

Brand charity (false ideologies not sold separately)

 By [Matt Rose](#)

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South African consumers, like other westernised nations, are all too familiar with products and brands that seem to be affiliated with certain 'causes'. Don't get me wrong; I am not against philanthropy or charity, but after being exposed to Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek's commentary on this issue called "first as tragedy, then as farce", I felt deeply disturbed by this global marketing trend. [video]

The satisfaction of moral impulses through consumerism.

He explains that 'charity' is now a basic constituent of our economy, and notes that "this cheap, charitable optimism" is embarrassingly naive - corporate charitable acts do not solve pressing social issues; they merely prolong them. This gives rise to newer and more indirect forms of apartheid, as people make empty token gestures that seem to help temporarily but inevitably feed social inequality.

Charity is admirable, but it is also misdirected, because charitable giving doesn't address the root causes associated with social problem

Don't presume

If buying organic puts you to sleep at night, that is great! Just don't presume you are restoring to health the world.

Western-style consumers tend to purchase commodities that seem to make the world a better place

Here are a few examples:

- [Starbucks and Fair Trade coffee](#): Starbucks uses its fair-trading as a kind of battering ram to hammer on its competitors (namely, local cafes).
- [TOMS One for One Movement](#): a US shoe manufacturer that donates cheap cloth shoes to third-world countries for every pair of regular shoes it sells. This example reminds me of the



'teach a man to fish' parable. They need a true social investment, not a hand out.

- [KFC "Add Hope"](#): for an extra R2 to your R40, you can help starving children. Massive multinational corporations such as KFC are part of reason social inequalities, both social and environmental, exist at all!

Pacified sufficiently in a ideological sense

The fact that you are content to pay more for what you are rightfully entitled to anyway proves that you can be pacified sufficiently in a ideological sense.

I pay my R2 to "add hope", precisely so I can keep these social issues at a distance. But real solutions to social problems ought to be orchestrated by parties that don't stand to benefit from them.

Some of you might say, "Better than nothing."

I say, "Bah! Humbug!"

For more:

- Bizcommunity Opinion: [Why we need more Mandela Days](#) by Amelia Jones
- Bizcommunity Opinion: [Brand-building in the time of conspicuous conservation](#) by Mike Freedman
- Bizcommunity: [CSI news in brief](#)

For More list added at 5.19pm on 30 June 2011.

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ABOUT MATT ROSE

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