

CMO Council survey to evidence SA private sector commitment to ESG and sustainability progress

Under the umbrella of Brand South Africa's *Play Your Part* programme, a new CMO Council initiative in 2023 will audit, identify, and showcase corporate best practices and successes in blending self-interest with altruism in the country.



Source: © 123rf [123rf](#) a new CMO Council initiative in 2023 will audit, identify, and show case corporate best practices and successes in blending self-interest with altruism in the country

Increasingly, there is pressure on brands, particularly those doing business in emerging markets, to be cause-committed, truthful, authentic, community-engaged, and morally and culturally aligned with how they can help the planet and society as a whole.

The survey will evidence private sector commitment to ESG and sustainability progress, the benefits of CSI spend, and the value realised from improving the well-being of people, communities, living conditions, and micro-economies in the country.

It will help Brand South Africa highlight the innovation, vibrancy, inclusivity, and effectiveness of business with a purpose in the country. And establish corporate South Africa and multi-nationals doing business here as best practice leaders worldwide and a positive reflection on the Nation Brand.



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11 Dec 2023



Areas of discovery

Areas of discovery (primary and secondary research) and discussion with chief marketers and reputation leaders in South Africa (and abroad) will include:

- Level of commitment, progress and comparative success by different types and size of companies (domestic and foreign) operating in South Africa.
- Areas of priority, focus and achievement relative to addressing societal needs – empowerment, education, training, housing, healthcare, safety, security, essential service delivery, infrastructure, entrepreneurship, community

development, diversity, sustainability, and the environment.

- Forces and factors influencing and elevating CSI strategies – shareholder/stakeholder pressure, social media voice, increased governance, research studies, corporate conscience, brand reputation, business value, socioeconomic concerns, special interest groups/NGOs, etc.
- Level of activation and engagement of key audiences and stakeholders in the organisational ecosystem, including employees, supply chain, distribution/service network and customer base.
- Outcomes and progress relative to balancing corporate concern for people, planet, and profit – any indicators, metrics or analytics evidencing or underscoring the theme of Doing Better by Doing Good.
- Identification and recognition of those corporates leading the way and setting the pace as standouts, innovators and flag-bearers playing their part in South Africa's upliftment of disadvantaged communities, at-risk constituencies, and general societal and environmental conditions.
- Issues, challenges, complexities, and ROI/impact associated with Ethical Branding policies and practices; how to achieve organisational buy-in, participation and ownership.
- Benefits of delivering on an ethical brand promise or claim; ensuring corporate behaviour and brand authenticity is true, trusted, and transparent.



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7 Dec 2023



Three categories of companies

Outreach, conversations, and online engagement will take place across three categories of companies that are represented on the CMO Council:

1. South African multinationals in banking, telecoms, retail, manufacturing, insurance, food and beverages, business process outsourcing, IT services, digital media, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, etc.
2. Foreign multinationals in financial services, automotive, FMCG, information technology, digital media, professional services, consulting, travel, hospitality, industrial systems, and health care products.
3. Locally based and internally focused South African enterprises and emerging growth companies across all business and industry sectors.

Key tactical and budgetary components

Key tactical and budgetary components include:

- Strategic partnership formalization and announcement; media and LinkedIn groups.
- Outreach to more than 1,000 marketing leaders in SA; email and messaging.
- Campaign branding with dedicated program page and call outs on CMO Council website
- Curation of third-party research and data points on CSI and CSR in SA.
- Audit of CMO Council member involvement and commitment to CSI
- Best practice interviews with brand leading CMOs selected by CMO Council.
- Content development in different digital formats for global consumption.
- GTM – Content publication, promotion, and affiliate syndication worldwide.
- Targeted email marketing, PR, social media/LinkedIn group postings.
- Blogs, podcasts and online discussion forums.
- On regional web conference and on-demand webcast.
- Marketing roundtables and/or dinner dialogues.
- Selection and recognition of leaders and innovators.

Global findings

The CMO Council recently polled its global members on what they viewed as the essential benefit of making a stand as an ethical brand and evidencing corporate social responsibility in business.

Findings indicate most senior marketers believe the biggest gain will come from furthering customer relationships and brand affinity:

- Customer preference/trust: 62%
- Employee affinity/loyalty: 28%
- Financial performance/gain: 6%
- Investor confidence/support: 4%

Responsibility for corporate ESG (environmental, social, governmental) and sustainability mapping and tracking is somewhat like ownership of customer experience (CX) in the enterprise.

Defused across multiple lines of business, functional siloes and operational areas. Unfortunately, real ESG accountability and accurate reporting are still a work in progress for companies of all sizes.

Another CMO Council poll of its members on LinkedIn earlier this year reveals 84% of marketing leaders believe CMOs should be a pivotal leader and at the forefront of organisational strategy, delivery, adherence, and brand communications around the ESG mandate.

A lesser 11% view CMOs as part of a team. Only a handful see the CMOs on the sidelines or not involved.

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