

Who and what is Brand South Africa?

Do we as South Africans know what is expected from us to help build Brand South Africa?

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I am still battling to understand the mandate and role of Brand South Africa (International Marketing Council) - "Alive with Possibilities" and South African Tourism - "It's Possible". Until very recently, both these organisations had their own logos and taglines. This in itself was not only confusing, counterproductive and conveyed contradictory messages, because each one of these bodies has their own agenda, budget and mandate! A suggestion is to arrange a marriage/merger between these organisations into ONE body to market, profile and position South Africa to all its Stakeholders (tourist, business people, other governments, locals, media and SA government - who is funding them). This will eliminate/minimise confusion, increase effectiveness of their actions with greater results and credibility.

The majority of South Africans do not even know what Brand South Africa is and what they want to achieve. With all brands, the most important ingredient/element/enabler, is the people who work for that brand; directly or indirectly. Employees of any company are the mirror, the "moment of truth" and the touch point of that brand with its stakeholders. Brand owners develop their strategies and action plans in such a way that the consumer experience what the brand stand for, or represent by engaging with the employees who works for that particular brand (at least I assume). The employees bring the values, intrinsic qualities and essence of the brand to life. If your employees are not on board your entire brand strategy will not deliver the desired results or stated objectives.

If this is true for commercial, consumer and everyday-life brands, then the same principles and approach should and must apply to Brand South Africa. We are less than two months away from the FIFA 2010 World Cup and our people don't know first of all, how to treat our visitors when they arrive, whether the visitors are in Polokwane, Pretoria, Prieska or Port Elizabeth. There is no unified, standard or ideal experience of what we want visitors to have or take away with them, when they arrive here and ultimately leave South Africa, after the tournament. In order to build a brand - you must have a sound, practical and implementable strategy, which has consistency at all its touch points - by the most important element of the brand - its PEOPLE.

Visitors to our country are coming to Africa. They are not coming to Durban, Joburg or Bloemfontein. Apart from the activities at the various stadia; they should have a memorable and lasting experience when they engage with Brand South Africa, which are the people of South Africa. You and I are Brand South Africa. Apart from the attempts by some companies on how to say hello in different languages; ±90% of South Africans do not know what the objectives and expectations are for Brand South Africa. The South African people can make or break the experience of visitors to our country, during the World Cup and beyond. From their arrival at OR Tambo Airport or Cape Town International, each citizen in this country must have a clear understanding of what it is that is expected of them to contribute in building Brand South Africa for generations to come..

The World Cup will come and go and we expect tourist to return, but most South Africans have no idea of how exactly to act as far as being hosts, entertain and enhance the experience of visitors to our country. This is not a get-rich-quick-solution, as seen and reported in various media, regarding the hype around the World Cup. If we don't do it right, the outcome and implications will speak for itself.

Brand South Africa and South Africa Tourism are not just logos with fancy taglines...its You and Me, the people who need to make the brand come alive and deliver on the stated objectives, as outlined by the bodies who are responsible for marketing, positioning and profiling this awesome country of ours.

Soccer Friday's is a great idea...but South Africans need tangible things/activities/solutions/education material to empower

us, on how best to engage with the visitors to our country, keeping in mind ,what we want to achieve as a collective.
One brand that speaks to the business community (investors), consumers and all other stakeholders as identified by South African Tourism and International Marketing Council.
South Africa is ready and hungry for ONE BRAND, ONE TAGLINE, TOTAL INVOLVEMENT AND BUY-IN FROM ALL SOUTH AFRICANS - AFTERALL WE ARE BRAND SOUTH AFRICA....

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