2015 is defined by disruption

By Louise Marsland   23 Mar 2015

The year has hardly begun and already world-changing ideas and technologies are defining 2015 as a momentous year - from the beginnings of real Artificial Intelligence emerging from the Big Data revolution, to the disruption Millennials are causing to specific industry sectors, and the mooting of a global income for all to combat poverty.

One way to pick up on burgeoning trends or to validate trends you've already noted, is to read. Prolifically. And then there are the weeks when you can't choose between all the incredible research and writing to hone in on just one trend.

Last week was one such week. In January, I wrote in my introduction to Bizcommunity.com's 2015 Trends, #BizTrends2015, that 2015 would be a year of momentous global change which would coalesce around rapid technological developments, economic reinvention, social revolution, social activism, innovation, and so on.

It's already begun to happen in this very busy first quarter of the year - from a breakthrough South African medical advance in penile transplants to dialogue fuelled by social activism locally about whether certain historical icons such as Cecil John Rhodes should continue to be revered or removed; to global developments in artificial intelligence and new economic theories on how to alleviate poverty globally.

This was why the past week was particularly noteworthy and an indicator of current trends which are already making 2015 that momentous year we have predicted it will be. These are my top picks of the trend indicators from last week:

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Harvard Business Review, no less, believes artificial intelligence is at a tipping point in 2015. What they mean by this is that finally the reality of technological development has caught up with the theory on AI espoused for decades, "driven by the exponential growth in technology capabilities, smarter analytics engines, and the surge in data".
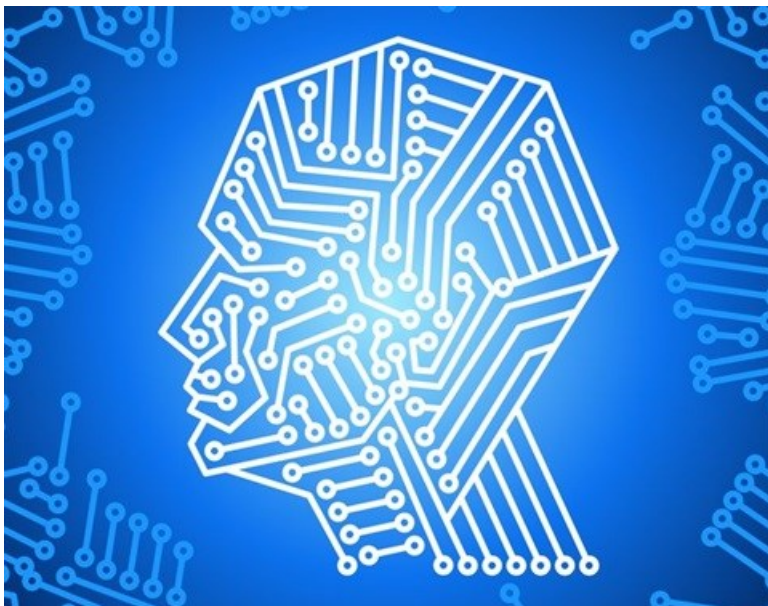
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The Internet of Things has accelerated the growth in "structured data" and the analysis of "unstructured data" for greater consumer insight. Because the analysis of all this so-called "big data" etc., is so time consuming and involved, machines and learning tools for quantitative data are being built and are considered the "first line of AI" to support human productivity.

It is this integration of AI systems which is accelerating big data and analytics, reports *Harvard Business Review* and is "showing the way" to the next generation of AI. An absolutely fascinating read.

2. Millennial disruption

The millennial generation are influencing much of marketing now and how's this for an interesting stat from *Business Insider* magazine - 33% of millennials don't think they'll need a bank five years from now and only half think that they will still be using cash on a weekly basis by 2020. According to Goldman Sachs, millennials believe that the financial disruption of current economic models will be such that there will be other models for paying for things.

'How Millennnials Get the News' is also the subject of an interesting study by the American Press Institute (APi), as posted by WAN-IFRA today. 39% are actively seeking out the news, but their reading habits are "vastly different" from generations before them. They will get hard news online from traditional sites and soft news from their social networks, but search engines remain the dominant tool for getting more information on a subject.
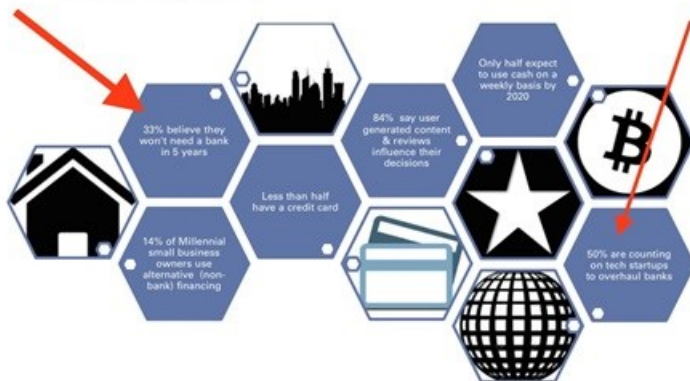

Image via Business Insider

3. Content shifts to mobile

Content is a massive focus across every discipline in media and marketing communications and venerable news giants like the *New York Times* are now shifting all their resources into getting their content mobile and making money from mobile readers. The reason according to *Advertising Age*: "Audiences are pouring into publishers' sites via mobile devices", but of course advertising revenue is far less as the rates are far lower on mobile devices.

4. Reshaping society

Fast Company magazine has put together a list of the 14 trends, theories and inventions that will have the greatest impact on this year. These are some of the most "audacious, transformative" ideas that could shape the world in 2015. Everything from a universal basic income for all as a global solution to poverty; to 'uncomfortable' design to challenge human beings to exercise; the urban farm of the future complete with drones; the programming of physical objects to bend to our will and respond to environmental factors, like smart materials integrated with smart technology as an extension of wearables; trading electricity with neighbours in collaborative 'grids'; to the scary fact that some nation might decide to "geoengineer the planet" without the world's permission, to benefit their own citizens, for example, to create rain artificially after a natural disaster like a drought. It's a brilliant read and possibly one of my favourite series of articles of the year so far and definitely a must to bookmark to track 2015 trends in business strategy and beyond.

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 Mix magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMCG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.
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