

Building Brand Africa through its strengths

Africa is a continent rich in natural and human capital resources, but its biggest asset by far is the diversity, warmth, friendliness, generosity, humility and humanity of its people. This was the inspiration for the official slogan of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, 'Ke Nako. Celebrate Africa's Humanity'.

 By [Thabani Khumalo](#) 25 May 2010

The 2010 Soccer World Cup has created a wonderful PR platform for Africa to build an African brand identity that reflects the continent's economic diversity, entrepreneurial aspirations, sporting excellence, increasing investment, economic growth, and greater stability. Hosting the 2010 WC also presented the continent with an opportunity to take charge of the management of the continent's brand.

Brand managed by foreigners

Africans mourn about why Brand Africa is misunderstood, mysterious, marginalised and perceived negatively by global communities. Although some African countries have done exceptionally well in developing, packaging and communicating themselves as brands, they alone cannot avoid being contaminated by the continent's dismal image and lousy reputation.

The current Brand Africa is being promoted with influence, creativity and passion by foreign countries, donor agencies and most prominently by aid celebrities such as Sir Bob Geldof and Sir Bono. Unfortunately, such campaigns have created a perception of a continent that is beyond hope, devastated by poverty, occupied by disease and death, engulfed in conflict and wars, plagued by corruption and incompetency, and has no coherent solutions to its challenges and aspirations.

Brand Africa should showcase Africa's strengths

This negative picture is created despite the continent's stupendous resources that have been proved incomparable with the others. With her natural resources - dense rich forest, snow-capped mountains, rivers, lakes, endangered animals, mineral wealth, world-class eco-tourism destinations, globally-renowned African heritage and fertile soil, Africa should be perceived as a land of wealth.

Africa has declared zero tolerance for undemocratic practices, corruption, wars, and human rights records are improving. The continent has also produced great leaders, best athletes and outstanding economic opportunities for global businesses. Above all, the continent is populated by friendly people from diverse cultural backgrounds who are keen to welcome visitors and investors. Such advantages need to be packaged and managed as a means to create a new Brand Africa based on Africa's strengths, stability and self-sustainability.

One Africa, one brand

True nation-branding is a complex and involved exercise that requires strategies to 'harmonise' the brand message across African countries and communicating the message internally as well as externally. Currently, there are too many uncoordinated, incoherent, inconsistent and competing brand building messages about Africa. It is not the question of whether or not African countries and role players are making

impacts, but suggesting that all parties, through the African Union, need to jointly mobilise their resources to deliver one representative brand building strategy.

There needs to be one brand, one thread, one point of view and one marketing effort that send out one message to all international platforms while still maintaining the different appeals of each of the 54 African countries.

World Cup, a missed opportunity

I think that the 2010 World Cup is a missed opportunity to inspire possibility; connect that possibility with opportunity and cultivate a new and sustainable momentum of reality for Africa and Africans. Brand Africa is in need of a change if Africa is to take its rightful place in world markets.

Without a radical positive Brand Africa development led by the African Union, the AU's vision of "an efficient and effective Africa Union for a new Africa" will remain a pipe dream.

ABOUT THABANI KHUMALO

Thabani Khumalo is a researcher, writer and commentator with various radio stations and newspapers and MD of Think Tank Marketing Services, a marketing, communication and media consultancy. Contact him on +27 (0)83 587 9207, tel +27 (0)31 301 2461 or email ttms.ystd@telkomsa.net.
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