

Understanding 10 mega-trends shaping brands in 2012

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14 Oct 2011

In the face of evolving brands, change has to be anticipated and the strongest indicator of that change is culture, Added Value South Africa cultural insights specialist [Dr Inka Crosswaite](#) said this week in Johannesburg, as she revealed the 10 mega-trends which she said will shape the future of brands, come 2012.



Dr Inka Crosswaite

The 10 mega-trends are as follows, as explained and detailed by Crosswaite:

- **Autonomy:** people are taking control of their lives, and individual choices are driving economic, socio-political and lifestyle trends.
- **Recognition:** showing others that one possesses discernment and has achieved. While material goods once signified one's achievements and status, they no longer do. The symbols of status have become more complex and multilayered.
- **Freedom and discovery:** consumers increasingly seek experiences, rather than products and services, which are often simply a means (tools) to an end (experience).
- **Belonging:** people form communities as spaces of comfort and solidarity.
- **More global, more local:** while globalisation is forging a homogenous global identity, it has reached its tipping point. People are starting to resist global culture and look for the authenticity of the [local](#) and the familiar for inspiration.
- **Identity blur:** gender and life-stages are beginning to blur. Identity is fluid, changing and layered. People alter their identities over time as situations change, and adopt many different expressions of identity simultaneously, making identity more complex than ever before.
- **New consciousness:** there is a strong need for life to be made simpler, easier and less threatening.
- **Vitality:** proactive health management and extended definition of wellbeing.
- **Wired world:** new technologies have entered all parts of our life and allow us to manage our lives 24/7.
- **Take a stand:** from cynicism and mistrust to a new-found determination and drive for new solutions to past problems.

"A trend is a shift in the way people think and consequently act. Consumer trends are driven by changes in the consumer's environment and knowledge," Cape Town-based Crosswaite noted.

Deep understanding provides consumer context

"A deep understanding of trends provides a consumer context for the shifts happening in a category, and allows us to ride and shape these changes, rather than just react to them. Understanding how trends work enables us to differentiate between short-term fads and trends, the latter having potential to impact long-term consumer behaviour."

According to Crosswaite, the 10 mega-trends generate 26 micro-trends, which she cited as:

- **Autonomy:** finding myself, in charge
- **Recognition:** flaunt, status spheres, I deserve it, think before you buy
- **Freedom and discovery:** spontaneity, 'sense-perience', democratisation of creativity
- **Belonging:** human touch, new communities
- **More global and more local:** that's us, township cool, at play with the past
- **Identity blur:** womanity, re-masculation, ID chameleonic, age bend
- **New consciousness:** comfort of simplicity, mindfulness
- **Vitality:** health experience, better for me
- **Wired world:** mobile life, digital universe
- **Take a stand:** everyday ethics, sprint of uprising

Unpacking the womanity micro-trend, Crosswaite said: "Roles which traditionally belong to men are being given a female variety. Female independence and confidence allows them to enter traditional male areas and make a success, if they so choose."

Rise of woman power

Speaking to Bizcommunity.com on the sidelines of the presentation, Crosswaite said women's empowerment and independence seems to shock a considerable number of men, who seem very unhappy by the rise of woman power.

"This is indeed the case in patriarchal societies such as South Africa, where traditions are still deeply-rooted in people's minds, which is not a bad thing after all, but usually generate a conflict with modernity. Men feel [emasculated] and suffer a lot. However, they learn to be men again, but not in a more brutish way as they used to be," she said.

"Thoroughly understanding these trends will provide the marketers with the ability to continually refresh their brands, and to mobilise them for the future. Getting it wrong might not mean failure, but it certainly will restrict the brand's ability to resonate with society."

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