

Purpose filled brands will set the trends in 2022

 By [Andra Nel](#)

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As the year begins, it is a time when brands look ahead and uncover the 'what's next'. That 'secret ingredient' that will truly make them distinctive in their category, while also ensuring that they stay relevant from a consumer perspective. And, as we know this can be difficult, but what isn't difficult is understanding that only brands that are inherently purpose-led will have longevity.



Andra Nel, KFC CSI manager.

Gone are the days where success meant for brands to just be focused on good service or a great product to be profitable - and brand purpose would live as a nice to have. Today, consumers are clear on their expectations from the brands they support, demanding more - more accountability, more community involvement and more sustainability.

Being part of the solution is “good for business”

Consumers expect brands to solve societal problems, even more so than they expect for governments. What has become the popularised term, purpose-led, and for this to stick with consumers as a truly authentic reflection of what you stand for as a brand, it has to mean more than a new buzz word. It has to be intrinsically linked in all you do as an organisation, going beyond just creatively defining your purpose, both internally and externally. Starting at base zero, this means ensuring that every action and function is aligned to living up to that purpose promise.

For a brand to be purpose-led and seen to be purposeful, that purpose needs to be tied to the very core of everything you do and not just relevant to the way you do business but also to the challenges that the communities you operate in and the consumers that live in them are faced with. Consumers are consistently playing back that they will continue to increasingly make purchase decisions based on how much organisations contribute to solving the problems that are hampering the liberation of the potential that exists in society. Being part of the solution is not only the right thing to do but it is also good for business.



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Brands need to care about issues that matter to their consumers

Reality is that business cannot succeed in societies that fail. For brands to retain their relevance, they need to truly care about the issues that matter to their consumers. However, the opposite is also true, in an increasingly prevalent “cancel culture”, consumers will also choose to switch/avoid/boycott a brand based on its stance (or lack thereof) on societal issues.

While being purpose-led is not a new concept in marketing and branding, it has become a crucial benchmark for brands today, setting those brands that are only for the now, apart from those that will remain infinitely relevant.

In fact, while purpose filled brands can make a stronger connection with their consumers, their connection to their own business morals and performance will also be strengthened. Organisations that have purpose embedded into all that they do see higher levels of workforce retention, innovation and motivation. Fact is that employees want to work for an organisation that positively and consistently contributes to society.

For purpose to be more than just lip-service for your brand, whether from South Africa, Africa or around the world, there are a few fundamental principles that need to form a part of your purpose thinking:

1. Inside-out

Being a brand with purpose means that purpose truly is at the core of all you do. That it is the guiding light in all that you do and that it becomes the yard stick by which you measure your efforts in all spheres of the business.

2. Authenticity

It is crucial that when brands play in the CSI space, especially, remain authentic to the core value of the brand. The biggest mistake that a brand can make is assume that the consumers will not notice that what is portrayed as purpose is in fact just

smoke and mirrors and not engrained into the brand or organisation. Consumers cannot be fooled by words that are not backed up by real action.

Therefore, if you want people to know that you stand for a specific cause or message, be sure to show congruence with that through your actions.

3. Consistency

Consistency of message, action and implementation of your values. In an era where brands are chasing the latest consumer trend and buzz word, be the brand that stays true to what your purpose is, committed to making long-term and sustainable difference and impact.



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4. Shared values

While organisations and consumers may focus on their own challenges, there is a sweet spot where shared values and interests exist. Where these two spheres collide and brands and consumers can relate to one another based on what is truly material to them. In this symbiotic symphony, when one wins, both win and meaningful impact can be felt and experienced by all.

While South Africa has its fair share of societal challenges, even greater than that is the potential that exists. Look at the communities you operate in, look at what keeps your consumer up at night, look at doing what is right, beyond the profit margin as this is where brands find a purpose that will make them part of the solution.

As you start crafting plans and strategies for reaching targets in 2022, may you also add another layer to your thinking. May you explore what difference you truly want to make in the world. May you explore how you as an organisation can leave societies in a better space than where you found it and may you, as a functional part of this ecosystem, embrace the challenge of being truly purpose-led.

ABOUT ANDRA NEL

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