

# Brand before marketing



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A name in itself does not constitute a brand. A brand is a living component which needs its own identity, purpose, character and personality. Many businesses often start marketing their products immediately after they have developed a name and a logo. They regard the brand as the "fluffy stuff" until they are placed in a position to unpack the brand into something more than just their products. A company's IP starts with a brand or else it becomes a meaningless entity.

Customers purchasing decisions start with the brand. The success of iconic global brands like Coca-Cola, Apple, Nike, Google, Samsung is not because of their products but mainly due to the brand equity they have built with their consumers over a period of time. It's about consistently positioning their brand in front of their consumers that ultimately translates into revenue. A consistent face to your brand helps build familiarity, trust and brand value.

Marketing on the other hand is the vehicle you would use to take your brand promise to market. It connects both the emotional and functional aspects of your brand to your customer. Marketing sells your products to the end consumer. Your brand should then be an intrinsic part of all your products. But don't be mistaken your brand is not your product.



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The world is changing from transactions to engagement. Today brands are created by consumers not by the company. Technology has enabled brands to get more intimate with consumers. Nike does not sell shoes, they sell the experience, the feeling, the aspiration. They are participatory and have created tribes and communities of people who have a vested interest in the brand. Nike goes beyond its normal marketing activity to ensure that it embodies all that is synonymous with running. Nike is running. The intrinsic brand values and vision is part of their DNA and every touchpoint with the customer is immersed in deep meaning. Brands would need to actively demonstrate and communicate a reason for being.

I engage with Uber and Takealot on my mobile. Yes it's an App but as a consumer I choose which brand stays close to me. The challenge for brands is to find ways to be more of a utility in consumer's lives, to be more meaningful and relevant not only to break through the clutter but to drive shared value in the consumer space.

Brands are going through a revolution beyond just being a visual identity. As technology evolves, brands are expected to be more, to do more. They need to show their *true colours* to stand out from the crowd. "Marketing gimmicks" is no longer a draw card. Instead brands need to reveal their vulnerabilities to capture hearts and wallets. Technology closes the gap between brand and consumer and creates an opportunity for brands to get closer to customers in a more intimate way.

All this means that brands need to re-evaluate their reason for being and find a cohesive approach to connect to their consumers in an authentic meaningful way. Customers are moving faster into the future and brands need to come up with a new plan to stay relevant.

## ABOUT AUDREY NAIDOO

I am a professional marketer working with full experience in both traditional and digital marketing. In my current role within Absa, I am responsible for all things digital including influencing and managing the group digital media investment. Focus areas include optimisation of all campaigns, insights driven marketing, innovation and thought leadership. I am a publisher and really passionate about marketing in the future and enabling marketers to upskill and understand the environment we operate in. I freelance on a part-time basis.

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