

Business and consumer trends for 2015



By [Dion Chang](#)

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"All rise for standing boardrooms."

Social activism and the underpinning of digital solutions to major market innovation will characterise this year, according to renowned South African trend analyst, Dion Chang, in this exclusive list of 2015 trends for Biz Trends 2015.

1. Active citizenry in South Africa - AKA 'Yes we can'

Irritated, annoyed and fed-up with the lack of service from Government monopolies and parastatals, South African citizens are doing it for themselves. Parkhurst, Johannesburg, was one of the first suburbs to get high-speed fibre-to-fibre home broadband last year, supplied by a Stellenbosch-based start-up company.

And then there is the ongoing e-toll saga. The people of South Africa have spoken and rejected the implementation of e-tolls; creating debate, discourse and the rise of The Opposition to Urban Tolling Alliance, the driving force behind the e-toll opposition.

'Privatisation' is the recurring buzzword as citizens seek alternatives for postal service, electricity and more. Not a new idea in the global space, the implementation of privatisation, involving a genuine transfer of public assets to the general population, would not only be a constructive solution to citizen frustration, it would also significantly help to create a real sense of participation and inclusion in the economy.

2. Social media commerce 2.0 the sociable way to shop

The term Web 2.0 was used in the first Web 2.0 conference held in 2004 and defined as a second generation of technology development and web design. Social media commerce is the evolution of social media - the next generation of online shopping - with the hot spots being Instagram and Pinterest joining last year's Starbucks' Tweet-a-Coffee and Amazon's #amazoncart.

Evolving into a shopping catalogue, Pinterest joined the social media e-commerce fray last year with the introduction of its Rich Pins feature. This enables brands and retailers to include metadata like real-time pricing, stock availability and a 'Buy This' link to product images to make pins more purchase-friendly. Categorised under the sub-heads: Place Pins, Article Pins, Product Pins, Recipe Pins, and Movie Pins, the Product Pins include real time pricing, availability and where to buy.

Over on Instagram, Curalate (a marketing and analytics suite for the visual web) have now introduced a "like2buy" app,

which now enables users to buy directly, via an Instagram post with registered brands.

3. Click and collect. Fetch and go

A survey from Which?, a company that reviews products and services, found that over 60% of people shopping online last year had problems with delivery. Enter Click and Collect. A convenient solution for online shopping that offers customers the option of collecting their purchases at convenient locations like shopping centres or petrol stations.

In the US, Amazon has installed Click and Collect lockers in shopping centres. Pioneering Click and Collect in South Africa, Makro finalised an agreement with Sasol last year, which will provide nationwide access to Sasol's extensive forecourt network.

Makro is also acquiring access to other sites to enable click and collect delivery. Using a proven technology already deployed in other markets (a code sent to customers' cellphones opens the locker) these lockers will be located in safe and accessible locations including fast food restaurants, office parks and other Makro stores.

4. Wi-Fi - Maslow's new hierarchy of needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs most basic needs has been adapted to the new world order. Wi-Fi is now a serious contender as a basic need. As we live in a connected world, people feel vulnerable when they're without a Smartphone or can't access a wireless network.

Just how intense is the need for Wi-Fi? Some Londoners unwittingly signed over their firstborn children in exchange for access to free Wi-Fi last year. An experiment was conducted whereby an unsecured, free Wi-Fi hotspot was set up in a busy London district so they could see who would fall victim to the "Herod Clause" and other forms of IT theft. The 'Herod Clause' was put into the Terms and Conditions of accessing the free Wi-Fi. In agreeing to gaining access to the free Wi-Fi, users had to sign away their first-born child. Six people clicked "Agree".

If you give people free Wi-Fi, they might not willingly give you their first born, but they'll happily give you their (increasingly rare) loyalty.



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5. Fast casual restaurants eat into fast food market share

'Fast casual' is still a niche but it's the segment expanding the quickest. In the US, there are roughly seven times as many fast-food restaurants as fast-casual eateries-yet both categories notched roughly a \$9.3bn increase in sales over three years.

Positioned somewhere between fast food restaurants and casual dining restaurants, the fast casual restaurant is a fast growing concept. Being a hybrid of the two concepts, they provide counter service and offer more customised, freshly-prepared and high-quality food than traditional QSRs (Quick Service Restaurants), in an upscaled and inviting ambiance.

Brands such as Chipotle Mexican Grill, Panera Bread, Qdoba Mexican Grill and Baja Fresh are considered the top restaurants in this category.

As the traffic growth in the fast casual segment surpassed that of every other segment for the fifth consecutive year, Big QSR brands such as McDonald's, Subway and KFC have been facing a huge threat by the leading fast casual restaurants.

6. Wearable tech becomes 'computational couture'

2014 was wearable tech's big debut but 2015 sees a high tech fashion romance blossoming. Style met wearable technology with 'smart' jewellery at New York Fashion Week last year with novel accessories like an 18k gold-plated ring featuring semiprecious stones that connects to a Smartphone and alerts the user to any notifications.

But wearable tech is moving beyond smart watches and jewellery, and into smart garments and wearable textiles.

"Companies are making gadgets that are attached to your body. That's not innovation, really," says product engineer, Amanda Parkes, of Skinteractive Studios. She's designed a dress that uses piezoelectric material to generate electricity from wearers' body movement. The energy is then stored in a battery that can later be used to charge a device. The sports industry has been the frontrunner in using nano technology in textiles to monitor athletes' performances. 2015 sees this technology move from the laboratories and onto the streets.

7. Digital burnout. Mobile meltdown

Recent research has found that we now spend more time on our devices (on average, eight hours and 41 minutes) than we do sleeping. This 'always on, always connected' lifestyle is what is fuelling digital burnout. It has rewired our brains to be in a permanent multitasking mode.

Our new default reaction to any spare time is to delve into cyberspace. No one simply stares into space any more. This leads to digital addiction, a new healthcare threat, which is being formally listed in some countries.

Digital addiction keeps our minds hyperactive. Once you're on your smartphone, you get tunnel vision: it's like delving into a cyber rabbit hole. This not only blurs the boundaries between work and play, but we become less aware of the physical world around us. When we do come back to our physical world, we discover there is still an entire offline life to live.

Living in two worlds means that we actually work doubly hard - so at the end of the year, you've not worked 12 months but essentially 24.

8. Sit, stand, move. Agile action in the workplace

With the high level of technology used to communicate and work, the concept that an employee needs to be positioned at the same desk in the same office every day is changing.

Agile working creates a flexible environment, which leads to greater productivity. By creating different working areas within an office, the staff has the freedom to work wherever they want, whenever they want.



Image via smrh.com

Giving the workforce the freedom and autonomy to make individual choices ignites creativity and fresh thinking. Fluidity creates new ideas and perspectives, improves communication and boosts productivity across diverse departments. Google and Unilever have adopted agile working with measurable results in productivity.

All rise for standing boardrooms. Nobody gets too comfortable and everyone is alert enough to be focused on setting a goal before they leave standing boardrooms. With no chairs, meetings are limited to a maximum of 30 productive minutes, after which everyone leaves with a specific plan of action.

9. Doctors go digital. Healthcare 3.0

Remote patient monitoring - a trend linked and enabled by wearable tech - is poised to revolutionise the healthcare industry. Cisco, a multinational technology corporation, presented their offering of remote patient monitoring at My World of Tomorrow in Johannesburg last year.

A system whereby a satellite clinic in a remote area run by nursing staff, is able to consult with a network of doctors for patients who have ailments that they can't treat or who need further diagnosis. A patient's vital signs are uploaded into a cloud-based system, which the doctor accesses in real time and via webcam, and allows the doctor to speak to the patient and nurse.

By March this year, South Africa will be introduced to My Doctor24, a local online service that puts you in touch with a doctor who will assess the urgency of your ailment, via remote consultation.

For healthcare professionals, 'Figure 1' is an app for discussing medical issues on a global scale, and is already proving invaluable in South Africa, connecting doctors in rural areas with city centres.

10. Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's just another drone

From delivering pizzas to saving lives, the sky's the limit for drone technology. Ambulance Drone is an all-purpose medical toolkit that can be automatically flown to any emergency situation and used to guide people to make non-technical lifesaving procedures.

A courier service in China is currently testing high-tech drones that can deliver packages to remote locations. With a built-in navigation system, these drones can go where trucks can't. Amazon has promised drone delivery by 2016.



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Last year the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) clamped down on the use of drones for commercial purposes without a special license, but the drone revolution is unstoppable.

Drones are already widely in use in South Africa for commercial filming and anti-poaching operations. The City of Cape Town have plans to test drones which would be used to monitor land occupations, crime, scrap yards suspected of harbouring stolen copper, shack fires and disasters.

A Pretoria-based company is developing a drone that could spray tear gas and fire rubber bullets at protesters. The company revealed that an unnamed mining company ordered 25 units.

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Trend strategist, Dion Chang, is the founder of research trend specialists, Flux Trends. He is an innovator, creative thinker and walking ideas bank. He takes the unique view of "trends as business strategy". Flux Trends - specialises in understanding the consumer mindset and identifying unexpected business opportunities within shifting trends. For more trends as business strategy visit: www.fluxtrends.com

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