

This year we see a lot of shifts in the tech and gadget space, and even more movements on social and economic fronts. Increasingly savvy and smart, and with more brand options available to them than ever before, this group should make for a very important audience on any brand's list. Here are a few trends worth looking out for in 2014.

## 1. Big City Life

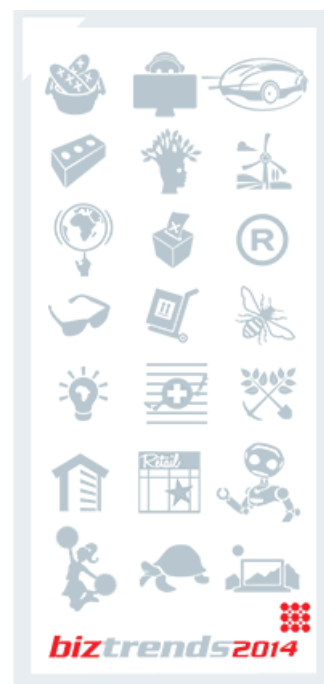
Websites to look out for around this theme include JHBLive, CapeTownLive, DurbanLive, as well as Maboneng, POPArt Jhb, etc.

## 2. Datamania

Offering youth free Wi-Fi is a must do if you're trying to get them to even look at you. A number of brands have recognised this and quickly jumped onto the band wagon. Chains like Wimpy offer free and unlimited Wi-Fi to customers, McDonald's and Mugg n Bean are two more identified cool Wi-Fi spots. A number of educational institutions also offer all their students free on-campus Wi-Fi. UJ, NMMU, University of the Witwatersrand are just a few.

### 3. Selfie Olympics

Released images include those of people balancing and posing in the most obscure positions. Literally hundreds of



thousands of selfies have been uploaded to date.

## **4. Lingua franca**

As cellphones became commonplace 10-15 years ago, young people (and some older) created an SMS lingo. This language, which for the most part became the lingua franca for youth who were limited to 160 characters to send an SMS took over at the time. It wasn't at all uncommon to see conversations which consisted of short (nonsensical to some) words and numbers youth seemed to understand so fluently.

This time around we see completely new words finding their way into our everyday language, and even making their way into the dictionary. In 2012 (not too long ago) nobody would have known what you were talking about if you made reference to a "Izikhote" - but in 2014 you'd have a tough time finding anyone who doesn't know what this word means. Another example to note is the word "selfie", and acronyms "YOLO" and "FOMO".

## **5. Mobile Me**

Youth are becoming more independent than ever before. A part of independence involves having the ability and mobility to move around freely, and this is linked to transportation on a very large level. You just have to take a look at the number of cars on the road to realise what an uptake there has been in car ownership - a greater number of them driven by young people.

Young urban youth - specifically township youth - have traditionally always been commuters who use public transport (often without assistance from parents, even at ages as young as five) so have previously been quite independent in this regard. We are now seeing a rise in the desire to be independent from a younger age in youth across age and colour bars. This is further supported by the "failure to launch" phenomenon, which sees youth staying at home for much longer, therefore giving them access to mom's or dad's car when not in use.

## **6. Techvantage**

2014 is a huge tech year and we can expect to see slick technological advances. With deeper penetration, and access to equipment becoming much more of a reality, gadget ownership is becoming a certainty for many who previously didn't have a prayer of owning anything of the kind.

Schools are not only getting with the programme, but are also encouraging and growing the love for technology by entrenching it into classrooms. Gauteng's 2,200 public schools will have access to uncapped Wi-Fi and 3G connectivity and 88,000 Huawei tablets will be distributed to students starting in 2014 as part of the province's e-learning solution.

## **7. Pro-litical analytical**

This group of first-time voters has a continuously growing (and changing) opinion, and they want that opinion heard. Whether the opinion is about something as fickle as the latest fashion trend, or something as serious as who your vote goes to in the national elections, youth want their thoughts and the reasoning behind their thoughts taken seriously. The one worrying issue here, is the source of this discerning (but often also naïve) group's information, and the influences they allow to creep into their decision-making.

## **8. My opt-in**

The age of duping and tricking people into signing up for your service or taking advantage of your offering are over. Today's youth are savvy and curious, and need to see what benefits you will offer them before they take up what you

are offering. Youth understand that they are decision makers, and that frankly for the most part brands need them more than they need the brand. You need to convince them to "join" your team, and please them, or this brand un-loyal group will simply opt-out - because as Lunga, 19 so aptly put it - "Because I can."

## 9. Work it!

With a steady rise in needs, and not enough money to squeeze out of parents and relatives, youth are becoming innovatively entrepreneurial. This generation of prosumers is not afraid to work to buy themselves their hearts' desires. School-going children are more than happy to do extra chores to earn an extra buck, and their post matric counterparts are even willing to go as far as taking on more than one or two jobs to support their demanding lifestyles. If sleep wasn't an absolute necessity, some of these youth might forgo it for extra time to make money.

## 10. Less-is-more

In 2014 we see millennials trying to gain a more subtle sense of chic by throwing in what they think are subtly (and therefore tastefully) branded items. Youth desire simple, but effective use of branding and logos without falling into the common "in-your-face" marketing style many brands still use. In 2014, you will see brands that fail to find this balance of top of mind, but tasteful use of branding and logos suffer.

Marketers are urged to play in a space where product recognition is so strong, that their brand won't need to keep shouting their own names (so to speak) for attention. Examples of brands that do really well at "less-is-more" marketing are Coca-Cola, Nike, Apple.

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## ABOUT JASON LEVIN AND MOKEBE THULO

MD of HDI Youth Marketeers Jason Levin has been in the marketing industry for over 20 years. In April 2008 Levin took over as the new MD where he now spends his time understanding what makes young South Africans tick. In 2012 Mokebe Thulo took on the role of communications manager at HDI Youth Marketeers where her key focus areas have been in developing a PR strategy, as well as aligning internal communications and managing stakeholder communications.

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