

Africa Centre of Excellence in Marketing launched

In a joint initiative, Coca-Cola South Africa and Wits Business School (WBS), last night, Thursday, 15 April 2010, launched the Africa Centre of Excellence in Marketing in Parktown, Johannesburg, South Africa. The R4 million project will support the continent's marketing industry on numerous levels, including raising African marketers' skills and enhancing the continent's business sustainability.

 By [Issa Siki da Silva](#) 16 Apr 2010

The project will introduce a Master's Degree in Strategic Marketing next year and aims to connect with the rest of Africa.

Marriage between brands

Speaking at the launch, Prof Mthuli Ncube, Wits University's Dean of commerce law and management, said, "We are delighted because we have come a long way about this project.

"This is the marriage between two great brands which will complement each other. Marketing spend is a good investment. This project will strengthen marketing and move it forward as an important discipline in Africa."

In a continent challenged by social injustice and inequality, armed conflict, corruption and poverty, African people are well-known for forcing their way into entrepreneurship in order to survive. But the lack of sustainability and marketing know-how has been hampering their progress in this field.

This is one of the areas that Africa's Centre of Excellence in Marketing will be focusing on.

Pan-African vision

Prof Ncube pointed out: "Our vision is a truly pan-African one, and we aim at monitoring sustainability - something that is badly needed in our continent. We will also be looking at developing case studies across Africa and connect with various continental institutions."

Coca-Cola SA president William Egbe - who is originally from Cameroon - emphasised the importance of creating an African chair of marketing, saying the lessons learnt by his company from operating in every African country will be employed in support of the work of the chair.

"We will increase the knowledge and skills base of professionals and students in the marketing arenas through education, training and research and development," he explained.

"This chair will form the basis of broad movement and an exciting platform to accelerate the level of skills. We will also build bridges between institutions to speed up the pace of transformation and education in Africa."

Building communities

Asked how Coca-Cola stands to benefit from this project, Egbe replied: "We will look for marketing talent

every day and we will reinforce the building of communities' sustainability when building our brand. African entrepreneurship needs to go beyond trading," he said.

African marketers, who have increasingly become frustrated by the CEOs and senior management's lack of understanding of marketing politics and cross-function collaboration, must become more accountable if companies have to move forward, newly appointed marketing chair and head of the centre, Geoff Bick said.

Bick also said that the centre will do its best to bring in more students from the rest of Africa, and enhance the understanding of marketing techniques in developing markets.

Bick, who will soon relinquish his post of academic director at WBS and concentrate fully on his new position, said he will drive Africa's marketing research, leadership and brand fields, and lead the chair as a whole.

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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