

Social influence

By [Gee Motsepe & Lara Petersen](#)

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From the rise of the Socially Important Person (SIP), active activists and tapping into national kids crazes, marketers need to be on their toes to keep up with the youth.



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1. Armchair activists to active activists

Since 2010 we've seen the uprising of the armchair activists, who showed their support for a cause through a simple post and/or hashtag (cast your mind back to #bringbackourgirls and #nkandla). But the close of 2015 saw the stirrings of something much more dramatic. The rise of the "#fall" movement across the country. South Africa was jolted from an impression of our youth as 'complacent' and 'de-politicised'... as they quickly and viciously mobilised. Bums were off armchairs as impassioned students from all walks of life stomped the streets together, demanding that #feesmustfall. The youth won't be silenced and they won't be passive. Keep your promises, or expect consequences.

2. Rise and rise of the SIP

Screen star who? 2016 sees the rising influence of the Socially Important Person (SIP). The democratisation of fame through social media has created new career opportunities, from full-time blogging to digital influencing for cash. And now we have the Instapreneurs too - young people who are creating their own personal brand of cool on Instagram. The platform continues to surge past other social media mainstays (it more than doubled its SA users, from 1.1 million in 2014 to 2.68 million in 2015. 90% of users are under 35). Screen and music stars are no longer the pinnacle of influence on youth, they now seek more authentic and accessible inspiration from the SIPs, whether it's for fashion, make-up, food porn, nutrition, travel or fitness, peers are the word.

3. Uber-connected

We refer to mobile phones as the youth's third kidney. They can't live without them (and check them every five minutes). Besides addictive social media platforms, the boom of convenience apps are making phones 'indispensable'. For young city-slickers, never before has it been easier (and cooler) to not drink and drive, thanks to Uber, while finding the best restaurant to grabbing some chow is a click away on Zomato. The new Discovery Vitality app gamifies and incentivises fitness goals with free smoothies and coffees (students don't say no to freebies) - subscribers are already exercising 25% more. Want the youth's attention? Give them an app that makes their life easier (and/or better and/or cheaper).

4. Doing good is now really good for business

Community investment works for the majority of SA youth. Plain and simple. This discerning market knows what they need, where they come from, and if brands and corporates touch on that need, they are viewed as responsible and caring. They might be young, but their hearts are big and spirit-filled. When it comes to good business, our youth believe in giving AND receiving. Pick n Pay School Club provides schools with free educational content to assist learning in primary- and high schools, and is a key driver of their consistent popularity with kids and teens.

5. Freebies

Freebies are an ongoing, and increasing, trend for youth across the world. Specifically for teens and young adults, because they are already getting an allowance or working for themselves - so they now know the value of money. Young people are very conscious of their spending patterns. According to the *Sunday Times* Generation Next 2015 survey, SA's youth spend more than R121bn per annum, but as may be expected, affordability remains an important consideration. One of the best examples is the all-consuming popularity of BlackBerry's BIS, offering great value for R60 p.m. with free internet, free social media and free instant messaging. When data charges were introduced, popularity plummeted and market share was immediately lost to the likes of Samsung and Apple. Cheap is good, value for money is very good, and free is great!

6. National kid craze

In 2015, the nationwide craze that got kids asking their parents to go to their nearest Pick n Pay to spend *another* R150, got the famous/infamous Stickees in kids' hands, and the major metropolises went mad. Pick n Pay reported a turnover increase of 8.5% in the few short months that the craze was in force. Globally, retailers are starting to pick up on this kid craze trend. 2016 will see either another retailer or corporate come up with a new approach to grab SA's kids and release a storm of pester power again. Maybe you should be the first to crack that nut? If not, as Moms and Dads, clutch those wallets!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gee Mbitsepe is HDI Youth Marketeers' PR and Social Media Coordinator, passionate about youth development, has an extreme appetite for life and everything that comes with it. Lara Petersen joined the team in 2014 as Copywriter and Ideator. She loves dreaming up exciting, magical experiences that connect brands to youth. Gee and Lara spend their time working on "totally awesome" youth campaigns, learning, sharing and staying forever curious and young at heart.

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