

Waka waka (this time for Africa)

 By [Gisèle Wertheim Aymés](#)

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It wasn't too long ago that Shakira was singing to thousands at the FNB Stadium for the 2010 Soccer World Cup: "Waka waka (this time for Africa). Your time to shine. Don't wait in line. Y vamos por todo."

1. Africa's lions are moving in fast in 2014

Already in 2010, the McKinsey Global Institute issued a global report on the opportunities for growth in Africa and in which they coined the phrase "Lions on the Move", and where they urged companies to act quickly to explore opportunities in Africa. I flagged this report in my Bizcommunity trend article in 2011. In 2014, the power of the African continent will take an even more prominent place on the global business stage.

"11 out of the 20 fastest growing countries globally are in sub-Saharan Africa." The World Bank, January 2013

And according to the United Nations Population Division, sub-Saharan Africa's 3.6% annual urban growth rate is almost double that of the global average.

The MGI report confirmed the rise of the African urban consumer, which will fuel long-term growth. "As 40 percent of Africans live in urban areas, a portion close to China's and continuing to expand they expect the number of households with discretionary income is projected to rise by 50% over the next 10 years, reaching 128 million. By 2030, the continent's top 18 cities could have combined spending power of \$1.3 trillion."

"Almost two-thirds of Africans think this year will be better than last, double the European rate." The Economist, March 2013

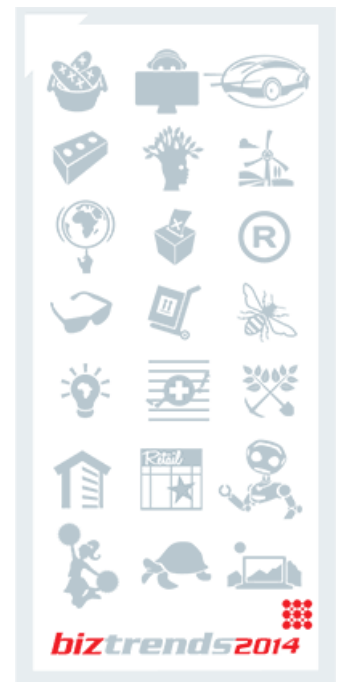
Africa is rising.

2. More mobile

The growing power and pervasiveness of that device in everyone's pocket continues to exceed expectations and transform consumer behavior, influencing customer loyalty, behaviour and pricing at an accelerated rate. It's been on my trend list for three years now and will continue to remain, although there are new twists.

Today in the USA, the world's largest economy, three quarters of IT resources in corporate US are focussing on developing mobile apps. Mobile commerce will reach USD 31 billion by 2016 and mobile ads will account for USD 6 billion by 2015 surpassing many traditional media channels. Experts are predicting that mobile apps designed by businesses for their internal use and competitive advantage will explode over the next two years.

Says trend expert Daniel Burrus: "The number of smart phones and tablets in all sizes of companies has obviously exploded in the last couple of years, and this hard trend is picking up speed. At the same time, the cost of being able to deploy business intelligence in every function is dropping off a cliff just as the capability of our smart devices, of our wireless and wired networks, and of both private and public clouds grow. So with costs decreasing and capabilities increasing, the time to act is now."



Now consider this...

"The contribution of mobile to the sub-Saharan GDP (6.2%) is higher than in any other region in the world." GSMA, November 2013

3. Transformation

In 2014 a new, more stringent BBEE regulation will be implemented to ensure more transformation in enabling the previously disadvantaged to participate in the formal economy. However, there's also another form of business transformation that will be required with the growing disruption of technology on business and a spate of modern companies whose way of working is far more efficient and talent retentive than current business practices.

Structures, processes, resource allocation and ownership will have to change. Companies need to be more empowered; more entrepreneurially led and younger talent must be engaged to enable retention strategies. A whole new way of incentivising talent, creating work environments to attract young bright talent will challenge existing business culture and ideology. Hot desking, allowing dogs at work and a more virtual existence are just some of the ideas that will change workplace culture. Businesses have to become more nimble and flexible.

"If you fail, fail fast though and learn and adapt even faster." Heard at the FIPP conference Rome 2013.

4. "Information moves at the speed of now"

Trendwatching.com says: "The Internet of Things will add USD 1.9 trillion of economic value to the global economy in 2020. In 2009, there were 2.5 billion connected devices; most of these were personal devices such as cell phones and PCs. In 2020, there will be up to 30 billion connected devices, most of which will be products." Gartner, October 2013

"Anything exceptional that 'connected objects' can do for consumers, whether that's monitoring or improving health, helping them save money, getting chores done, will be warmly welcomed next year and beyond."

There's a deluge of information out there and it moves at the speed of now.

5. Vying for validation

The strategists at Ford Motor Company believe that "vying for validation" is as an important consumer trend to consider in 2014. "The deluge of tweets, updates, blog posts, texts and everything else that consumers are projecting onto the internet on a daily basis is all part of a social need to validate."

Social media and internet publishing are amplifying a human condition and people are now effectively seeking that validation from loose acquaintances or strangers.

"Is craving validation from strangers a useful way to spend my time?" the strategists ask. Well if there is any doubt, just consider how many "selfies" are posted every second of every day across the globe.

6. The internet has a greater reach than television

People living in developed nations now rely on the internet more than any other medium for news coverage. In the early 2000s, radio was overtaken by internet usage. Then the shift towards web-based information began to affect print media, with newspaper sales heavily impacted.

In Africa, internet still lags global penetration due to accessibility and affordability, but this is fast changing. By 2014,

even television globally will have less reach when it comes to news reporting. Television and the internet are in fact converging together as one. Social media, mobile technologies and exponential bandwidth improvements have driven much of this change.

7. Fear of missing out (FOMO) vs Joy of missing out (JOMO)?

FOMO vs JOMO. Are there signs that the average consumer is questioning the benefits of constant connectivity? The strategists at Ford seem to think so: "With more information at our fingertips than ever, we've been trained to always look for the 'best' thing on the horizon... which leads to a constant feeling of FOMO."

Ironically, this trend is real and increasingly spawning a whole range of new industries such as consultants to help people go on a digital detox to reduce their reliance on the addictive beast!

8. Convenience rules

There's nothing new about our reliance on convenience, but our tech centered world is fueling its ranking importance in the pecking order of consumer's lives. [Ariel Schwartz](#), an editor at Co.Exist refers in her article on trends from the FutureBrand traders who predict that comfort and convenience will reign in 2014.

Subway is the fastest-growing US restaurant chain worldwide and chocolate and ice cream sales are soaring worldwide. Judging by the number of fast food outlets (and the profit they are showing) sprouting all over Africa, we are in alignment with this global trend. The irony is, as fast as people consume and become unhealthy, increasingly they are turning to smartphones and other devices to help them improve their health.

Expect too a rise in health related apps, which improve techniques for self-treatment, developments in stress-detecting technologies and apps, which track and improve mental wellbeing too.

9. Guilt-free status and the end of bling?

There's a lot of talk among trend forecasters about the end of bling, statusphere and pursuit of a guilt-free status. Whatever you want to call it, there are major differences in how people project their wealth around the world. The FutureBrand Index operated on the assumption that the culture of bling, ever-present in fashion, is declining. They say, "As conspicuous consumption increases in emerging economies, there is a self-consciousness around consumption - an awareness that there are implications to consumption choices. It's almost a return to a sort of authenticity."

South Africa and Africa in general is a complex continent of contradictions and extreme polarity when it comes to wealth, the aspiration of wealth and guilt or not around this wealth. However, if the global pundits are right, the brands with authenticity will rule in 2014.

10. The female factor

The female factor is powering her way through boardrooms and political gatherings, but are women breaking through glass ceilings? There's still a jury out on this and while the numbers show women still lag men in senior positions in business by a long shot, there are more positive signs that women are getting closer to the top.

Urbanisation has become an "agent of change" for women in developing countries, the lower birth rates and higher levels of education and opportunity found in cities are creating more opportunities for women. Here in South Africa, we're seeing the growing importance of women in business, society and government. And yes, *it's time for Africa's women to shine!*

Attributed sources: Information for this article was derived from the following sources: Mckinsey Global Institute, FutureBrand and Trend Watching.com. Looking Further with Ford 2014 trend report and insights from Ariel Schwartz, an editor at Co.Exist. and Daniel Burrus founder and CEO of Burrus Research as well as media insights from the FIPP Rome Conference 2013

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