

# Reaching the media savvy youth market



By [Louise Marsland](#)

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Do you know how to reach the youth? Have you produced a campaign that has become part of youth culture? The Khuza Awards and youth branding conference taking place in Johannesburg this week has heard from youth experts who believe most marketers are missing the boat when it comes to reaching the wired generation.



Liesl Loubser

## Media savvy

In her presentation yesterday, Thursday 4 May, Hot Dogz CEO, Liesl Loubser, unpacked the media overexposure which the youth are faced with today:

1. Media overexposure: the youth are a media savvy generation today. They live in media rich homes, where crime has created urban prisons, which, with access to technology, makes the youth of today communication junkies and over exposure to media.
2. Chapterised world: young consumers are in control of media messages and live in a 'Chapterised World' which enables them to retrieve, store and delete data, from ipods to cellphones, to internet to TV, etc.
3. Shorter attention spans (SAS factor) - new media intelligence: media multitasking, very discerning, want everything immediately. That's how they cope with life. Visual literacy rather than traditional literacy, ie, reading. We have discovered a new type of learning: visual. isms will replace sms when bandwidth increases.
4. Choice paralysis: how do they make a choice with such an abundance of media and messages? Relevance, brands that talk to them in their own language and on their own medium of choice.
5. Complex media worlds: age compression, time compression, content compression faces the youth.
6. Social status: traditional media classifications do not apply to youth any longer. Youth researchers find it very difficult to utilise current standards in the industry. The divide is not a socio-economic one that creates a social divide in the youth; it is access to media, which creates social status.
7. Generation gap between tweens and young adults: youth are more into personal devices and young people who are growing up with these products and believe that the only technology they will need in the future is their cellphone.
8. Time: the tween group is the most compressed when it comes to their time. In the Khuza research conducted, youth interviewed kept media and activity diaries and most had 20-hour days. In terms of integration, young adults love campaigns that address the past and are politically correct - the younger kids don't understand the issue, it's in the past for them.

## Reaching the youth

The youth today love brands that make us laugh at ourselves, ie, Polka; brands that create debate, ie, Nando's; and brands that have a sense of pride, ie, Castle. What alienates them - and they say that more companies get it wrong than right - is engineered scenarios. Companies and ad agencies need to address the past by projecting a positive spin for the youth.

We've all heard of Mobisodes (mobile phone movies). The youth today love 'Adisodes': tiny chapterised dramas in ad campaigns. Loubser says the youth love them as it creates anticipation for what comes next, ie, campaigns such as Polka, Nando's, Lays, Corse Lite, and Fanta. They enjoy the short, bite-size messages. The short attention span could be a reason for that. The youth discuss these extensively and brands can continue to ride on the wave of becoming a part of popular youth culture.

The youth feel that brands that use humor correctly reflect an understanding of their need to relieve stress and turn experience into a positive media consumption moment, ie, campaigns that get it right are recent TV ads from Doom and Joko.

There were many vehicle ads in the top 10 youth choices. The youth panel loved the creativity and appreciate ones that display youth aspiration, as they believe it shows a belief in the youth and reflects positively on their future and must be "fresh and raw", ie, Momentum, BP and IEC - Power of X recent advertising reflected this.

Building a relationship with the youth is more than just a campaign, it is those companies that show deep insight, Loubser says, that the youth reward by becoming co-owners of the message and integrating it into their culture. For example, brands such as Axe and Doritos. Brands like this understand youth culture and the technology to personalise messages to the youth, and are prepared to come to the youth where they are at, rather than using outdated traditional mediums, and those that show creativity.

## Shared media

"Within the media environment they live in, the youth all said that they regulated their own personal media intake. What agencies refer to as traditional media (TV, radio for example) becomes 'shared media'. In the household the older siblings or parents decide on the content and times, but the young'uns still know what they like and what they loathe. When it comes to 'personal media', the youth worship their own personal devices. What is surprising is that they choose their content according to the same amount of responsibility that their parents have given them."

The Khuza Awards (which were also presented last night to the favourite brand campaigns as judged by youth research) report gives in-depth analysis, graphs and the full low down and up on who won what, and how they fared in comparison to each other. The youth know what they like.

Loubser explains that while the SAS factor has lead the youth into a new phase called 'Chapterisation', with great respect for campaigns that use Adisodes (ads that have continuation and storylines), just because they "can't concentrate" for longer than a split hair, doesn't mean they're not taking it all in. Even more impressive is the level that they're doing all this multitasking and multi-media on. The Khuza Study shows that the youth account for 20 hours of activity per day in their lifestyle diary - at least six of those hours or more is due to multi-tasking. They have the ability to do their homework; listen to their iPods; be on the internet, while eating and sms'ing friends.

Brands with role models caused an ambivalent response. While the youth definitely enjoy idolising those shinier and cooler than they, they aren't taken in if the brand and the supporter are not a genuine match.

## ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMOG Files newsletter. Web: [www.sourceagency.co.za](http://www.sourceagency.co.za).

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