

The big themes on the 2014 brand radar

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Although the fundamentals of good branding practice endure, the landscape in which brand managers must champion their brands is increasingly volatile. Great brand managers need to hone their 'brand radars' to adapt and evolve their branding strategies accordingly.

My interactions with the academic literature, practitioners and colleagues suggest the following key trends:

1. Leveraging brands as a strategic tool to capture share in an increasingly competitive South African market

Low growth rates suggest that marketers are going to have to work harder for their share of the pie. This calls for brand managers to develop compelling brand positioning strategies aimed at rigorously selected target markets.

2. Building brand equity in new markets, with an emphasis on other African countries

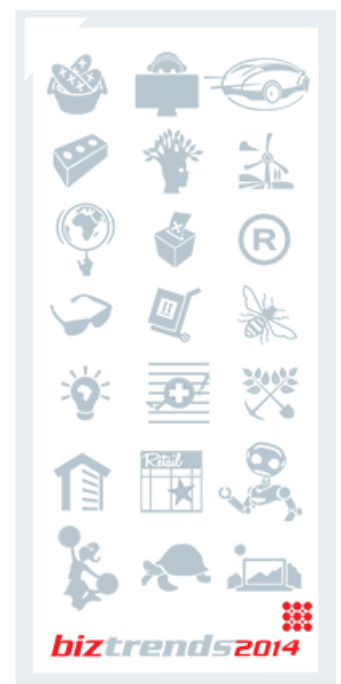
Despite reduced growth from China leading to a slowing of investment in emerging markets, Africa is seen as a hot proposition for global investors. The race to build relevant, differentiated brands that recognise variance within African markets is on!

3. Shaping brand reputation in social media

As social media consumption grows, savvy brand owners recognise that getting their game right in this space is not just a question of building brand awareness - it's also about managing brand risk. Brand custodians need to beware of outsourcing this critical branding capability.

4. Working to ensure that leadership and employee behaviour is 'on brand'

Creating brand equity is about much more than creating a pleasing promise. Savvy brand builders know that the organisation needs to walk the talk. This calls for much more than brand immersion programmes - it's about recognising that culture and brand are inextricably linked. And working with leadership to motivate all brand ambassadors to deliver the promise - to all stakeholders.



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