

Brands and branding for good in an insecure world



By [Issa Sikiti da Silva](#)

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The world is changing. From Internet advertising revenues upstaging TV advertising revenues in the UK last year to xenophobic violence, South Africa's successful 2010 FIA World Cup to reduced global competitiveness, inadequate leadership, global recession and corruption, among others, delegates attending the Brands & Branding for Good conference currently underway at the Hilton Hotel in Johannesburg were told.



"A whole lot more complicated"

"Suddenly managing brands becomes a whole lot [more] complicated," Ignite MD and conference chairman Paul Bannister said this morning. "And what does that mean for our brands because the market has to absorb all the things I am talking about?"

In the face of these changing and unsecure patterns, especially the reduced global competitiveness that affects brand prosperity, Bannister urged South Africans to work together with other countries to increase competitiveness.

"We are living in a world of reduced global competitiveness. Forty-nine million people in SA are not enough to compete on a global level. We need to team up with SADC countries to increase competitiveness in the region," he said.

"Accumulated steps are driving real change"

"We are on a journey, and sometimes we don't know where we are going," Leslie Pascaud, Paris-based director for responsible marketing practice of global company Added Value Group, said. "Innovation and sustainability may be the same every year, but the depth is changing. A year is gone by seemingly without a lot of progress, but yet at micro level accumulated steps are driving real change."

The second annual Brands & Branding for Good conference's theme is 'marketing in a shifting world'. Close to 20 international and local speakers will try hard in the next two days to unpack the complexity of key matters regarding

sustainable practices and branding with purpose. At the same time, speakers will also perhaps provide some guidance as to how organisations can consolidate their brands in the current uncertain environment without losing the plot on green values.

"Business has changed and it is no longer what it is used to be," Freedthinkers' Dale Williams said, adding that there is a huge shift in the relationship between businesses and communities.

"A new view is emerging"

"Things have gone wrong, but as we are now living in a world of transparency we need to make amends wary that our brands are always under scrutiny," Williams urged. "A new view is emerging. We can't live in the world and take it for granted. Healthy businesses need healthy societies and healthy societies need a healthy ecosystem."

But, despite the picture of the future not looking rosy, Pascaud believes different organisations have begun to take the road to sustainability, including SA consumers, who seemingly have begun to care and demonstrate a range of sustainable attitudes and behaviours.

"We have to make people understand that their environment is their future economic prospect," Pascaud pointed out, adding that there is a huge difference between innovation and sustainability.

Saturated with connectedness

In a world saturated with connectedness, Pascaud urged organisations to include an impact assessment up front, dial down the fluff and dial up reality, give greater importance to stakeholders and opinion leaders, and put in place an iterative process to ensure the product or service reality delivers on objectives.

In addition to this, she recommended that organisations take a slightly different approach to consumer input to avoid over-claim and address sensitivity to greenwash.

Williams added: "Don't just do good for the sake of doing good, but for the context of the world we are living in. Good business journeys start from the inside."

For more:

- Bizcommunity Search: [Brands & Branding for Good](#)
- Official site: www.brandsandbrandingconference.co.za
- Conference twitterfall: brandconference.webnow.co.za
- Twitter search: [#BBG2010 OR "Brands & Branding for Good" OR "Brands and Branding for Good"](#)
- Added Value: [Sustainable innovation: marketers should dial down the fluff](#)

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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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