

Brand Commune 2018 uncovers whether business purpose is measurable

The annual Brand Commune took place on 19 June 2018 in Johannesburg presented by the Brand Council South Africa (BCSA) to uncover the potential point to purpose for South African brands.

“ Sizakele Marutlulle *‘it’s not about where business is headed it’s about where people are headed, that’s the future we need to understand in order to define purpose’* [#brandcommune2018](#) [#point2purpose](#) [pic.twitter.com/wymrOnlq1N](#) — Brand Council SA (@BrandCouncilSA) [June 19, 2018](#) ”

Is there a point to business purpose when it comes to the advertising and marketing efforts for South African brands? Until recently, it’s been questionable whether the concept of ‘purpose’ has the potential to create tangible value for businesses in the long-term.

Anyone and everyone from advertising and marketing, brand, and business arenas was invited to join in this discussion, led by Sipho Hlongwane, a prolific journalist, consummate editor, writer, and managing editor of *The Daily Vox*.

Is business purpose measurable?

The overall objective of the event was to discover whether business purpose is merely a fad or the thing that will propel our brands into the future. With his keen interest in the key conference topic, Hlongwane gave delegates and speakers ample opportunity to engage on whether business purpose is measurable, if it adds an additional layer of complexity to our strategy, how it translates to business practice, and most importantly, how it will impact profitability.

The conference also included an exciting line up of speakers from both the business and creative industries, each of whom hosted meaningful, thought-provoking conversations. Among these speakers was Mxolisi Mgojo (CEO Exxaro), Dr Sean McCoy (founder of HLKM), Heidi Brauer (chief marketing officer, Hollard, Chartered Marketer - SA), Pepe Marais (Joe Public United group chief creative officer), and Sizakele Marutlulle (Ceo and founder Marutlulle + C/O), while Sithembile Ntombela (general manager: marketing, Brand South Africa) joined in the panel discussion.

Each of the speakers brought their own strengths, authentic flavour, and experiences to the conversation, highlighting unique facets of purpose, discussing what this means to their experience, and how they see the future unfolding.

For instance, Mxolisi Mgojo spoke about the role of purpose in leadership, brand and reputation, saying that relevance should be the driving force behind purpose. During his talk, he highlighted the very real need to align the values of business

with stakeholders, saying that while these parties will inevitably be uncomfortable when you start doing anything different, you must stick to it.

Culture, brand and purpose

Says Mgojo, “Never before has purpose been so important in shaping the leadership narrative and behaviour and ensuring that we translate this into appropriate and relevant governance and business practice. We have a duty to be responsible, to serve and to leave this world a better place than we found it.”

We also heard from Dr Sean McCoy and Heidi Brauer, who spoke about ‘Culture, brand and purpose’. According to the pair, the act of following purpose is born out of leadership, company values, and corporate culture. It’s more than a poster on a wall. Says McCoy and Brauer, “It’s a rallying cry that comes from the very heart of the company, framed by its people-centric culture and informed by its very DNA. It is purpose that drives a company’s compelling brand positioning and execution.”

We also heard from Pepe Marais about how to find your greater purpose. Sharing from his personal journey towards uncovering purpose, he spoke inspirationally on how this journey led to interrogating the status quo of the modern approach to business.

Purpose aligns your brands to its users

According to Sizakele Marutlulle, “Future-facing brands no longer speak of consumer-centricity, but rather human-centricity because while we are consumers some of the time, we are human all of the time.” Marutlulle went on to explain how practitioners must speak truth to those clients who think ‘purpose’ is just another buzzword that will pass or is a “soft” matter that ‘marketing’ must handle.

In fact, purpose aligns your brands to its users and in a distinctive way, enables your brand to move at the speed of culture.

As each speaker came forward, a different nuance of business purpose was highlighted, giving everyone who attended the conference a challenging and inspiring look into the point behind this new concept.

Says, Leigh-Anne Acquisto, chairperson BCSA, “It is with the greatest humility and gratitude that we thank all of those who contributed to and attended the event. The conference was an astounding success, the speakers were of the highest calibre and spoke authentically, and we’re still receiving compliments regarding the conversations that were facilitated.”

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