

Taking local brands to a global stage

FT Quotes

“ Branding is in fact a journey, not something that can be built up in three weeks but instead one that can take even three years and something that applies to all businesses. ”



“ Sri Lankan businesses should have an active online presence, not just through social media like Facebook and Twitter, which can sometimes be counterproductive. Local companies must think bold and think big. ”



“ As Sri Lankan companies are coming from a place with relatively small budgets and a small target market, they should aim for the regional and global markets in order to grow, for which the companies need to be present in the digital space ”



“ Asian CEOs and executive teams have the potential leadership, capacity and aspirational fuel to turn their organisations into some of the most admired and profitable global brands ”



By CASSANDRA MASCARENHAS

“ A strong brand is characterised by a unique brand promise and an outstanding brand delivery that should be consistently balanced. ”

“ This was followed by a listing out of strategic Asian challenges, which included that low cost is becoming a commodity, trading on a ticker, less focus on innovation, asset challenge, dominance of large diversified companies, excess capacity and IP/trademarks. ”

“ According to Roll, what matters to the boardroom is the means of measuring and tracking brand equity and the financial brand value and how a company can maximise the brand's contribution to the overall success of the business. ”

“ This calls for the need for a cross-functional and metrics driven approach to brands as well as elevating the branding discipline into the boardroom. ”



Business and brand strategist Martin Roll discusses insights, knowledge and perspectives about branding as a strategic tool with the audience at the Managers' Session held yesterday.
-Pic by Kithsiri De Mel

FT Insights

- 10 leadership principles
- Elevate the marketing function (CMO)
- Think like a leader – act like a challenger
- Be bold! Differentiate! Be aspirational
- Hire all stakeholders
- Reach pains
- Innovate – the strategic theme towards 2020
- Globalise: be culturally knowledgeable and sensitive
- Unique organisational culture – Live the brand
- Measure and benchmark brand performance
- Avoid arrogance and complacency – Raise the bar and do your own change agent

Discussing the strategic importance of branding, it enhances shareholder value and delivers competitive returns, creates a catalyst for better leadership, creates a shared vision throughout the organisation and works as a mechanism for balancing short and long-term perspectives and performance.

Singapore Airlines

One of Roll's key examples, Singapore Airlines, was started up back in 1973 when the country was regarded to have its own airline one that was regarded as a rather dubious decision at the time.

“ However, ardentness to delivering great service and the latest technology, while it hasn't made Singapore Airlines the best in the world, has worked to their advantage on the whole. ”

“ Brands are about delivering on a promise. It's not something that can be only depended on marketing. ”

Singapore Airlines was the first airline to fly from London to Singapore in a Concord.

“ They were also the first to brew a coffee on board by getting down Italian coffee engineers to set it all up. Similarly they were also the first to introduce the 'hot towel' onboard and have patented the scent of their hot towels. ”

“ It's about the points of difference – such small things also make a difference, ” he pointed out.

Singapore Airlines was the first to fly an A380 commercially from Sydney to Singapore two years ago which put them on the front page of every newspaper worldwide and was aired by all television stations.

“ They didn't have to pay for that sort of advertising, they simply leveraged on their advantage of the latest technology to their advantage. It has cost them many A380s. ”

“ Other airline operators are simply just another aircraft in the sky. Singapore Airlines keeps innovating, their range varies, their brand of innovation has been at the forefront all the time and this characterises them very much, ”



A section of the audience

explained Roll. “ He further stressed on the fact that branding is very important to be left to the market. ”

“ The standard operating procedure at Singapore Airlines, which includes intensive training ensures that their service standards are up to the required standard and that in turn reflects upon their brand. ”

“ It has paid back well for the airline which now has millions of engaged customers and has had only two bad quarters over the past four years, in comparison to Western airlines which go through bad quarters regularly. ”

Branding in Sri Lanka

Singapore Airlines on the whole has helped to rebrand Singapore as a country, contributing 20% of the Singapore brand equity. Similarly, Roll feels that Sri Lanka's own flag carrier airline, Sri Lankan Airlines, can be built up to do the same.

“ It has lost a bit of its forte but the country should concentrate on bringing it back as its going to be the face of Sri Lanka in time to come. Modern face history is now changing, this brand needs to be revamped – it will work better than any billboard or advertising gimmick, ” he stated.

“ Speaking on branding excellence, Roll asserted that branding was in fact a journey, not something that can be built up in three weeks but instead one that can take even three years and something that applies to all businesses. ”

“ He recommended that Sri Lankan businesses should have an active online presence, not just through social media like

than 50 per cent of their revenues on average from outside their home markets, but their great Asian brands can be drawn from these executives to HSBC, Eastman, Three Hotels and Resorts, Peninsula, Hero Honda, Anova Pacific and Huanan.

Roll summed up his eye-opening presentation with a quote of his own: “ Asian CEOs and executive teams have the potential leadership, capacity and aspirational fuel to turn their organisations into some of the most admired and profitable global brands. ”

Facebook and Twitter, which he said can sometimes be counterproductive, but bold to think big. ”

“ As Sri Lankan companies are coming from a place with relatively small budgets and a small target market, Roll feels that they should aim for the regional and global markets in order to grow for which the companies need to be present in the digital space. ”

“ In fact, a McKinsey study shows that the top 10 Asian value creators derive more

