

TREND: Brand storytelling

One of the biggest shifts in marketing communications recently has been the shift towards telling the authentic stories of brands and their consumers. Brand storytelling is a result of a shift in consumer behaviour, driven by the transparency of a socially connected world.

Changing consumer behaviour and improved data analytics is dictating strategic brand change, while at the same time, marketing fundamentals such as using authentic consumer insights to build brand resonance through storytelling, must be embraced by marketers in 2015, top brand and marketing strategists urge in exclusive opinion for Biz Trends 2015.

In the insightful 2015 macro-trends report by FCB, published first by Bizcommunity.com, strategy director, [David Smythe](#), is optimistic that despite an economic downturn in South Africa, opportunities exist for brands on the continent of Africa; and for those brands that are open to the rapid change in the market, which includes transparency, authenticity and consumer engagement - primarily through brand storytelling.



Source: [Distilled.net](#)

"The best brands will not be those with fictional or made up stories, but those that will give an accurate, real time picture of what they are doing for consumers, at any given time," says [Johanna McDowell](#), founder and managing director of Independent Agency Selection (IAS). Transparency has become the most important tool in marketing today.

In her key trends piece, McDowell provides a smorgasbord of top trends for the industry, including a new role for media

agencies in the data race and the need for "agility marketing" from marketers to manage that stream of data. She urges marketers to engage in "silo-busting" and to simplify their internal structures in order to become those agile deities who know every move of their consumers before their consumers know it themselves!

The key take out for 2015 for expert contributor, [Adene van der Walt](#), executive strategy director of agency Ireland Davenport, is that brands need to deliver products that are up to date and innovative whilst remaining true to their brands' core values. Transparency, authentic consumer insights and emotional connections through campaigns, both earned and paid-for, will drive brand resonance and value, in consumers' minds, she says.

It is this emotional connection with consumers and a movement back to the origin of things: craft skills; brands with a back story; authentic products; real food with ethically sourced ingredients and packaging, that is driving the artisan trend of the maker movement. It is these inventors and creators who are creating a new economy around the 'maker culture', predicts [Alayne Reesberg](#), CEO of the World Design Capital 2014: Cape Town. This deep need, particularly among the Millennial generation, is to "live a more sustainable life" with purpose. Brands that tap into this *zeitgeist* have a future.

[Yegs Ramiah](#), responsible for group brand, corporate affairs, marketing and communications at Sanlam, says brands need to help consumers make better choices by focusing on the real issues consumers face, ahead of the bottom line and marketing plans. Coming from a financial institution, this is a distinct shift in thinking.

Not to be missed in the Strategy trend category is one of Bizcommunity's most popular columnists for over a decade, strategy guru [Sid Piemer](#), who tells the industry to relax because "no one will see the next big thing coming". Even the current big things, like Facebook and Twitter, started as something else before evolving into what they are today. That's the thing about the speed of change and evolution of current business thinking and strategy - the only thing that will save you is your strategic thinking ability.

****Trends curated by [Louise Marsland](#), specialist editor of Biz Trends 2015.***

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