

What is a brand and how do you go about building a better one?

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A brand is more than a logo, more than a name, more than an identity and more than a product, author, business and marketing innovator Donna Rachelson said this week in Johannesburg. Rachelson, who was speaking at Meetings Africa 2011 in Sandton, said a brand is the accumulation of perceptions residing in the minds of the market.

All the brands have a personality, according to Rachelson, and these personalities include arousing emotion. "A brand such as Outsurance arouses a lot of emotion in me every time I am driving due to the way its pointmen make traffic much better."

Rachelson is the author of *Branding and Marketing You*, and has also worked previously for Nando's.

"Consistent in fulfilling expectations"

"Great brands are consistent in fulfilling expectations, Rachelson said, citing Coca-Cola as a 'solid' brand example fitting this pattern. "Great brands have special meaning for their target market. Brands ignite passion, and it doesn't matter whether it is a human being or a product."

She said great characteristics of the brand include being energetic, passionate, respectful and powerful, dynamic and dedicated. "Google is a very important and dedicated CV in our lives and it will never lie," she pointed out.

"Remember that if you don't make efforts and take responsibility to build your brand, others will do that for you. And how do you go about building a better brand?"

Rachelson explained: "First, ensure that it is positioned as high as possible and as unique as possible. It must be distinctive and be able to stand out." She also reminded companies to ensure that their brands are positioned in the way that they boast a sense of uniqueness, greatest strength and a competitive edge.

"Understand what your specialisation is"

"You must also ensure that you understand what your specialisation is. It does not matter which field you operate in, you can become a specialist. Understand your personal values because this forms the core of values and beliefs of your brand."

And lastly, she said, a brand must be able to leave a legacy, be able to live for its clients, have a unique selling proposition

and take a stand. "A brand is a bundle of perceptions and if you don't take responsibility for building and marketing your brand effectively, you will never be successful," she concluded.

Just a few metres away where Rachelson spoke, a buoyant exhibition session was taking place, with more than 200 companies displaying their products while some visitors and buyers were busy networking and creating connections - a series of relationships organisers are hoping will last beyond this year's event.

Meetings Africa 2011, a business tourism marketing platform which aims to expose local and international buyers to the range of services and products in Southern Africa's MICE (meetings, incentives, conference, exhibitions) industry, is being hosted by South African Tourism. CEO Thandiwe January-McClean said the event is an invaluable opportunity for the entire African and South Africa business community to interact and explore mutual benefit opportunities.

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ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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