

Brand trends for 2011

By [Colleen Funkey](#)

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Trends can be likened to ocean waves, as a force of energy moving across the water, building in momentum and size until breaking and becoming one with the ocean, the norm. Much as the ocean, consumer values, attitudes and behaviours are in constant motion and, as marketers, we need to understand and predict these waves in order to respond and adjust so as to ride them and not be crushed because we didn't see them coming.



"They (surfers) keep their eyes on the horizon," Shaun Tomson - Surfer's Code.

Here are my predictions for some of the 2011 waves:

Changing status

As experiences become increasingly more valuable, consumers are opting to spend their money on acquiring skills, building their knowledge and self-discovery rather than on traditional consumption with its visible status symbols. Consumers are sharing their experiences and earning status through the stories they tell.

Think about who you would want to sit next to at a dinner party - the banker who pulled up in a Porsche or the guest who has just backpacked through Nepal? Who do you think has the higher social status at that dinner party?

What is your brand doing to support and enable self-development of your consumers - and are you enabling them to share their stories?

Great expectations

Driven largely by increasing access to information through the online world, consumers are more informed and empowered than ever before. They are demanding more, as they take control and seek interaction and meaningful relationships with brands.

Does your brand listen, engage and encourage participation from consumers? Have you allowed and enabled co-ownership of your brand with your consumers? Think of the Apple app creators who certainly must feel a part of the brand as they have participated in its creation. They are not just loyal consumers, they are evangelists.

Choice curators

Consumers are time poor, overloaded with information and seeking trusted guides to help them navigate through the choice overload. Decisions are influenced by peer reviews online and referrals from people and brands they trust. According to the 2011 Trend Report (Trendwatching.com), "roughly 25% of Tweets contain links" - consumers are increasingly taking on the role of curators as they comment on, share and recommend to one another. Word of mouth is becoming even more important as decisions are based on trust.

To build trust and earn curator status, brands need to be committed to honesty and transparency. Is your brand honest? Does your brand support and enable consumers to make the right choice for their needs?

Green, greener, greenest

Sustainability is no longer fringe, as consumers take ownership of the problem and demand that brands do so too. The status associated with green credentials is fuelling demand for eco-easy and affordable products. To earn credible eco-credentials, brands must educate and enable consumers to make a positive change and to feel and see the difference they make to the planet and for its people. Carbon credits cannot be felt but watching a plant grow and develop over time or a child acquiring a new skill (see the wonderful initiative in UK travel tourism www.footballs4fun.co.uk) can be deeply fulfilling and rewarding.

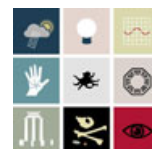
Is your brand providing consumers with a platform to make a difference to the planet and people? If so, can they feel and see the difference they make?

By keeping our eyes on the horizon, we can watch how changing consumer values and attitudes begin to influence behaviour. As you see a trend slowing building, wait until it gets just big enough then capture this energy to move your brand and business forward. Trend watching... it becomes a way of life!

References: 2011 Trend Report (Trendwatching.com)

For more:

- Biz Trends 2011: [Marketing & Media South Africa](#)
- Biz Trends 2011: [Marketing & Media Africa](#)
- Biz Trends 2011: [Retail](#)
- Twitter Search: [#biztrends2011](#)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colleen Funkey is an experienced brand strategist and accomplished marketer with over 13 years of classical marketing experience within the fast moving consumer goods and retail sectors, namely Colgate-Palmolive and Clicks. More recently Colleen held the position of Senior Strategist at Yellowwood Future Brand Architects, a leading brand strategy and consumer insight agency and part of the TBWA group of companies, where she worked on a number of B2B and B2C brands including Iziko Museums, The SAIL group, Trinergy Brand Connectors, The Nature Conservation Corporation, The Baby Expo and a long time South African favourite, Dairybelle. She now runs her own small marketing consultancy in Cape Town, Funkey Brands, focused on supporting the small to medium sized business sector. Follow Colleen on Twitter here: [@colleenfunkey](https://twitter.com/colleenfunkey)