

A roller-coaster of a year

 By [David Blyth](#)

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2014 is a going to be a roller-coaster of a year. There are huge opportunities for brand growth across the continent, the chance to showcase local design to global audiences and connect with consumers on issues that really matter to them. But we're also confronting a volatile currency and increasing technological disruption. Marketers will need to work hard to capture attention and earn love for their brands.

This year we will see more:

1. Brave work

I have the hopeful feeling that this year we will see really brave work that makes us stop, think and reconsider. There has been a lot of 'play it safe' branding produced over the past few years and it feels like it's time for something ground-breaking - big ideas that change the way people view our industry.

2. 'Good' creative

In line with global trends and the focus on nation-building that'll accompany our 20 years of democracy celebrations, we're going to see many more projects that connect social responsibility initiatives to brand ideas and campaigns. Companies are starting to link their CSI work with their Corporate Purpose and Values.

3. Shiny Cape

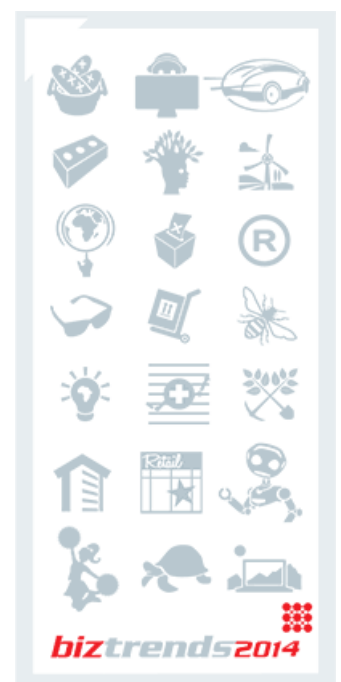
Cape Town is [World Design Capital 2014](#), and so we can expect to see inspiring projects kicking off, interesting events and the eyes of the world on local design and innovation. With such an abundant resource of creative talent, it will be great to see locals shine brightly. Brands will do well to tap into this celebratory mood and to partner with designers to create innovative products, artworks and design interventions for social problems.

4. Politics

Pre-election campaigning has already begun and it's exciting to see South Africa moving beyond 'show and tell' poster campaigns to a more integrated, multichannel environment. As for the brand marketing industry itself, I foresee more politics between different disciplines (each trying to own the relationship); the big guys and the small guys; the independents and the networks; the people who care about the work and the people who care about the money.

5. Tightened belts

With a weakening rand and increasing cost of living, I think it's safe to assume consumers will be feeling squeezed this year. Expect to see a greater focus on real value, and even anger from consumers at unaffordable prices. Consumers may turn to more local suppliers, products and services as the cost of imports rises. Local brands can seize the opportunity to build meaningful, lasting relationships with them.



6. Retail reincarnation

Online shopping was held at bay by our poor internet penetration for ages. All of that is about to change, as smartphone sales accelerate rapidly. Retail brands will need to find ways of offering easy, relevant and enjoyable shopping experiences across all channels - from physical stores to mobile devices.

FMCG brands will need to invest in real relationship building with their consumers if they want to stand out, and there will be increasing opportunity for collaboration between retail, product and e-commerce brands.

Not everything in branding is changing - don't forget to check out a [few of the fundamentals](#) we believe aren't going anywhere. And for the rest, good luck!

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ABOUT DAVID BLYTH

David Blyth is CEO at Yellowwood. His focus at Yellowwood to date has been on building thought leadership and a pan-African client footprint. David is a prior chairman of 'think' (South African Communication Design Council), the Digital Interactive Media Association and is a current director of the Brand Council of South Africa (BCSA). Follow @dvblyth on Twitter.

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