

# Thoughtful and considered

By  Brett Rogers

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The trend most influencing today's consumer is 'thoughtful and considered'. You cannot simply show them something shiny; the shiny will need to communicate their belief systems and resonate with their ideals.

Moving into 2022, a number of those trends which have been, well, 'trending' for a while now, will gain critical mass and become part of the norm. As a result, brands will need to clarify their approach to certain aspects of their businesses, including product development and marketing.

Some of these trends are simple to grasp and work within – for example, plant-based. Others are more challenging, perhaps because they are philosophical in nature – for example, belief.



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The overarching trend most influencing today's consumer is 'thoughtful and considered'. You cannot simply show them something shiny; the shiny will need to communicate their belief systems and resonate with their ideals.

Here, my pick of the trends that will become part of the norm.

## Plant-based

The push towards plant-based products is only going to increase. And, as we see the world starting to adapt to our needs and wants, we will see options, innovations and opportunities a-plenty.

One of the guiding lights in this regard have been outlets like Checkers, which stepped into the space softly without making it a big deal. For instance, its Heritage Day promotional activity kicked-off with plant-based options for the braai, a product choice that would have been scoffed at a year ago. Other examples include the increasing number of vegan restaurants opening doors and, tellingly, not leading with the fact that they are vegan in their messaging.

As 2022 progresses, we're likely to see the end of products that utilise unnecessary animal products, and especially an attack on products tested on animals.

## **Look at my eternal youth**

The search for the holy grail of youth continues unabated. But, in recent years, we have seen a real uptake and change in norms. In the past, people have kept their procedures secret even from their friends. Now, they post about their botox treatments, their filler procedures and their success with teeth whitening kits on social media, badging with their procedures rather than hiding them.

Brand managers should be alert to how the brands they take care of contribute positively or negatively to this trend. They should explore showcasing the positive anti-ageing or beautifying aspects of their brands.

## **Cancel culture apathy**

While the fight against bigotry in all its forms continues (and there's still a long way to go), the power that 'cancelling' a person or a brand had has rapidly eroded over the last year or so. Many who indulged in this behaviour can't be bothered to actively keep track of who or which brands they cancelled

This apathy has meant that 'cancelling' has had little to no impact on a brand's business.

However, while the drive to 'cancelling' is weakening, brands should continue to look inwards regarding problematic issues within their organisations because something will eventually emerge to censure those perceived as guilty. Also, it's just the right thing to do, and that is usually a pretty good way of deciding how to manage change.

## **The return of belief**

Religion has been on a downward trajectory over the last two decades as the generation of Millennials whose lives were negatively impacted by religious doctrine from their parents, teachers and administrators have rejected organised religion and its stories. They have raised their own children as non-believers who are growing up in a deeply polarised society with difficult social dynamics and increasing 'aloneness'.

As a result, Gen Zs are reaching for spirituality and belief to connect themselves to something greater than themselves. They are searching for 'something' to help them deal with the anxiety and worries that come from becoming adults on a planet with some severe challenges.

Religion gives unquestioning community and support, provides a higher power and a connection to humanity that is missing from our digital lives. People like Kanye West have embraced religion in a way that god brands like Hillsong can only dream of. He's created a god out of himself but brought Jesus back into the picture, almost making belief 'cool again'.

We'll start seeing more and varied religious influence coming back into the picture.

## Who takes advantage of the gender ender first?

Unisex fashion is a massive opportunity for a major South African fashion house to latch onto to expand its market. Already we have unisex sneakers – a strange decision it seems, or maybe it's only strange from my perspective having feet that are ™'d by Lords of the Rings”

However strange it might feel, there is a common conversation of ‘aah, men have such great clothes, and look THEY HAVE POCKETS!’ On the other end of the spectrum, the women’s section has super interesting stuff that men (many men, not just me) have no access to and would love to wear.

It won't even take a lot of effort. Traditionally male brands could simply (nothing is simple) extend the sizing range, and adapt their marketing to reflect any gender.

## ABOUT BRETT ROGERS

Brett Rogers, culture lead at Cape Town advertising agency HaveYouHeard and content curator for In\_, a channel of content, which showcases cultural forces that are changing the world. It aims to inform, inspire and entertain the viewer and does so with multimedia posts, including podcasts, videos, google trends, mini Q+A's and more. In\_ talks to those interested in in-depth cultural exploration and those curious about the world we live in.

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