

# Creating a strong nation brand

By  Danette Breitenbach

29 Aug 2016

Colonialisation has meant that South Africa has no nation brand. A strong nation brand is one that can only be achieved through social cohesion, an ideal expressed in the Freedom Charter.

The Minister of Communications, Faith Muthambi put this to delegates who attended the recent inaugural Nation Brand Forum, hosted by Brand South Africa at the Maslow Hotel in Sandton, Johannesburg.

In her keynote address to the broad industry representations from government, civil society and business, she says that the idea expressed in the Freedom Charter is where we need to be. "We need more efforts to build the country's brand both locally and internationally. This Forum is the start of this. Together we will find inspiring new ways to reach a cohesive vision of Brand South Africa and we understand that everyone plays a part in this. What needs to be done must be determined by this Forum today."



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Today, nations are increasingly concerned with their reputation, she adds. "The world today is one market economy and that is the environment we are competing in. To thrive in this economy, we need to develop our uniqueness."

While we are a developing country, she says, South Africa has a good story to tell. "We must be proud to be South Africans. I love this country. This is our country. We need to get over ourselves. We need to talk with each other. Let's all

play our part in taking South Africa forward starting today.”

Brand South Africa CEO, Kingsley Makhubela, expressed his optimism and was upbeat about the country following the recent local elections. “Recently we have seen our democracy in motion with changes taking place in power at a much greater scale. This shows the positives of our democracy and that it is maturing.”

He adds that the country needed to take cognisance of external factors that are affecting or having an influence on the country. “We are living in a world that is turbulent where lots of change is taking place and we need to navigate this world. Europe is increasingly less interested in the developing world as a right wing is emerging. We are also watching developments in the United States (US) very closely. If Trump comes into power, it will change the manner in which we project ourselves. With Iran allowing Russia to launch operations into Syria we are seeing a new alignment of forces. All of these issues affect us.”

There are three fundamental issues related to the South African nation brand he says. “How the brand is managed, that is the reputation of the brand, how the brand is projected both locally and abroad, and what is it that is needed to be communicated about the brands.”

To answer these questions, the Forum split into workshops with delegates allocated to each. The subject of the workshops included: Cultural heritage, Tourism, Exports, and Governance and Social Cohesion.

Given the rich cultural diversity of South Africa, delegates in the Cultural Workshop were encouraged to make suggestions on how this area can feed and shape the overall identity of the nation. The Tourism Workshop encouraged delegates to reflect on what unique tourism offering South Africa can boast about, particularly in the different provinces, and to identify related opportunities.

Governance and Social Cohesion focused on the profile of the country in terms of governance Corporate South Africa when marketing the nation, while investments and exports explored how the province, metros and promotion agencies could collaborate.

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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