



BRAND SUMMIT
South Africa
2018 REPORT



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The Brand Summit South Africa team, from left to right: Nadeem Petersen, Kurt Wilson, Babongile Dlamini, Jeandré Leslie, Lesley Schroeder-McLean, Solly Moeng (Convenor) and Jessica Jones.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	1
THE CALL OF DUTY	3
THE POWER OF PERCEPTION	5
CHECKING THE SELL-BY DATE	6
RIDING THE BRAND ROLLERCOASTER	7
LOST AND FOUND	9
SUMMIT OVERVIEW: REIMAGINING SOUTH AFRICA	11
THE RAINMAKERS	13
HITTING THE HEADLINES	15
A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME	17
THE VIEW FROM THE NORTH	21
CO-CREATING A BRAND	23
A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY	27
KEEPING THE PROMISE	29
THE STARS SHINE BRIGHTLY	31
PARTNERS	35



FOREWORD

Solly Moeng (Summit Convenor)

The successful launch of the much-anticipated Brand Summit South Africa at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, in May 2018, heralded the formation of a new, private-sector-led, platform for discussing South Africa's evolving image and identifying ways to enhance the country's attractiveness for foreign direct investments, leisure and business tourism, foreign students, scarce skills needed to grow the economy, other foreign exchange earning opportunities and general goodwill.

Over the next few years, this annual event will morph into the more pan-African "Africa Brand Summit", which will cover the same issues from a continental perspective. Ultimately, it aims to:

- Identify the phenomena that inform, and therefore shape, perceptions about South Africa (in the case of the current "Brand Summit South Africa") and the broader African continent (in the case of the more pan-African "Africa Brand Summit").
- Identify ways to reclaim and control the narrative.

South Africa competes with other nation brands in the region and around the world for goodwill and other economy-boosting opportunities. Mindful of the vital link between these opportunities and the country's need to create and grow a truly inclusive economy, the 2018 Summit interrogated South Africa's preparedness, from an image and reputational perspective, to meet the challenges it faces. Many of these challenges have accumulated in the past 10 years, following the removal of former President Thabo Mbeki from office and the arrival of his successor, former President Jacob Zuma.

Underpinning the rationale for our thematic discussions is, on the one hand, the acknowledgement that country brands are complex and get shaped by developments in various areas – including politics, the economy and social issues – and, on the other hand, the obligation to place a spotlight on the considerable reputational ramifications and impacts of state capture and other forms of corruption on South Africa's social and economic wellbeing.

Developments in the years since former President Mbeki's departure led to the weakening of South Africa's moral leadership on a number of important regional and global issues. Other impacts included weakened citizen morale, as well as declining taxpayer and investor confidence, all of which led to markedly diminished tax revenue for the state, weakening the government's ability to adequately deliver services to communities around the country. The unprecedented use of race for political gain by post-apartheid political leaders, which reached its zenith following the appointment of Bell Pottinger to drive a wedge between blacks and whites, also did much damage to a social fabric that many felt had begun to heal.

All of these developments materially affect South Africa's domestic and global reputation because South Africans and others in the diaspora, worried about the developments at home, could no longer be trusted to be positive ambassadors of the country's global efforts to attract foreign investments and retain the general goodwill that it used to enjoy under the presidency of Nelson Mandela and, to some extent, Thabo Mbeki.

OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE OF THE BRAND SUMMIT SOUTH AFRICA

Twenty-four years after the dawn of democratic South Africa and five presidents later – including an interim one – a lot has happened to unravel the tapestry of the “rainbow nation” which earned South Africa the world’s admiration.

The inaugural Brand Summit South Africa enabled our delegates to:

- Begin understanding how South Africa is perceived at home, in the rest of Africa, and in other parts of the world (current nation brand image).
- Understand what it is currently associated with and known for, domestically and globally (current nation brand image).
- Identify what shapes perceptions about South Africa’s nation brand.
- Discuss South Africa’s brand narratives; that is, the messages that are being received, at home and abroad, about the country, how these get sent out and how they inform the narrative of the nation brand image.
- Identify key South African brands that particularly affect the country’s image.
- Globally benchmark South Africa against other nation brands, especially its middle-income-country peers, in Africa and elsewhere.
- Discuss global best practice in nation brand building and management.
- Facilitate discussions about an ideal brand South Africa; what we would like South Africa to be known for and associated with (brand identity).
- Recognise, award and celebrate influencers that make South Africa shine.

The Summit presentations and panel discussions were divided into themes (Project Good Hope, Business, Politics, Community, and Global Benchmarking) to enable us to consider the role played by influencers in each sector in shaping perceptions about South Africa. This report summarises the key discussion points and recommendations from each presentation and panel discussion.

In addition to the discussions, the Summit screened messages sent from a number of foreign delegates from as far afield as Budapest (Hungary), Beijing (China) and New Delhi (India) who were unable to attend.

The 2018 Brand Summit South Africa culminated in a Gala Awards Dinner at which positive perception influencers were acknowledged. The highest award of the Summit, the “Influencer of Influencers Award”, was conferred to Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng and Professor Thuli Madonsela, former Public Protector of South Africa, for pushing back against the deeds of those who harmed South Africa’s image. (See pages 31-34 for more about the gala.)

Hopefully, these winners and the discussions during the Summit will inspire others to champion South Africa’s brand. After all, as ambassadors of our country, we all have a role to play in enhancing its image and ensuring its success on the global stage.





THE CALL OF DUTY

Speaker: Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng

The Chief Justice opened the proceedings with a stirring challenge to all South Africans: hold power to account.

In most constitutional democracies, the chief justice is a dispassionate, cautious voice – sometimes even a forbiddingly severe one. Not in South Africa. Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng opened the Brand Summit South Africa with a fiery keynote address crammed with emotion, wit and provocation.

The core of his message was that South Africans need to grow up and take responsibility. Only we can revive our democracy and our economic and reputational wellbeing. “You need to see yourselves, and the company that you keep, as solution bearers.”

Mogoeng was unsparing in his description of the decay of South Africa’s global image in recent years. “We have become known as the country of the corrupt,” he said, “of lazy people with an amazing entitlement syndrome. We have become known as a divided people – as an unstable nation that deserves to be downgraded to the level of junk.”

He decried the fact that our political culture allows for the election of leaders whose suitability for high office goes unexamined until they assume power. In a sharp dig at former President Jacob Zuma, he asked in a tone of bemused outrage: “Why is it that while I was interviewed for two days before I got my job, the head of state was never interviewed or challenged?”

Mogoeng did acknowledge the major achievements of the ANC government to date and of our collective triumph during the peaceful transition to democracy. “A lot has been done. Housing, electrification, schools, some land restitution, strong institutions.

“South Africa is a beautiful country,” he said. “It is the country of Nelson Mandela; a country where love, caring and forgiveness is abundant. We are a very resilient people who, against all odds, managed to become the constitutional democracy we are. There was no civil war. We have regular elections, broadly and substantially free, fair and credible.”

“It’s not about the law. The law is there. It’s about how much we do to penetrate the minds and hearts of our people.”

But we could not ignore the rot in our governance during the Zuma era, said Mogoeng. Nor could we absolve ourselves of our partial culpability for that decline. “Mediocrity has, in certain respects, set in while we were not watching. Where were you when it happened? Were you vigilant?”

The key, Mogoeng said, is to return to our democracy’s foundational text as a route to recovery. “So that we, in the words of the preamble to the Constitution, can recognise the injustices of our past, honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land, respect those who have worked to build and develop our country, and believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.”



Mogoeng identified three different forms of evasive thinking in contemporary South Africa – all of which served to delay progress. “One of the difficulties is that some of us no longer want to recognise the injustices of the past. There are others who remember and think only about the past. Others say we should focus on what is happening now, that the past is in the distance.”

It was not enough, he said, to simply dismiss the reconciliation efforts of the transition period as inadequate. Those efforts were always intended to be the beginning and not the end of the journey towards healing.

“If your child said to you, ‘I heard there are divisions that need to be healed,’ and you explained those, your child might ask what steps were taken to heal those divisions. Is it the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)? And what did we do to follow through on the TRC?”

The obvious answer to Mogoeng’s last rhetorical question: not much. And that failure is the result of a culture of complacency, he suggested.

“The Constitution on its own cannot fulfil the aspirations it contains,” he said. “We have lazily found a very comfortable spot of leaving it all to government, as if it were not we, the people, who must ensure that government by the people is a reality. This racism has gone too far, and there are far too many contradictory messages to the world. I don’t know if the outside community knows who to listen to.”

Mogoeng was not calling for a conformist unity here, but a constructive, robust dialogue – provided that resolving conflict is everybody’s goal.

“On the land issue, for example – don’t wait for any position to be imposed on you,” said Mogoeng. “It’s your responsibility to help find a solution. Let black and white ventilate their anger as strongly as they need to.

Let us accuse one another in a room like this until a solution to the land issue is found.”

Mogoeng was forthright in defending the Constitution and the existing array of laws as a basis for restitution and progress. “It’s not about the law. The law is there. It’s about how much we do to penetrate the minds and hearts of our people.”

The Chief Justice emphasised that being constructive does not preclude speaking frankly. “We are sensitive. We don’t want to ruffle feathers. That’s our problem – at the expense of South Africa and future generations. As long as you are comfortable, you are not going to challenge what needs to be challenged. And that means the preamble to the Constitution becomes an empty shell, a meaningless document.

“We spend quite a bit of time saying what we think others will be pleased to hear from us. And listening only to what pleases us, and rejecting every other thing. We need to connect with those voices, reflect on them, as we strengthen the foundation of the South Africa we deserve.”

In other remarks, Mogoeng said that South Africa needs to be tougher on private-sector corruption, to correct pay imbalances between the sexes, and to pay attention to securing our borders. He also called on the media to adopt a more even-handed approach to policy debates, and resist the urge to speak as partisan voices.

Mogoeng called for a national moral renewal to drive socioeconomic change. “This is a time for objectivity, for truth,” said Mogoeng. “Any dispensation that doesn’t hold the highest standards of integrity will only last for a while. Nothing else endures.”

The address was greeted with a rousing ovation. The Summit was off to an inspiring start.

“This is a time for objectivity, for truth. Any dispensation that doesn’t hold the highest standards of integrity will only last for a while. Nothing else endures.”





THE POWER OF PERCEPTION

Speaker: Gary Leih (Founder, Leih's Truth and Propaganda)

Armed with a stylish presentation befitting a marketing and advertising pro, Gary Leih unpacked the concept of a nation brand and gave a snapshot of how South Africa's brand image is perceived.

With 38 years' experience grappling with the question: "What is a brand?", Gary's sought-after opinion has influenced minds in the advertising and communications industry around the world.

Gary concisely defined the concepts of a brand and nation branding before examining the importance of the latter. Most simply, a brand can be understood as the gut feeling about a product and, as such, is difficult to influence.

"While some brands burn quick and bright, others take time to develop and go through many changes," he said, likening South Africa's brand to that of a delinquent adolescent needing time to develop into an adult.

Nation branding aims to measure, build and manage the reputation of a country. Key in such an endeavour is collaboration: countries most successful at nation branding work together with various stakeholders to develop their brand. Nation branding is not a political strategy, but rather one that everyone should unite behind and play their part in; this theme was echoed numerous times as the Summit unfolded.

However, while there is an urgent need for South Africa to define the brand it wants to portray, it is perception, and not reality, that is the most significant factor that shapes the brand.

Such perception, typically formed in mere seconds and based on only a single instance of contact, informs subsequent decision-making and discussion with respect to a country. In addition, as outlined by Simon Anholt, founder and publisher of the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index, with globalisation every country is competing with all the others for attention, investment, talent and tourism.

As Anholt has described, "A nation brand is the mix of core characteristics that make a country distinctive, memorable and competitive." These characteristics stem from resources, culture and heritage, government, mass media, businesses, citizens and tourists, for example.

With such a wealth of prized characteristics, it is surprising how South Africa compares against Croatia, which, despite being an underdeveloped nation after war, with no technology and little to offer, managed to rebrand itself with a singular vision as "the Mediterranean the way it once was", and soon found itself on many travellers' bucket lists. Similarly, the singular voice of a benevolent dictator in Singapore raised the small city state from snubbed Southeast Asian underdog to global economic hotspot.

"We still have the power to surprise. At all levels."

We have slipped since the days when the country rallied behind Madiba, lamented Gary: "It's a tough global market, and we have wasted goodwill." But while we are mired in disillusionment, first-time visitors are blown away by South Africa, he assures. "We still have the power to surprise. At all levels."

Quoting Bill Bernbach, Gary reminded the audience that "we are so busy measuring public opinion that we forget we can mould it". To do so, we need to pursue the big ideal rather than just the big idea, asking ourselves: "The world would be a better place if South Africa did what?"

Perhaps, proposed Gary, a place to start would be to have a world-class airline that carries our flag around the world. And while tourism could be our secret weapon, the people of South Africa need to believe in the health of the nation in order to promote their country sincerely to tourists ... and one another.

CHECKING THE SELL-BY DATE

Speaker: Crispin Sonn (CEO, Gamiro ISI; Director, Gamiro Investments)

Speaking about South Africa as a nation brand, Crispin Sonn argued that the transition to democracy planted the seeds of our branding crisis: in the desperate quest for stability, we failed to make our people our most valuable product.



Crispin Sonn, CEO of consulting firm Gamiro ISI and director of Gamiro Investments, and previously marketing and communications director for emerging markets at Old Mutual, is no stranger to the task of selling the South African story abroad. In a dynamic speech, he let fly with a challenging and irreverent analysis of how and why brand South Africa has faltered.

At the outset, Crispin situated our country brand within the broad sweep of its history, noting that South Africa's identity in the global mind was once "located in the doctrine of fascism". From Hendrik Verwoerd to PW Botha, this country was defined by "a radical form of authoritarianism" exercised by "people who arrogate immense power to themselves".

All that changed in 1994 – with one element of continuity in that once again the country was symbolised by one man: Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. "Our branding entirely revolved around this towering figure even though the national priorities that he set have not been addressed to this day.

"There was an incredible reliance on making this brand work to attract foreign direct investment. It needed to be peaceful, and for it to be peaceful, white South Africans needed to feel confident.

"That meant that core socioeconomic injustices were put on hold for a while, purely to ensure that the transition worked." And then in came the marketing gurus, who put their veneer over the state of affairs.

Of course, South Africa is now a much better country than it was in 1994, said Crispin. "That is something not always acknowledged."

But our brand still lacks power, because the product isn't finished, argued Crispin. "When you research the

South African brand, the words and phrases most frequently associated with it include 'potential', 'promising', 'great geopolitical location', 'access to Africa' and 'sophistication'. As opposed to the words we need to embody, like 'driven people', 'high work ethic' and 'pushing boundaries'.

"The other thing that troubles me is being known as a gateway to Africa," said Crispin. "Africa starts at the Cape of Good Hope. We are not the gateway. We tell the world we are different to them."

Crispin argued that while there is a mood of hope at present, hope is a fatalistic and unreliable engine of change. He quoted the Bible's Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

"So let's talk about vision, not hope."

In the social media age, he said, perceptions are formed without documentation or fact-checking. "There is no editorial scrutiny. You look for the facts to support your opinion." This means that the custodians of any brand have to take popular perceptions seriously, and counter whatever causes them.

"We didn't work hard enough on investing in our true product – which is our people. We looked at the bell curve and saw all these black kids coming through, and said, 'What are we going to do with them?' Like it's a bad thing. When in fact that is our opportunity."

We cannot sell a dream forever, Crispin argued. It's time to sell a reality – and it won't sell if it's unjust. "Today, authenticity around a brand is critical. How consistent is my experience of the brand with the values they publicly espouse?"

In the case of brand South Africa, that is a question we cannot dodge.



RIDING THE BRAND ROLLERCOASTER

Speaker: Bonang Mohale (CEO, Business Leadership South Africa)

Eloquent while not mincing words, Bonang Mohale delivered an assessment of the status quo like an army commander, his troops having sailed the stormy sea and now ready to fight the good fight.

In the last 20 years, Bonang has gone from leadership strength to strength, culminating in his current role as CEO of Business Leadership South Africa. He opened his presentation by setting a sobering context – that of South Africa as part of the world’s most mismarketed and undermarketed continent. In addition, we have ridden a rollercoaster of brand management, quadrupling our economy within five years after 1994, rising from the pariahs we were to winning hearts around the globe, only to plummet back down, squandering the recognition the world had granted us.

From a seamless handover of power, from which the corporate world could model effective and efficient succession planning, and Thabo Mbeki’s 43 consecutive quarters of positive GDP growth, “we took our rightful space amongst the economies of the world. And by our own choice, gave it all to a thief who, in nine years, took us back 20.”

Bonang reminded the audience that our brand is a utility: “an asset, that can take children to school and build homes and hospitals.” With ethical leadership comes sound policies, attracting foreign direct investment “not for brownfields but for green-field investments, so that in hard times they cannot take their machinery and walk away; it stays here and they have to work with us in partnership,” supporting an iterative cycle of job creation and sustainable employment.

He lamented that despite having created world-class, celebrated institutions, such as the South African Revenue Service, we find ourselves today with a public administration worse than during apartheid. “Not because we don’t have good-quality human beings – women and men who are selfless, who are whole-some, who are genuinely obsessed with the development of others, but because one of the five pillars of state capture is to undermine the institutions and state organisations,” Bonang noted.

The challenge facing all of us is: how do we capitalise this positive sentiment that Cyril Ramaphosa has given us? “We want transformation first and foremost, and then jobs, then economic growth ... but we are painted in a corner,” he said.

“This economy must look like us, talk like us, behave like us.”

However, our problems have nothing to do with availability of resources, or lack thereof, Bonang claimed. We are the only African country that, when we became free, didn’t focus on the one thing that helps people transcend: applying yourself and working hard, rather than fostering a sense of entitlement. Citing Zimbabwe’s 80% literacy rate after just 10 years of focused effort, Bonang recounted how all countries have upped their education except us.

“Great wars are won by good execution, not great plans,” said Bonang, adding, “There are only two kinds of countries, economies or nations: the quick and the dead.”



However, he emphasised that “an economy is not built and driven only by mergers and acquisitions; at some stage it’s about building products and services that the world wants,” including our own people. “We have to pay our people a decent salary so that they can afford the goods that we produce,” he continued.

Bonang explained that one of the key challenges confronting governance is to ensure that corporate decision-making is consistent with shareholders and the broader stakeholder community. But most people have not participated personally in democracy in the last 24 years. Thinking that “the business of business is business”, we went away and left the country to politicians to do with what they like.

“We must insist to be involved,” he said. “This economy must look like us, talk like us, behave like us.”

But how do we create a shared future in a fractured world? Bonang outlined four subthemes to this question:

- How do we drive sustainable economic growth?
- How do we navigate both a bipolar and multiconceptual brand?
- How do we overcome inequality in society?
- How do we shape the agile governance of technology?

We must remember that investors want us to succeed. Business needs to ensure that our government is capable; ultimately, it will be better off. “We need to maintain this momentum,” concluded Bonang.

“We want transformation first and foremost, and then jobs, then economic growth.”





LOST AND FOUND

Speaker: Themba Maseko (Former Head of the Government Communication and Information System)

Former top government communicator Themba Maseko, now director of Business Leadership South Africa, offered a brutal assessment of how the Zuma presidency degraded the national brand.

Hailed as one of the first public officials to blow the whistle on state capture, Themba is a consummate communications professional. His primary loyalties have always been to the facts and the public interest, and in his previous role as head of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) he treated media colleagues with respect, patience and openness.

Those are precisely the qualities needed to forge a credible political or country brand. But it's rarely that easy. Themba sketched a history of the difficult task the government faced in building South Africa's nation brand, starting in 1994, including a litany of problems: rampant poverty, violence, HIV/AIDS, policy uncertainty, and the Afropessimism of some expatriates.

"Wherever you went, if you mentioned you were from South Africa, they said, 'Oh, Mandela's nation!'"

On the positive side, the country could boast of an emerging but functional state. "There was political stability thanks to the miracle of the 1994 transition," said Themba. "And with Madiba magic, there was no difficulty in promoting the country. Wherever you went, if you mentioned you were from South Africa, they said, 'Oh, Mandela's nation!'"

Mandela's strong and visionary leadership included succession planning, said Themba. "Everybody knew it would be in capable hands under Mbeki. We even flirted with 5% growth in the 2000s. Consistent fiscal prudence gave the investor community confidence."

Mandela began a programme of joint business-government missions abroad that conveyed a positive message, and this policy was taken forward into the Mbeki administration. The International Marketing Council – later renamed Brand South Africa – was set up to drive our global branding efforts.

"At home, the GCIS was set up to focus on internal communications aimed at promoting the brand to the citizens of the country," said Themba. "Presidents and ministers visited remote areas to face communities at *imbizos* (assemblies or gatherings), so as to create regular interaction between government and citizens,

who felt engaged with and by their leaders." Efforts were also made to connect with expats and enlist their help in promoting the country.

The country scored major successes in hosting big sporting events and global conferences, and the NEPAD initiative positioned South Africa as central to an African renaissance.

"With all of these initiatives," said Themba, "the key was that the brand was directly experienced by the people, not just by companies or officials. But then we gave it away." The programme of *imbizos* was cancelled during the Zuma administration. "That is why protests have been rising, because the people feel politicians are not listening to them," he said.



The post-Polokwane leadership “just didn’t get it”, said Themba. “They scored too many own goals.” Corruption even seeped into the very machinery of communication: the Guptas were put in charge of controlling access to officials at key government events. And during his nine years in office, Zuma indulged in 12 cabinet reshuffles, with the nadir being the firing of Pravin Gordhan and Mcebisi Jonas while they were abroad on an investment roadshow. “That did so much damage to our brand. It will take us many years to recover from it,” said Themba.

Part of the problem, he argued, was that civil society and business stood back. “They said, ‘Well, they are elected leaders, let’s let them get on with it.’ It was a major mistake, and now there is a resolve among business leaders to remain vigilant and involved, and protect our constitutional institutions. We will speak out when something is wrong.”

Themba closed his speech on a note of gritty optimism. “Not all is lost,” he said. “The brand of South Africa can be – and is being – restored as a beacon of a prosperous, non-racist, non-sexist and constitutional democracy.”

“The key was that the brand was directly experienced by the people, not just by companies or officials. But then we gave it away.”





SUMMIT OVERVIEW: REIMAGINING SOUTH AFRICA

Speaker: Thuli Madonsela (Former Public Protector; Chair of Social Justice, Stellenbosch University)

Advocate Thuli Madonsela reflected on the Brand Summit South Africa narrative: let us recapture who we are and change how we are perceived.

Whether holding the formal office or not, Advocate Thuli Madonsela epitomises the concept of a public protector. Unafraid to take a deep, honest look at our part in what we have become, Thuli provided her impressions of the Summit and the future.

She immediately focused on truth. “The reality is perceptions do matter,” she stated, explaining that a person’s perception is the only truth they know. “That’s the only basis from which they are going to make decisions and act.”

“Often we think intentions matter, and then we are surprised when people don’t understand our intentions.” But she would surely approve of the intentions of the Summit’s organiser, Solly Moeng: to provide a robust start to a difficult conversation. “It was fantastic to listen to colleagues talk about who we were and how we were seen, particularly during apartheid, ... and how the mighty have fallen,” she said.

She recounted how South African delegates abroad during the early years of democracy were received like “kings and queens” around the world. “Now, we are received with a sense of pity; from glory to pity.” This point resonated with many.

But some brand bastions still foster positive international perception. These include personality brands such as Trevor Noah and Charlize Theron, and busi-

nesses such as Nando’s, Old Mutual, Discovery and Woolworths. “These companies trade on our behalf,” said Thuli. “Their win is our win. But of course we want them to win with integrity.”

She reflected that “we are becoming an ‘every person for themselves’ nation”. Thuli shared her son’s insight: “‘He said, ‘The problem is not how we treat strangers, but how we treat African strangers.’ And that’s the sad thing about branding. It’s never about how the majority treated you, it’s about that one rotten potato.”

The way we treat people affects whether or not they will want to associate with you, Thuli continued. “Nobody wants to associate with rude people, with no integrity, who are unreliable and judgemental. But more than anything else, nobody wants to associate with someone who doesn’t respect them.” One commonality in the world, particularly among people who have nothing else, is that they want respect.

We have fallen from grace, but the discussions at the Summit, and the new presidency, show that we have caught ourselves on the slide down. “People are rooting for us to go back to glory,” Thuli said.

Picking up on Samuel Mensah’s playful expression “the good, the bad, and the future”, Thuli delved further into our relationship with Africa. The good: we have handled democracy and its levers well, we have a sound Constitution, we are relatively peaceful and we



have demonstrated commercial and technological excellence. The bad: Afrophobia, and cracks in the integrity and ethics of our corporate governance.

"But what I didn't hear," Thuli added, "and what I would like us to see in future in terms of how Africa will see us, is the free trade area – it opens space for us to interact with our continent, before we go to BRICS, before the Commonwealth, before the rest of the world."

Thuli faced down the elephant in the room briefly, acknowledging the heavy impact of state capture on our fall from grace, and highlighting the need to handle internal dynamics better. The big issue, she said, is social justice: how we treat those we perceive to be either advantaged or disadvantaged by apartheid, and how we collectively respond.

"We must ensure that not just the president but all leaders in democracy issue consistent messages that are about a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it." We learn how to interact with the world, and how to behave, from the media, school and our culture, which give us the lens through which we view other people's countries. And what we show the world of ourselves comprises our history, our dominant brands (such as Mandela) and successful individual companies, and how we treat others. We have created the stereotype that we are not friendly to foreigners, especially of dark skin type, she said.

"We are seen as ingrates," attested Thuli; we do not show enough appreciation for the sacrifices made by Africa for our freedom. And while we can build

"We must ensure that not just the president but all leaders in democracy issue consistent messages that are about a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it."

proper acknowledgement into the school curriculum, Thuli rather encouraged using the AU programme to strengthen our continental solidarity.

There is a glimmer of hope in the election of President Ramaphosa. "People believe we are geared for a better future. We haven't fallen to the bottom of the pit; we can salvage it."

Regarding brand management, Thuli reflected on the thread of conjecture that ran through the two days of the Summit and, indeed, public discourse: what Ramaphosa and the ANC are going to do to improve South Africa's brand. However, she felt that there was not enough emphasis on what we, the people, are going to do to leverage the strength of brand South Africa.

Thuli emphasised a pertinent question raised by a young delegate in the Q&A after the Politics panel discussion earlier in the Summit: "What is our message to young people? What should we do and not do in pursuit of the brand/narrative?"

Our narrative should be, she said, that we are a land of hope. A country of the people of *ubuntu*. A resilient nation. The nation that invented the TRC. That showed the world that we could transcend conflict that looked intractable, through purpose-driven leadership, ethical behaviour, impact consciousness, and commitment to serve the people.

Thuli proposed considering the ecotourism model, where for every gain, concrete money manifests. "You need to experience that as the brand grows, you benefit," illustrating her point with an Ethiopian proverb: when spiders combine their webs, they can snare a lion. But one must understand that lion.

"I am privileged to be part of this conversation, and I hope it will continue in schools, in townships ..." The outcome: shared prosperity and, accordingly, peace.





Panel 1: Project Good Hope **Panelists:** Alan Winde (Minister of Economic Opportunities, Western Cape Government), Rashid Toefy (Deputy Director-General for Economic Operations, Western Cape Government Department of Economic Development and Tourism), Palesa Morudu (Writer and Board Member, Wesgro), Tim Harris (CEO, Wesgro).

THE RAINMAKERS

Moderator: Kieno Kammies (Host, *Kieno Kammies Show* on Cape Talk; CEO, KK Strategic)

Project Good Hope is a new place-branding campaign, run by Wesgro, to burnish the image of the Western Cape as a business and tourism destination. A laudable idea – but how do you fix a PR nightmare like the Day Zero water crisis?

Over the past decade, the Western Cape has been South Africa's best-performing region when it comes to tourism and economic growth – until late 2017, that is. The drought and associated water crisis have left Cape Town's reputation high and dry, and parched the public's confidence in its leadership.

The uncompromising broadcaster Kieno Kammies moderated the panel discussion of Project Good Hope. Although the panel included two senior figures in the DA provincial government and a former member of the DA's national shadow cabinet, nobody flinched at confronting the gravity of the short-term branding challenge facing the governing party and the city.

"It was a communications disaster," said Alan Winde, Western Cape MEC for Economic Opportunities, about the Day Zero campaign. It was a desperate – and successful – measure to drive down water use, but

a side-effect was unnecessary panic and gloom about the city's future.

"The Day Zero message was not properly understood when it went out," said Alan, who was wearing his ever-present "Water Wise" T-shirt. "But the positive side of the campaign is that Harvard, the World Bank and the United Nations are now coming to find out how we beat the crisis. We went from using 1.2 billion litres a day to using 530 million litres a day – never before has that kind of reduction been achieved. And there are 120 cities around the world with the same problem."

"Day Zero kept the taps open. But now we're dealing with the consequences of that sexy, Armageddon-style message."
– Tim Harris

Wesgro CEO Tim Harris agreed with Alan. "It has been a fascinating case study," he said. "The first thing that Day Zero did was drive the largest water consumption cut in history. It kept the taps open. But now we're dealing with the consequences of that sexy, Armageddon-style message. So we then set up a war room, called the Water Communications Centre, with 15 people in a room who responded quickly to queries from local and international journalists."

Crucially, the water supply problem is being fixed at a rapid pace, said Tim. "In the medium to long term, the



city will get 12% of its water from new sources, and that will rise to 40% next year. This is the model – and the narrative we need to get out globally. But the cost is real – we have seen huge job losses in tourism and the film sector, for example.”

Even if the drought persists for years to come, the Cape Town show must go on. Rashid Toefy, Deputy Director-General for Economic Operations in the provincial Department of Economic Development and Tourism, emphasised that Project Good Hope should communicate the richness and variety of the region’s assets. His department aims to make the region more business-friendly by reducing red tape. It is also focusing on developing skills in the workforce to fuel economic growth.

Kieno challenged the panellists to talk about Cape Town’s yawning inequalities, maintained by the spatial divide that separates the wealthy peninsula from the poverty-stricken Cape Flats. If the wealth gap isn’t narrowed soon, the city will face a reckoning, said Kieno. “If an investor can’t get to her meeting because the N2 is on fire, then we have a problem.”

Writer and Wesgro board member Palesa Morudu agreed, noting that the perception that Cape Town is a racially exclusionary city goes far beyond the Cape Flats – it is a view shared by much of the black middle class across the country. “If you look at the Western Cape and Cape Town over the past 10 years, what was working for the region’s brand was political stability and a functioning government. There is a perception of minimal corruption.

“But studies show the city is only able to retain about 4% of the black professionals who move here. If you don’t transform leadership, you will always have this problem.”

Alan was challenged by Kieno to comment on the DA provincial government’s efforts to uplift poverty-stricken communities. “At the moment our country is far too reliant on grant systems,” said Alan, “but a job enables you to go further in life. We need to have disruptors, and we need to create a broader base of wealth – we need to take that 35% ratio of small business jobs to 50%.”

Finding and developing young farmers was a priority, he said – and not an easy task. “We bring busloads of young people into Boschendal and ask them who wants to be in agriculture. Nobody puts up their hand.”

Tim said that foreign investment and tourism remain the best routes to job creation, and that needless barriers are blocking both. “The biggest issue is the issuing of visas,” he said. He cited the bitterly ironic example of a recent conference on aviation in Cape Town to which a group of Rwandan delegates were invited to talk about their country’s investor-friendly visa policy. But the Rwandans could not attend – because they could not get visas in time. Many similar lost visitors have lots of money to spend and potentially invest.

“But the city has some extraordinary attributes,” said Tim. “Currently, 10 000 students from around Africa are studying here – we are the higher education capital of Africa and the events capital of Africa.”

Tim also lauded a recent effort, supported by corporate giants Investec, Tsogo Sun and Naspers, to bring more international flights to Cape Town International Airport. “We have added 13 new flights in the last five years,” he said.

Cape Town will never run out of visitors. But it competes with many other beautiful cities – and many of those have plentiful water, open visa policies, low crime and relative equality.

This means Project Good Hope has work to do. It’s not an expensively resourced campaign, as Alan pointed out, with a budget of only R6 million – a tiny proportion of the Western Cape provincial budget from which it came (some R60 billion). But when your message is clear and compelling enough, it can go a long way.

“Studies show Cape Town is only able to retain about 4% of the black professionals who move here. If you don’t transform leadership, you will always have this problem.” – Palesa Morudu



Panel 2: Business Panellists: Kganki Matabane (CEO, Black Business Council), Mteto Nyati (Chief Executive, Altron), Sheraan Amod (CEO, RecoMed), Simon Susman (Chair, Woolworths Group).

HITTING THE HEADLINES

Moderator: Siki Mgabadeli (Daily Anchor, *The SAFM Market Update with Moneyweb* and *Moneyline* on eNCA)

The Business panel took an introspective stance to analyse the question: “How did we get here?” “Here” being a nation that went from reading about expansion and earnings per share over our morning coffee to reading headlines on corruption, auditor blunders, inefficiency, forex scandals and fleeing of the poor.

T rue to the name of the weekly eNCA TV show she used to host, *The Big Debate*, charismatic financial journalist Siki Mgabadeli opened the discussion by asking: “Has the corporate sector lost the moral high ground?”

Simon Susman, chair of the Woolworths Group, weighed in with the first of what he warned would be “controversial answers”: “EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) remains the be-all and end-all of business,” he said. “But without values, you don’t have EBITDA.” Simon reflected on how Woolworths has tried to implement sound values in its business, not always with success. “But we keep trying,” noted Simon.

“We all fall down on our values; the challenge is to get back up,” he concluded.

“The problem is that we have lost our will to do the right thing,” weighed in Siki. Simon, however, disagreed: “I don’t believe 55 million of us have lost the will; 1 000 of us maybe.”

Representing the innovative entrepreneur, Sheraan Amod recounted how international investors are refusing to invest in South African enterprises while our politics are in a “shambles”. Sheraan founded internet venture incubator Springlab, and today is CEO of RecoMed.

“The irony,” he said, “is that we are the Silicon Valley of Africa. Never has there been more innovation, venture capital investment, revenue and partnering with local corporations. But the image we have is shocking.

“The track is becoming muddier and harder to race on,” he noted. However, it is not the business environment that is muddying the waters; it is politics. To international CEOs, business can project a positive image and encourage investment. But they simply respond by quoting “some terrible headline”, Sheraan said. “We are losing more than half our deals,” he admitted.

Mteto Nyati, chief executive of Altron, offered a different perspective. He felt that we are too hard on ourselves. “The key is what you do once you have identified you have issues,” he said. Unable to account for the actions of every employee, Mteto explained how, at Altron, he takes ownership by leading by example. “That is what shapes behaviour of people,” he believes.



However, Siki questioned whether this might contribute to the current problem. Seeing the train heading for derailment, many of us sit and wait, believing somebody else will fix it.

"Why is business not speaking up?" asked Siki. "Is it profits? Fear of being shunned? Cowardice?" Mteto countered that although many may not have stood up, they have rejected the modus operandi, refusing to take part in dubious actions.

A spirited Kganki Matabane, CEO of the Black Business Council, observed that we have become dispersed since the end of apartheid as we no longer have a common enemy. "Today, what is our one goal?" he asked. "People are doing as they wish, and there is no shame," he continued.

*"We all fall down on our values;
the challenge is to get back up."
– Simon Susman*

Kganki touched on another controversial thread, asking, "Who is a South African businessperson? We do not present one face," he said. This was quickly interrogated, with doubt expressed that what we look like is relevant to how we conduct business based on values and ethics. Kganki defended the majority, who are excluded on a daily basis, he said. "The face we present should reflect the majority; this is not happening in South Africa 24 years on. It is a big threat to democracy," he responded, not sugarcoating the issue.

Mteto extended Kganki's point, recounting how when he joined his organisation a year ago, only two of the 55 leaders were black, and only two were women. It was a big shock, he said. "A leadership team needs to reflect society, not just black, not just men. We don't want to end up exactly like what we have fought against."

Addressing Mteto, a UNISA lecturer in the audience asked what we can do to invest more in impoverished communities, given that part of our brand image is that South Africa is facing a digital divide.

Mteto began his answer by explaining that about five years ago, the South African government implemented a policy on broadband connectivity, called SA Connect, in a drive to connect hospitals, schools and government buildings, among others.

"However, the big problem is that in schools, for example, teachers are digitally illiterate. Most CSI is about creating labs rather than training and building capacity. Once you get it right, thousands of kids will grow through that teacher. The biggest area of leverage is principals and teachers."

Naturally, the audience asked about Steinhoff and KPMG and what we as a nation brand can do to help these corporates rebuild their reputation. Kganki didn't beat around the bush: "Make an example. Deal with those who are guilty. We can't keep forgiving."

Sheraan redirected the discussion towards progression in the venture capital space. We're seeing growth from successful lobbying, he said, with relaxation of the rules on how intellectual property is viewed. "It's a duty of South Africans of every level to lobby government for viable policy," he asserted.

Growing trust among large corporations is leading to partnerships. Transformation is happening at procurement level, and this is increasingly a factor in assessing a venture.

Simon agreed: "There is a lot of good news." The ratios of LSMs around the country are changing, with many black people moving up the LSM categories. "We should encourage that," he said, "but we have much more work to do."

The discussion ended with Simon outlining his four dreams:

- Incentivise better education and incentivise teachers.
- "Transformentrepreneurialise" state-owned enterprises. Add the *volk*. SOEs should be great places to benefit the community.
- Get rid of the red tape for SMEs – they are the gem of our nation.
- Hold to values.

Certainly, the values, ideas and hopes espoused by the panellists inspired the room, and the business space will be one to watch.



Panel 3: Politics Panellists: Thuli Madonsela (Former Public Protector; Chair of Social Justice, Stellenbosch University), Ralph Mathekga (Head of Political Economy, Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection), Mondli Makhanya (Editor, *City Press*), Ryland Fisher (Former Editor, *Cape Times* and *The New Age*; Media Expert), Phumlani Majozi (Political Analyst; Non-Executive Director, Free Market Foundation).

A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME

Moderator: Adriaan Basson (Editor-in-Chief, News24)

The Politics panel gazed into the crystal ball to discover what lies ahead for South Africa's political brand in the wake of President Ramaphosa's installation.

News24 editor-in-chief Adriaan Basson kicked off the debate by challenging each panellist to sketch out the contours of South Africa's political brand in May 2018.

For newspaperman Ryland Fisher, the desperation of our national moment was clearly visible in the protests he encountered the night before the debate on the outskirts of Mitchells Plain, where he went to visit his father-in-law.

"Is that the brand of South Africa at the moment?" he asked. "Impatient people turning to violence to get their voices heard. I am worried that if we don't deal with that, give people a voice, listen to people, we will have a deeper crisis. It also doesn't help that the president cut short a trip abroad because people were violent in the North West. It gives the wrong impression. It sets a precedent."

For *City Press* editor Mondli Makhanya, the Jacob Zuma presidency distorted our vision of ourselves, as well as our economy and our institutions. "One of the tragic legacies of Zuma was his corrosive effect on social cohesion," he said.

"He left behind a very divided society, because the worst elements of ourselves were accentuated. Extreme voices were given volume, formalising the message of Bell Pottinger's Guptabots – and it has damaged our debate, to the point that we hate each other. We cannot have conversations about land and the economy that don't turn ugly. In the fixing of South Africa and the brand, we need to reverse the heightened rhetoric and division and anger."

Political analyst Ralph Mathekga interjected that President Ramaphosa cannot be expected to heal the fabric of society. "I call Ramaphosa a crisis management supremo. I don't expect a grand vision from Ramaphosa. What I want him to do is lock us in a room and get us to agree to something – to get back to consensus politics. We want to see a president who is decisive. We have drifted apart, and my concern is the proliferation of majoritarian politics – in which there is no need to justify a position if it's the majority decision."

Advocate Thuli Madonsela then offered her summation of the status quo – and it was a typically poetic one. "We are too hard on ourselves, and we shouldn't be. The moment you see yourself as a loser, you are likely to lose. We must remain hopeful but pragmatic. We do remain the land of hope. That started at the height of colonialism, when black people and women



“The colours of the rainbow are constant, but the shape is not.” – Thuli Madonsela

were not thought of as human, as persons. We remain the land of *ubuntu*,” she said.

But we cannot ignore the damage done, she said. “The reality is that state capture has left us looking like a battlefield in the aftermath of a battle.”

She went on to describe five different types of misguided voices that dominate the current political scene:

- **Political entrepreneurs** looking to exploit the impatience, by justifying looting in the North West, for example.
- **Interrupted looters** – the ones who brand you “white monopoly capital” if you tweet about corruption, for example.
- **Disaffected, left-behind people** – they are fragile because they were angered by white monopoly capital and then disaffected by the revelations of state capture, which showed that the very people who claimed to be their saviours were looting from them.
- **Denialists** – people who think that South Africa was normal before state capture.
- **“Switzerlands”** – the people who say, “I don’t care. As long as I can make a living, the rest can fight.”

Asked by Adriaan about the new president’s freedom to act decisively, political analyst Phumlani Majozi remarked that compromise is Ramaphosa’s gift. But he argued that the new president has to be bold in favouring the country over the party.

“I think he has to follow that path if he wants the public to judge him favourably. He is, of course, constrained by the ANC culture of consensus,” he added.

Mondli agreed, and used a football metaphor for Ramaphosa’s role. “We need a leader to do what Zidane did for Real Madrid when the chips were down. He would calm things down, slow the pace, and do nothing rash or dramatic. I believe Ramaphosa has done that. He didn’t go in with a guillotine. That enabled him to hold on to the party and not alienate too many people.”

The appointment of the controversial David Mabuza as deputy president revealed Ramaphosa’s *realpolitik*, said Ralph. “It shows we are one of the most forgiving nations in the world. One of the costs of the transition is the acceptance of Mabuza’s rehabilitation. There are certain things we are willing to let go in exchange for a stable society; we are a practical nation. And the private sector must understand that he cannot go all out and purge the old order – he will not see another day if he does so.”

Adriaan asked Ryland to look ahead to the battle for the Western Cape. “Voters in the Western Cape gave the ANC an opportunity to run this province and city, and the ANC betrayed that trust. They will struggle to convince them to give them a second chance.

“That said,” he added, “they are being helped along by the DA’s mistakes. But I don’t think they will win back the Western Cape. Whoever is able to provide safe streets, jobs and houses will win. These are very basic issues that will dominate the campaign.”



Adriaan asked whether the rainbow nation is a dead idea. Thuli's response was to reinvent the metaphor. "The colours of the rainbow are constant, but the shape is not," she said. "We are diverse. And we always will be. But we need to make the rainbow a beautiful shape."

The revival of the dream, she said, will happen through the provision of tangible hope. "We had a journey of healing that was too slow," she said, citing examples including land restitution and the provision of housing. "What we need is plain social justice – and to stop the looting."

But what of the Economic Freedom Fighters' mobilisation on the land issue. Will it sway desperate voters?

Phumlani was sceptical. "Since the election of Ramaphosa, the EFF has lost the narrative thread. They had a drum to beat: 'pay back the money' really sold as a message. The party grew quite fast, but now they are struggling to find a narrative that works. On the land issue, there is a propagandistic element, and the EFF is using it for electoral purposes. The DA is also finding itself in a situation where they need to find a narrative."

But the establishment should dismiss the EFF at their peril, warned Mondli. "You have to hand it to them," he said, "it was quite a phenomenon: a party formed seven weeks before the polls, winning 7% – the branding was amazing. They can say whatever they want, because they know they will never run a government. It's populism: the uniform, the berets, the spectacle. The ability of Julius Malema to speak is incredible: for an hour at a stretch, switching languages, never repeating himself, and the crowd never gets bored."

And they are strategically opportunistic, said Mondli. "That protest at H&M – we frowned on it as hooliganism, but it drowned out the January 8 ANC rally. They are branding masterminds. I really don't believe Ramaphosa is going to disable the EFF. My sons, for example, love the coolness and rebelliousness of Malema. The EFF won't become a major player, but it's still a success story if they reach double digits."

Mondli sounded a note of caution about the land debate, one of the biggest threats to brand South Africa at this point. Not because of the aim of redistribution, which we agreed on 20 years ago. What it has been reduced to is: "Let's get our stolen land back from the whites, and then our stomachs will be full and we will be happy." The message we are sending out is that South Africa is interfering with property rights. It toxifies the environment, which is already damaged.

Thuli agreed, and warned about the threat of opportunistic voices that "whip up the anger of our people".

"What we are left with is defiance of the rule of law. Let's not use our people to undermine the rule of law. Because even if you end up governing, you will govern the ungovernable."

"What I want Ramaphosa to do is lock us in a room and get us to agree to something – to get back to consensus politics." – Ralph Mathekga





Panellists: Palesa Morudu (Director, Clarity Editorial), Samuel Mensah (Founder and CEO, Kisua.com).

*“Barriers to trade
make us all poorer.”
– Samuel Mensah*

THE VIEW FROM THE NORTH

The relationship between South Africa and the rest of the continent is deeply rooted in a shared history of struggle – but it is also very fluid. How can South Africa improve its brand across Africa? And right now, how do we look to our neighbours up north? Palesa Morudu, director of Clarity Editorial, spoke to Samuel Mensah, businessman and founder of African fashion label KISUA.

Samuel is richly qualified to comment on South Africa’s African reputation. Hailing from Ghana, and now dividing his time between his homeland and South Africa, he has lived in a string of other African countries. “I was raised as a child of the continent.”

His fast-rising fashion brand KISUA imports textiles from Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire to manufacture clothing in South Africa, and then sells the finished product in South Africa and Ghana, also exporting to the US and other large markets abroad.

Palesa began by asking Samuel to comment on the widespread view that South Africans of all races are psychologically and culturally disconnected from Africa north of the Limpopo.

“The description is broadly accurate,” said Samuel. “But there is also a very good side to how South Africa is perceived. It is seen as a beautiful country, one that is potentially a land of opportunity for the average African, a place where the rule of law exists, where you can march and exert pressure on a ruling party to remove a president without teargas being used, or being shot.

“The perception is that South Africans can demand change and, very often, actually get it. They can take presidents to court. There are strong institutions, a melting pot of culture, and good infrastructure. But there is the difficulty of Africans assimilating. The feeling of being unwelcome – there is a very strong view in the rest of Africa that ‘they don’t want us there.’

There is also a racial dimension to the xenophobia that creates this view, Palesa commented. “If you are white and European,” she said, “you don’t have as much difficulty in South Africa. And I’m struggling with that.”

For Samuel, the legacy of distrust left by the xenophobic attacks of 2008 and 2015 is not irreversible. “There is a role that everyone can play,” he said. “Every time you interact with an African from another country, see yourself as South Africa’s self-appointed ambassador and play a positive role in rebuilding those bridges.”



Palesa mentioned a view that is often articulated by African immigrants to South Africa: that South Africans are given to passively expecting help from their government, whereas those from up north have long given up on government support and know they have to “do it for themselves”.

“But there is one major difference between the two histories that partly explains this,” said Samuel. “Black people in the rest of Africa were rarely dispossessed of their land. So if things got really bad, you could go back to the village and farm and you would not starve. Whereas in South Africa, there was systematic dispossession, which also bred a culture of militancy and disobedient protest.”

The ebb and flow of pan-Africanist ideology in Pretoria’s Union Buildings was an interesting issue, said Palesa. “Thabo Mbeki identified South Africa as part of Africa,” she said, “whereas Mandela saw us as part of the world. Zuma was unclear. How has this perception evolved from the African view?”

“There was euphoria at South Africa’s liberation in 1994,” said Samuel. “Many African countries had invested quite a lot in the struggle – something that is not spoken of enough. It should be in the school curriculum, so that South African kids can discover, for example, how teachers in Nigeria donated 2% of their salaries to support the liberation struggle. When you see a Nigerian, do you know that their mother or father may have given up one month’s student stipend to support the cause of the South African struggle?”

“So there was a honeymoon period; the political tensions between African countries and South Africa were mostly covered by the euphoria,” said Samuel. “But in the Mbeki era, it became more obvious that

African immigrants or visitors were treated as second-class citizens. The irony, of course, is that Mbeki was ‘the Africa president’. Mbeki is loved even more than Mandela in parts of Africa, for making Africa a priority, with NEPAD, strengthening the AU, and generally placing African policy at the heart of his foreign policy. And in the Zuma years, nobody even bothered to complain. Africans in South Africa just got on with it and didn’t expect much.”

Palesa then brought up the post-apartheid image of South Africa as a gateway to the continent. “What is the value of that metaphor?” she asked.

It’s not a false one, said Samuel, but it’s not particularly accurate either. “South Africa still checks a lot of the boxes. It has the highest gross domestic product, over 50 million people – so that tends to be quite attractive to foreign companies – and it’s easier: there is reliable electricity, running water, rule of law, expertise and human capital.”

It is a springboard into the rest of the continent, said Samuel, even though geographically it’s not the obvious entry point. “The fragmentation of the continent was one of the greatest disservices done to Africa at the end of the colonial era. We were divided into so many voices and countries. In the context of that market structure, you need to start somewhere – and South Africa has been the easiest. But that is changing. Infrastructure and internet access are improving across the continent, with Kenya and Ghana emerging as alternative headquarters.”

“And how should South Africa mitigate that risk?” asked Palesa.

“By opening up a bit faster,” said Samuel, “and becoming more aggressive in its approach to doing business.” For example, Nigerian investors buy homes in Europe and the US but not in South Africa, said Samuel. “They didn’t feel as unwelcome in those countries, and it is not as difficult to enter into business. There is a disconnect between brand South Africa’s message of openness and the policies of the Department of Home Affairs and other government departments that need to make it happen. It would require bold leadership and compromises on visa-free access or a pre-approved database of African visitors who receive visas on arrival.”

Samuel ended the discussion with a passionate appeal for an opening up of trade across Africa. “The fragmentation of the continent makes it incredibly difficult to do business. Barriers to trade make us all poorer. We have to solve this problem.”



Panel 4: Community Panellists: Rod Solomons (Convenor, SA First Forum), Louise van Rhyn (CEO and Founder, Partners for Possibility), Neeshan Bolton (Executive Director, Ahmed Kathrada Foundation), Theo Ndindwa (Founder and Director, iKapa Dance Theatre).

CO-CREATING A BRAND

Moderator: Sean Lewis (Lecturer, UCT Graduate School of Business)

Epitomising a true community model where members can speak freely, debate and be heard, the Community panel demonstrated an empathy, critical analysis and optimism befitting the spirit of *ubuntu*.

As one of the founding members of the South Africa First Forum – a core objective of which is to unite and connect with all those who want to be part of positive change – Sean Lewis was a natural axis around which the Summit could turn from a focus on government and corporates, to civil society. Sean quickly cut to the chase, asking the panel what role civil society should play in recapturing the South African brand.

Theo Ndindwa, pioneer in transformation, social inclusivity and economic development in dance and the arts in South Africa, took on the role of opening act. “Civil society has not really been included in creating the narrative,” he said. “Discussions are high level, and are not broken down to street level.” He emphasised that education, both in schools and generally in terms of awareness, should be the starting point.

“We cannot expect the Education Department and civil servants to raise our children,” followed Louise van Rhyn, founder and CEO of Partners for Possibility. “One thing we have to do is make sure our children can read by Grade 4. It can be done.” But while the scale of such a task might seem insurmountable, she compared the 1 600-odd schools in the Western Cape with the 1 000 or so branches of Woolworths. It is possible to successfully manage a network on such a scale, she stated.

Teacher, activist, leader and government advisor Neeshan Bolton honed in on the role of citizens and their place in the brand narrative, questioning the concept conveyed in the Summit theme: recapturing the South African narrative.

“What is the narrative that we want to recapture? I don’t think there has been a commonality from 1994 onwards. We should talk about recreating, or co-creating, a brand we all have a stake in,” he proposed.

The violence we see, hear about or experience is a widespread, low-intensity civil uprising; how can we prevent full civil war? Neeshan provided an example:



“We need to allow people to speak in the voices and languages they are comfortable with.” – Rod Solomons

the Hare Krishna movement feeds over 100 000 in KwaZulu-Natal alone, every day. “There are many other such organisations across South Africa who ensure that the destitute and the hungry don’t go out onto the streets. It’s also civil society, through a whole range of community organisations, who supervise children after school.” Civil society acts as a buffer to full-scale uprising. Take civil society away, he says, and the full enormity of South Africa’s problems will be more visible than what it is today.

“Our culture glorifies the armed struggle way beyond what we should have,” Neeshan observed. Comrades who spent time in prison or in the armed struggle are exalted above others. “We shy away from a non-violent narrative,” he said, calling for a narrative that speaks to the current conditions and where we would like to go as a country.

Rod Solomons of the SA First Forum, persuaded by the delegates to join the panel following his astute commentary and questions from the floor in previous sessions, agreed. “We need to empower ordinary South Africans to engage in the kind of South Africa they want to have and they want to live in. That’s a huge task. It’s a difficult task. But we have to do it. In that way we will address that fundamental question of why South Africans are so violent when they are unhappy.”

Rod reminded the audience of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, developed from inputs from all sectors in the national community. “It was painstaking, but it happened, and people bought into it,” he explained, adding that the Constitution was similarly put together, with the people making real contributions, holding discussions in communities and ensuring buy-in.

Rod appealed for due consideration of people’s language in giving them the space to engage those in authority and ask difficult questions. “Language can be such a debilitating issue and can disempower people. We need to allow people to speak in the voices and languages they are comfortable with.” There is much wisdom to be heard, he said.

Being provocative, Sean challenged whether it is a good thing that civil society is a buffer: “Are we not being a plaster on a festering sore instead of lancing the boil underneath?”

Louise both agreed and disagreed. “The task is too big,” she responded, looking again at education as an example. Of 25 000 government schools, 20 000 are failing. “Many wonderful things are happening,” she admitted, “yet our children can’t read.”

"Our Schools Act was written for well-resourced schools," she said, ascribing the inequality in education to two key factors: school principals being equipped for their task (for example, through 50 years of privilege), and the skill capacity that comes from community members and parents. "We are not distributing the wealth of skills across the system," Louise emphasised.

However, although Louise agreed that the buffer civil society can offer is important in addressing the mammoth task, she argued that it "is not going to get us to the South Africa we want". "Every time we see a story being told, we should ask: is this story useful? Is it going to get us what we want? If not, we need to change it and tell a new story. We need to be story catchers," she said.

Neeshan agreed that the "plaster" was necessary, expressing concern that, without it, we would probably not be able to deal with the scale of the wound opened. "We must acknowledge the dominance of the political parties and institutions – they really are powerful in this country," he warned. But he questioned how we might hold these entities to account; how one might reverse the imbalance of power. "Our electoral system doesn't even allow us to recall a leader."

Neeshan picked up Louise's education brush but painted a different picture with it. "Our experience in the last few years is that the politics of teachers' unions has influence over our schools today, like a pyramid scheme. Even the best student governing body cannot change the power relations. Party affiliation is too much an influence," he feared.

He also pointed out that the same areas struggling with non-functional schools have fully functional churches and other such institutions. "School governing bodies are contested political spaces."

In pursuit of an alternative to the band-aid, Neeshan concluded with a question: "How do we shift focus to political empowerment of citizens to use this democracy and reverse the power relations that have manifested?"

Rod echoed the sentiment. "We need to empower ordinary South Africans to get their voices back and hold those in authority accountable for their actions. Accountability needs to come with consequences," he continued, bemoaning that, currently, consequences are taking too long to take effect. "We're sitting on a powder keg," he warned.



Rod reminded the room of the *batho pele* concept – “people first” – and a perhaps too-dusty Van Zyl Slabbert report. “We need to have a say on how we are governed and by whom, and not only every five years. Politicians are human. We need to break this personality cult we have. They are not all-powerful,” he elaborated.

And while it may seem obvious to us, the people, we need to make politicians, SOEs, public servants and others understand: those budgets and resources don’t belong to them personally. They are custodians, reminded Rod.

Harking back to Chief Justice Mogoeng’s expression that we are “tap dancing around the fundamentals”, Sean asked the panel to identify the core issues we should be addressing to co-create or recreate the South African narrative.

Neeshan shared a fundamental mistake identified by Neville Alexander, a former revolutionary who spent 10 years on Robben Island: not being honest with people on how long it would take to fix the problems in this country. “The real problems weren’t understood by many of us,” he admitted, echoing the Chief Justice’s analogy.

Another fundamental element, identified by Theo, was that of relating to the youth. The youth can’t relate to “the good old days” that have run as a thread through the Summit rhetoric thus far, he confessed. “But there are some things we could relate to,” he said, suggesting that we should look back to what worked but for whatever reason is no longer done. “Not enough is being passed on,” he added.

Event organiser Solly Moeng shared his sadness that the generation that changed history, that was there during the negotiations, does not stand up to give context to what happened back then. “We allow the Julius Malemas to get away with their narrative – that we’ve given too much away, that we should start from scratch.”

We should not throw away what Mandela did to hold us together, he said, concluding with a plea to the elders: talk to the youngsters.

“We should talk about recreating, or co-creating, a brand we all have a stake in.” – Neeshan Bolton





Panel 5: Global benchmarking **Panellists:** Yanina Dubeykovskaya (Founder and President, World Communications Forum Association (Switzerland)), Samuel Mensah (Founder and CEO, Kisua.com (Ghana)), Duke Malan (Co-owner, Malan-Hilberg (Hong Kong)), Hilda Basson (Owner, Oxygen Communications and *The Patriot* (Namibia)).

A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

Moderator: Bruce Whitfield (Financial Journalist, *Business Insider*; Presenter, *The Money Show* on 702 and CapeTalk, and *Taking Stock* on eNCA)

Country branding is a fierce global battle for attention, investment and tourism. How successfully is brand South Africa targeting markets? In the Summit's final panel debate, moderator Bruce Whitfield got some fascinating answers from an elite panel of communicators and entrepreneurs.

First up was Russian branding expert Yanina Dubeykovskaya, founder and president of the World Communications Forum Association, who began by sharing the Russian perception of South Africa. Yanina also listed some key words that Russians have typically associated with Africa: "sun", "heat", "sand", "pirates", "animals" and, somewhat obscurely, "Limpopo" (a legacy of a well-known Russian children's book).

In today's globalised era, other messages about South Africa filtering through to Russia include its membership of BRICS, its mining industry, the election of a new president, and the fact that it waived visa requirements for Russian visitors a year ago.

We form opinions about other countries in three ways, Yanina said. First, what we learn at school about them – a very deep level of brand perception, which we remember throughout our lives. Second, we absorb their globally recognised cultural icons (Nelson Mandela for South Africa). And finally, we absorb new

information through mass media. This last route is crucial, she said, when it comes to shaping a country brand quickly, particularly in the age of social media.

The symbolism of Mandela is the cornerstone of the South African brand's power, she said. "You are lucky to have a spiritual father," she said. "In Switzerland, Russia, and many other countries, society is trying to find a lighthouse, but they don't have it."

Yanina concluded with her personal impression of South Africa on her first visit: "I am so amazed by your openness, your intelligence, your sense of mission." She also praised our lack of hostile rhetoric. "You don't have enemies in your discourse. In other countries it's different: these discussions always start using an image of an enemy. It is a very positive, constructive discourse. I don't think anyone can stop you."

Next up was Ghanaian fashion entrepreneur Samuel Mensah, founder and CEO of Kisua.com. He summed up our brand's impact across Africa by using the rubric "the good, the bad and the future".

"The good is that South Africa is seen as a beautiful country, boasting democracy, rule of law, free expression and a reputation for being an African melting pot," said Samuel. "The bad is the feeling amongst Africans that they are unwelcome in South Africa."



And what about his third category – the future?

“From a selfish perspective, the approach to the rest of Africa needs to change,” he said. “Africa presents a huge economic opportunity for South Africa, and we have only just scratched the surface of that opportunity.”

“A big part of this has to do with education,” he said. “The South African school curriculum doesn’t do enough to highlight the role of African countries in supporting the South African liberation struggle. For example, the fact that South African exiles were given a Ghanaian passport and a full scholarship to a Ghanaian university.”

The next snapshot of South Africa’s image abroad came from Hong Kong-based communications executive Duke Malan, co-owner of the public relations firm Malan-Hilberg. He began by saying that his experience in promoting South African businesses in East Asia has taught him the value of having quality political leadership.

“The first thing is to recognise that despite some of our own goals, there is still a deep reservoir of goodwill for South Africa,” said Duke. “People love the idea of South Africa, and they want to see it work. But over the last decade, we’ve really tested that – and that reserve has nearly run dry.”

As evidence, Duke cited President Cyril Ramaphosa’s decisive preparation for his visit to the World Economic Forum: he consulted with business and labour to find a message to take to Davos. “Ramaphosa understood that if he doesn’t go there with something tangible – a proof point, such as the Eskom board change – it’s just storytelling,” said Duke. “He understands the cost of low trust.”

*“People love the idea of South Africa, and they want to see it work.”
– Duke Malan*

It is not easy to project a distinct brand identity in the Asian markets when you are a smallish and distant economy, said Duke. “In Asia, there is a conflation of Africa and South Africa. I always show my audience a photo of the Sandton skyline, and ask them: ‘Where is this skyline?’ And they say Singapore, Dubai, New York, Hong Kong. Nobody says: ‘That’s Africa.’ In a binary world in which Africa is seen as just broken, you need to create a framework for people to think about Africa positively.” And the clarity of the message is essential, said Duke.

Next up was Namibia’s Hilda Basson, owner of both Oxygen Communications and *The Patriot* newspaper.

She observed that South African retail brands play a key role in marketing South Africa in countries like Namibia – for better or for worse. Steinhoff’s fall has hurt many Namibian investors, she noted. And the quality of service at stores also shapes the country brand.

Hilda agreed with Duke that the leadership shift is promising. She praised President Ramaphosa’s courtesy visit to Namibia soon after the election, and said the informativeness and responsiveness of South African government officials in their dealings with foreign media had improved.

Lastly, she said, South Africans should accept their advantages and good fortune in many areas. “It’s very easy to complain, but bear in mind that people in a number of African countries would swap governments with you at any point.”

All the panellists agreed that the Mandela story should be central to the national brand. “Even in markets that know so little about South Africa, the equity in the name is massive,” said Duke. “So how do we leverage that?”

The problem is that for many frustrated South Africans, the Mandela brand is losing power. “He has become something of a cliché if you are young and struggling in life,” said Samuel. “So we need to find ways to make his values relevant to their lives today.”

Once more, the country branding riddle leads back to the domestic social contract: the promise of the Mandela era needs to be fulfilled at home before it can be compellingly expressed to the world.

KEEPING THE PROMISE

The Brand Summit South Africa was a resounding success. Not because it fixed “brand South Africa” – that will take a bit more time and effort – but because it sparked a powerful and positive conversation about how complex and vital that task is.

Many of the exchanges between panellists and delegates centred on two tough questions that should be asked about any country brand:

- To what extent can a positive country brand transform the underlying reality of the society it represents?
- By considering how to build a better brand, are we in fact putting the “brand” cart before the “reality” horse?

A common refrain at the Summit was that the Jacob Zuma presidency inflicted serious damage on our society, our economy, our global reputation and our own belief in our collective future. Almost all the delegates shared the view that he has been replaced by a far more credible and competent leader in President Cyril Ramaphosa. Leadership quality is a key ingredient of a healthy country brand, and many delegates reported anecdotal evidence that the transfer of power was already improving perceptions at home and abroad.

But speaker after speaker touched on the urgency of a project that goes much deeper than branding: healing the old, festering wounds in our society. Zuma did not create our unsustainable levels of poverty and inequality, or our simmering racial discord, or even our culture of corruption. However, he stole almost 10 years

of potential healing from the pain of our past. He also, certainly, aggravated our legacy issues. The opportunity cost is immense. As a result, the pain will persist for some time – unless a broad compact of government, opposition parties, business, labour and civil society is formed to solve them.

Several voices emphasised the primacy of individual actions in driving progress. As Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng remarked in his powerful keynote speech: “You need to see yourselves, and the company that you keep, as solution bearers.”

What we choose to do with our individual agency is up to all of us. But we can and will disagree on the nature of collective solutions to advance the country. For example, in the debate about Project Good Hope, DA Economic Opportunities MEC Alan Winde and Wesgro CEO Tim Harris spoke convincingly about all the things that the DA’s provincial and city governments are getting right, for example cutting red tape, building skills and generally making it easier and more rewarding for foreigners to invest and visit.

But for co-panellist Palesa Morudu and moderator Kieno Kammies, fixing the racial inequality that mars the image of Cape Town requires reinvention of its socioeconomic and spatial legacies in order to become racially inclusive. Deprived communities need major interventions. Business as usual is not enough.

That’s not a problem unique to Cape Town, of course. As Crispin Sonn noted in his speech, the deepest flaw in brand South Africa is that “we didn’t work hard enough on investing in our true product – which is our people”.



This historical injustice has a troubling feedback effect because the message of failure that it sends serves to deter some of its obvious remedies: foreign investment, tourism and growth. If our “product” (our lived experience) does not match the promise of our brand, then we are an inauthentic brand. In short, we cannot sell a lie.

Even for skilled and ethical communicators, the task of being honest about profound societal failures is not easy. But former GCIS head Themba Maseko’s presentation offered a welcome reminder that frank and responsible communication by our leaders and marketers is an attainable dream. But he also noted that South African business leaders abdicated their duty to speak out about obvious abuses of power.

Bonang Mohale, CEO of Business Leadership South Africa, vowed that the captains of industry wouldn’t repeat the mistake again. He also acknowledged that wage inequality was in itself a barrier to growth. “We have to pay our people a decent salary so that they can afford the goods that we produce.”

Of course, the country’s failure to improve standards of education after liberation was the original sin. The problem was not budgets or policies, but about the translation of these into classroom realities. “Great wars are won by good execution, not great plans,” said Bonang.

The Summit was enriched by insightful voices from other countries, particularly on the unhelpfulness of exceptionalism. Fashion entrepreneur Samuel Mensah spoke about the wonderful assets we can boast of compared with most African countries – an open and functioning democracy being arguably the biggest.

Samuel urged us to compete as hard for African talent, custom and investment as we do for the attention of the rich world. Visa policies need attention, he said, if we want wealthy Africans to settle and invest. And in order to beat the demon of xenophobia, South African children should be taught about the great solidarity and sacrifices made by our fellow Africans during the liberation struggle.

Similar thoughts were expressed by Namibian communications leader Hilda Basson, who urged South Africans to see our neighbouring states as precious allies who want us to succeed, and as valuable customers who want to buy our products and visit our shores.

Russian branding expert Yanina Dubeykovskaya added a note of encouragement. We live in a fractured world with a great shortage of inspiring narratives, she said – and South Africa has one of those rarities in the story of Nelson Mandela. We are lucky, she said, and we should build on Mandela’s spirit of peace. “You don’t have enemies in your discourse. In other countries it’s different.”

Many commentators might disagree with Yanina about the nature of our discourse. And the political panellists, notably Mondli Makhanya, Ralph Mathekga and Thuli Madonsela, all sounded warnings about the increasingly polarised and racialised tenor of our national debate, with land reform looming large as a watershed subject. The panellists agreed that confronting the problem of landlessness was vital. But it must be done within the constraints of the Constitution – because an attack on property rights would damage our economy and further erode our reputation.

Ramaphosa’s immediate task in helping to revive our brand, the panellists agreed, is to foster constructive politics and consensus building. But one of the Summit’s collective insights was that a deep and difficult task falls to us all: to co-create a new reality in South Africa; a reality of justice and shared prosperity. When the promise of democracy is fulfilled, our brand will be unbeatable.

Conversations of the depth and honesty that we saw at the Brand Summit South Africa will take us closer to attaining that dream. As Thuli observed in her closing address, quoting an Ethiopian proverb: “When spiders combine their webs, they can snare a lion. But one must understand that lion.”



THE STARS SHINE BRIGHTLY

The Summit delegates, speakers and soon-to-be award-winning influencer brands gathered at the proudly South African Moyo restaurant at Kirstenbosch – a garden that celebrates the diversity of the Cape Floral Kingdom – to celebrate journeys: Solly Moeng’s journey in reaching the summit of the Summit; the past, present and future journeys of the South African brand; and the journeys of select special brands that are taking people places.

Hosted by Shalom Khandanyisa, the event was both a thank you to all the role-players concerned and an opportunity to share in the 2018 Brand Summit South Africa’s conclusion and celebrate progress.

Keynote speaker Alderman Patricia de Lille brought her tenacity and love of Cape Town to the gala. Introduced as Mandela’s favourite opposition politician, she has 15 years’ experience as an MP. Under her leadership, Cape Town has garnered respect as South Africa’s best-run metro.

De Lille opened by describing the well-known Cape Town brand: that of an iconic world-class city, considered one of the most beautiful in the world and a destination of choice for tourists around the globe. But when she became mayor in 2011, De Lille immediately embraced her first mandate to change this perception – from Cape Town being only a place of beauty, to also being a place of business.

With the premise that the world owes us nothing, De Lille began galvanising the city government, business sector and citizens to rebrand Cape Town. “A brand of a well-run city doesn’t happen overnight. You have to build the brand, build that trust,” she said. Every day, you have to show what Cape Town is all about, she emphasised. “Investors have a checklist to assess where they will put their money. To promote brand Cape Town as a business destination, we developed a checklist to ensure we can compete with the best cities in the world.”

As the global village has grown, the world has changed, with cities being the key drivers of this change. By building city brands in South Africa, we can work together to create a strong nation brand. “The success of a city is a success for the country,” she said. “National and provincial government are all about talk,” continued De Lille. “Cities are responsible for implementing conventions.”

Cape Town’s strong investment and job creation figures have come about through change and transformation, explained De Lille, by getting back to the basics: security, electricity, infrastructure, addressing apartheid spatial planning and bringing people back into the city; creating an environment that fosters business.

The City of Cape Town conducts regular surveys to assess customer satisfaction and identify where to improve. However, a key shift in thinking was necessary to gain buy-in for real change, and in 2014 the city

*“The success of a city is a success for the country.”
– Patricia de Lille*



changed its pay-off line from “This City Works for You” to “Making Progress Possible, Together”.

De Lille also spoke about the water crisis in Cape Town, explaining how through honesty about “Day Zero” and a strong, supportive local message, Capetonians have rallied and reduced water demand from 1.1 billion litres per day to less than half that. As a result, we have shown the world that we are open for business.

“Mandela gave us direction, but now it’s up to us to build on that brand,” De Lille concluded. “The future in our country is bright. Have hope. Take the opportunity that has come around for the second time.”

Shalom echoed De Lille’s words, adding, “Transformation doesn’t come by chance but by change,” before welcoming brand reputation strategist Tshepo Matseba in his capacity as chair of the panel of judges for the Summit’s brand influencer awards.

“Without a promise, it is hard to inspire a nation,” began Tshepo. A clear core purpose and consistent offer is needed, he continued, introducing the criteria in mind when the judges considered candidates for the following brand influencer awards:

- SMME Start-up Influencer Brand
- Start-up Influencer Brand
- Citizen Influencer Brand
- NGO Influencer Brand
- Public Intellectual Influencer Brand.

The public nominated contenders that they felt represented the South African brand, such as NGOs, individuals, companies, start-ups, intellectuals and media, both locally and abroad, explained Tshepo. They had to convey a South African authenticity and be public, ethical leaders. Driving positive media conversations, the nominees had to promote social and economic development and diversity, South Africa and “South African-ness”, being thought-provoking while still staying true to their values and knowing where they’re going.

Joined by the judging panel, comprising Lolly Chibi, John Binns and Mia Azam, as well as Alderman Patricia de Lille, Tshepo announced the winners, who each accepted their award both humbly and proudly.

“It’s only the beginning; it’s the first lap,” concluded Tshepo. “So far, we have shown we can move in leaps and bounds. Next year we hope to see more categories and winners.”

Before final applause for all the award-winners, Tshepo added: “Now that you have won, please don’t take it that you have made it and can now relax! You have made that change. Keep doing what you are doing. Keep encouraging other people to be influencers.”

“Transformation doesn’t come by chance but by change.” – Shalom Khandanyisa







SMME Start-up Influencer Brand

Trophy: WESMART Financial and Administration Solutions

Certificate: Zari (African Equations)

Start-up Influencer Brand

Trophy: Code for Change

Citizen Influencer Brand

Trophy: Benon Lutaaya

NGO Influencer Brand

Trophy: Partners for Possibility – Symphonia SA

Certificate: Sparrow Schools

Public Intellectual Influencer Brand

Trophy: Feenix



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