

2012 Ideas Expo Botswana – Recap Part 2

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(http://funkyforyou.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/530458_443887985637753_307471727_n.jpg)

This is loooooong overdue, my apologies, life has been hating on my blogging hobby recently. This is part 2 of the Ideas Expo recap. In [part 1](http://funkyforyou.wordpress.com/2012/08/08/2012-ideas-expo-botswana-recap-part-1/) (<http://funkyforyou.wordpress.com/2012/08/08/2012-ideas-expo-botswana-recap-part-1/>) I discussed the presenters that presented on the first day, not all, just those that stood out to me. After listening to Kevin Aspoas, CEO of the Jupiter Drawing Room on day 1, I thought things couldn't get any better. How wrong was I!!

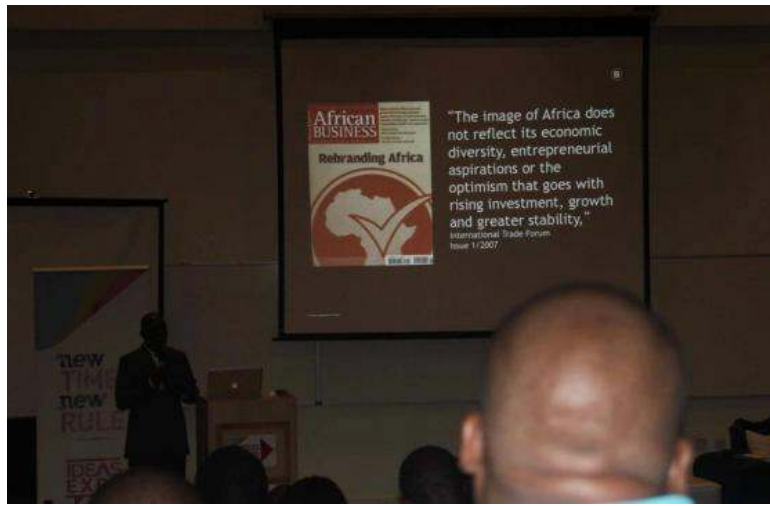
Day 2 brought us 2 very inspiring and talented speakers: Xolisa Dyeshana ,partner at Joe Public SA, and Thebe Ikalafeng, founder of Brand Africa. I actually failed to take comprehensive notes during their presentations because they were so captivating. But I will share the few notes that I did.

Thebe Ikalafeng – Brand Africa

His presentation, though centered on branding and how important it is for Africa, resonated on so many levels because branding is essentially selling your personality and identity. Who you are and what you believe in is reflected in your product. Branding also communicates how you think others view you or how you want others to view you. If you want people to think you are fun and exciting, then you will use bright colours for your packaging and interesting logos (e.g. [Coke](http://www.coca-cola.com/an/) (<http://www.coca-cola.com/an/>)). If you want people to think you are serious and sophisticated then you may be more sparing with your colour choices and use a more structured design for your packaging and logos (e.g. [Sanlan Investment Management](http://www.sanlam.co.za/wps/wcm/connect/Sanlam_Investments_EN/sanlaminvestments/our+businesses/sanlam+investment+management+(sim))) ([http://www.sanlam.co.za/wps/wcm/connect/Sanlam_Investments_EN/sanlaminvestments/our+businesses/sanlam+investment+management+\(sim\)\)](http://www.sanlam.co.za/wps/wcm/connect/Sanlam_Investments_EN/sanlaminvestments/our+businesses/sanlam+investment+management+(sim)))))

Thebe Ikalafeng describes branding as “the unique differentiator “, what makes you or your product unique from all other similar products. There are numerous supermarkets in Botswana for example (Spar, Pink n’ pay, Choppies, Pay less, Woolworths foods etc), however you can tell the difference between each one through it’s branding. It is also what will attract you to a particular supermarket. On a larger scale, branding can build a country and give its people an identity. Malawi, for example, is known as “the warm heart of Africa”, implying that Malawians are friendly and welcoming, that is their identity.

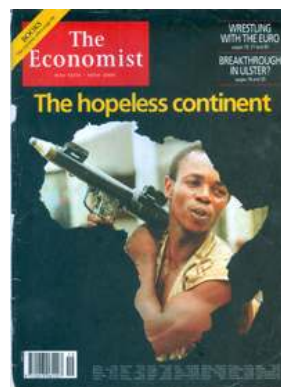
Thebe Ikalafeng stated that, from what he has seen, Africa is not branded well. Our economic diversity, aspirations and optimism is usually not represented in our image.



(http://funkyforyou.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/560945_500708543289030_1588446933_n.jpg)

Thebe mid presentation – Photo credit: Ideas Expo page on Facebook

Case in point, look at the cover below from The Economist in 2000.



(<http://funkyforyou.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/the-economist-may-13th-2000.jpg>)

However, 10 years later they changed their tune:



(http://funkyforyou.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/378816_10150466246339060_1764456792_n.jpg)

We tend to blame foreign media companies for our image. However, Thebe thinks it's time we took the responsibility upon ourselves to change perceptions rather than sit and wait 10 years before they start appreciating our strengths rather than constantly touting our weaknesses.

He also noted that our branding tends to be one dimensional and we are at fault for not thinking out of the box and underestimating our audiences intelligence. How many times have you seen the outline of the continent of Africa in local or continental logos? Which begs the question that is that all we see ourselves as? A continent? A place? A location?



(<http://funkyforyou.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/logos.jpg>)

Thebe stated that Africa needs rebranding by Africans. We have to begin by knowing who we are and accept it. This was the funniest part of the presentation because he then proceeded to show us images that were uniquely African. A memorable one was of a police woman sitting on a curb and she had the widest hips I had ever seen! But such is African. Some of us have big hips and buttocks, we have strong cultural identities, we are heavily influenced by our colonial history, we have a unique fashion perspective, we have political problems, we have wars and famine. That is Africa, and it's ok because it is us. He even snuck in a picture of a woman with an afro and quickly said "I wish more African women would accept they have kinky hair and stop trying to achieve European textures" The ladies in the audience quickly warned him not to broach that subject so he laughed and moved on.

Sadly most of us don't know or are not aware of what being African is because we are so busy trying to be Europeans or Americans. And it is not our fault because our colonial rulers told us for years that simply being us was not good enough. Our dress sense, our traditional religions, our hair, our music etc were not good enough. However, it is time we woke up. What is the point of making ourselves imitations (and not good ones at that) of other continents or countries? To relate it to the personal level, in our youth we spend a lot of time trying to imitate our favourite artists and actors because we don't know who we are. And you do not know who you are until other people show you. Most of my friends who have gone to study in foreign countries should know what I mean. You realise what being "African" is when all you have around you are Asians or Americans. You finally understand what mannerisms beliefs and cultural traits make you who you are.

Once you know who you are, you can then begin to brand yourself, you can then show off your personality and emphasize your selling points. Thebe urged us not to forget the world trends in our self branding. He summarized it as "Think local and act global". Take their ideas and practices and expand them to suit our context whether it be in advertising, design and life in general. Our context or "being African" is what will then differentiate those ideas.

His presentation left everyone quite inspired and I was sure I would change the world after it! Ha!

Go to [Brand Africa \(www.brandafrica.com\)](http://www.brandafrica.com) for more information.

Xolisa Dyeshana – Creativity, Africa's change agent

Xolisa's presentation style was very informal and relaxed so I found it especially difficult to make notes. It felt more like a conversation and he used pictures or videos to support his presentation rather than slides with lists of information.

Being an ad man, his view was that creativity is what would change our continent. Creativity in problem solving, in advertising, in design, in business practices etc. It was actually a presentation that complimented the Ideas Expo very well given that the slogan was "A different point of view". Creativity is a result of taking a different point of view.



(http://funkyforyou.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/561749_500719186621299_94733778_n.jpg)

Xolisa mid presentation – Photo credit: Ideas Expo page on Facebook

He then gave lots of examples using his own work. He presented advertisements of subjects that had been addressed fervently in the media already such as theft, child abuse, sports etc. However, his adverts had taken a different approach on the subject, one that made you see the issue in a whole different light and subsequently caught and held your attention. You can go to their [website](http://www.joepublic.co.za/work/) (<http://www.joepublic.co.za/work/>) to see some of their work.

The most memorable ad he made us listen to was one for child abuse. In it, there were 2 boys bragging about their fathers to each other. One child would say something, then the other would counter with a more ridiculous claim to out do the other. As it went on, it got funnier and we were soon laughing out loud. However things took a dark turn when one boy said something to the effect of “my father’s stronger than yours because he can beat my mum till her arm breaks”. When we heard that, we all fell silent. As the boy continued it began to register that he had an abusive father. The contrast of the emotions we felt, from happy and amused to shocked and saddened was what was most effective about the advert. We immediately felt pity and sadness for the boy and I guarantee if we had been asked to donate to the foundation that was being advertised we would have done so there and then.

Xolisa noted 4 things that ad men need to do to affect change through advertising:

- Create work through your work. Use your position to make work for others. If you can hire locally, do so.
- Self motivate. Believe in yourself and be your own cheerleader. Nothing is more powerful than self belief, it can motivate you to do the impossible.
- Live in the future. Always think about tomorrow and how your work affects tomorrow.
- Understand people. To know how to capture other peoples imagination with your ideas, you need to understand how people think. Case in point: Microsoft vs Apple. Microsoft produced a tablet similar to the iPad in 2000 but it failed to capture the imagination (and wallets) of consumers. 10 years later along came the iPad which was a roaring success. Steve Jobs understood people and used that to sell ideas to them, Bill Gates did not.

And this marks the end of my Ideas Expo recap. It was definitely an enlightening experience and I hope to attend next years as well. I also hope it will get bigger, better and that more people will attend it. A big shout out to the organizers who went out of their way to make it happen, I thoroughly enjoyed myself (and the ribs too! yum!)

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