while the show is airing. We will therefore see the growth of social and sharable television as tweets and Facebook comments become the centre of most shows and live competitions. This will play an important role in attracting a somewhat active audience for traditional media.

11. Social customer retention

Most businesses will realise that social media is more than just maintaining a presence on social media platforms. They will focus on the effects of using social media to promote not only their sales activities, offering value-add to customer service, but in also rewarding youth loyal to the brand. In this sense, there will be a greater move to use social media as a tool, not only to attract new youth but also to try and retain existing ones.

AND ULTIMATELY:

12. Increased social media investment

While social media seems relatively cheaper than traditional media, an increase in investment will be needed to boost creativity and online activities beyond just the "likes", "comments" and "number of followers". More permanent

employees will be needed to maintain this, as brands seek to differentiate themselves in ways that will effectively attract the attention of users. We can definitely expect an increase in social media investment from both small- and large-scale businesses in 2012.

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