

The head, heart and hand of branding



By [Thabani Khumalo](#)

15 Oct 2009

The brand new world created by globalisation, informed citizenry and consumer's demand for brand experience presents a challenge for global brands to balance their aggressive marketing campaigns with social responsibility.

The world's most powerful and wealthy brands have turned the planet and people's greatest enemies. Their crimes range from the obesity epidemic, environmental destruction, exploitation of water resources, abuses of workers' rights, price fixing, exploitative wages, pollution, cultural imperialism to unethical and inhumane behaviour.

Human rights campaigners accuse transnational brands of using billions worth of marketing budgets to promote their brands using ruthless, unethical and inhumane tactics. This is done to penetrate markets, protect their market shares, influence consumers' behaviour and ensure that they remain leading global brands. In the process, brands undermine personal autonomy, manipulate social values to create consumerism, promote waste, accelerate environmental degradation, undermine laws and violate human rights.

Balance

The brand new world created by globalisation, informed citizenry and consumer's demand for brand experience presents a challenge for global brands to balance their aggressive marketing campaigns with social responsibility.

Consumers are looking for trusted brands with real provenance, heritage and authenticity - brands that represent and respect consumer's needs, challenges, aspirations, cultures and values. Today's public is looking for service and satisfaction in different ways, so companies are no longer selling a breakfast cereal, soft drink, or a car anymore.

But they are providing a customer experience from the moment the need and want has been recognised to well beyond the actual purchase. Along with this experience is the knowledge in the customer's mind that they have acquired a product that cares for continued sustainability through attention to economic, environmental, and social performance.

In today's world, a "brand with a purpose" needs to go through three stages of brand development, namely the head, heart, and hand of brand.

The head of branding

Huge financial resources are allocated to think-tank brand marketing strategies and tactics which include market research, developing and testing new brands, competitor analysis and producing creative marketing campaigns to influence

consumer brand preference, secure the share of the market and generate brand profit. Companies even use their financial muscle to buy influential events, associations and celebrities to force their brands into passionate followers and admirers.

While brands go all out to make their logos and slogans visible and products acceptable, consumers, critics and interested parties are starting to scrutinise and question their strategies and tactics, brand experience and effectiveness, corporate brand values, and personnel behind the brand.

The heart of branding

Brands at this stage have realised that a huge investment on brand marketing can only promote brand awareness, but cannot build brand loyalty.

Brands are then opening their hearts to humanity and thus positioning themselves on an ethical platform. They are embracing the highest ethical values and prioritise sound principles of marketing ethics such as transparency, humility, honesty, human values, legal compliance, respect for consumers' rights, access to information and privacy, and fair business.

And the emphasis is the balance between brand principles, brand profit and community development.

The hand of branding

During this stage, brands are positioned as an element of corporate citizenship and a tactic to contribute in the day-to-day challenges of customers and communities.

In their quest to earn trust, credibility and good citizenship status, brands turn on lending their hands to their communities' programmes of development, fighting crimes, providing education, and of providing basic resources and services, rather than have people buy them through advertisements and advertorials.

To achieve success and sustainability, brands have a duty to act honestly, humanly and ethically in their dealings with communities. Responsible brands are the responsible business of the future. I can't wait for 2009 Encyclopedia of Brands & Branding, South Africa's annual guide to the country's leading [brands and branding](#) trends that launches on 28 October 2009!

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