

Brand SA searches its soul, realigns its goals

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[Africa's most valuable nation brand, South Africa](#), continues to search its soul and look towards enhancing its international reputation and increasing its brand equity as it aims to stay relevant and strong in the current competitive economic environment, where only nations with a strong dose of credibility and competitiveness can survive. Brand SA stakeholders hosted a summit today, Tuesday, 31 May 2011, in Johannesburg to relook at strategies aiming at moving the country forward.



The International Marketing Council (IMC) is only the custodian of Brand South Africa, but the brand belongs to every South African, who should act as an ambassador of the brand in order to position the country as a globally competitive nation, IMC deputy chairman Chichi Maponya said.

Brand pillars

Successful economies, Maponya said, have a strong brand identity, drawing on their comparative advantages - or brand pillars - to attract the people, businesses, and investment they need to stimulate growth.

Therefore, she said the five brand pillars or values that will enable ordinary South Africans to identify with the country's positioning are:

- ubuntu (humanity, generosity)
- diversity
- sustainability
- innovation and creativity, and
- possibility.

"We are forever competing with other nations for investments and tourists, and through a collective effort or partnership we will ensure the success of Brand SA, which is not solely the public sector's task," she said.

The IMC, which is tasked with managing the country's reputation and image, says today that Brand SA can only reach its goals if all stakeholders - business, government and civil society - respond to a call to collaborate in realising the positioning

of SA as a globally competitive nation.

Whether you are in media, government or business, you need to do your bit to tell the SA story in a positive way to advance the reputation and credibility of Brand SA, IMC CEO Miller Matola urged.

"It is about holding hands"

Matola added: "How can we work together? It is about holding hands. And wherever you are, you should tell a SA story based on objectivity and positivity. And by understanding and exploiting our unique combinations of ubuntu, diversity, possibility, sustainability, and innovation and creativity through inspiring new and different ways, we enable a collective transformation of the quality of lives in South Africa."

He said nation branding must also be driven domestically, meaning from inside. "If we are not confident domestically, how are we going to promote our country abroad, and persuade other people to believe in us?"

Addressing delegates, deputy minister in the presidency Dina Pule said countries all over the world are shaping and reshaping their national identities as they compete with other nations and regional blocks for power, influence, prestige and wealth.

"The rapid advancement of globalisation means that SA must fight for its share of attention and respect of the international media, governments and people of other countries," she said.

Youth unemployment perhaps the greatest risk

SA has been ranked Africa's most valuable and most competitive nation, and fifth in Africa in terms of good governance, but a plethora of socio-economic challenges continue to hamper the improvement of many ordinary people's lives. Pule, who acknowledged the existence of such challenges, said youth unemployment is perhaps the greatest risk to future social and economic stability which requires immediate attention.

The IMC said today's summit is the first of nine such events. All provinces will be visited and Limpopo (on 26 June) is next on the list.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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