

Need for paradigm shift

Change of mindset needed to break into luxury brands circle, says Mukhriz

By CHOONG MEK ZHIN
 mekzhin@thestar.com.my

MALAYSIAN entrepreneurs who are looking to break into the luxury brands circle should first change their mindset and unleash their innate creativity said Deputy International Trade and Industries Minister Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir.

He said locals must also think about other aspects of making a business grow such as marketing, promotions and branding in addition to manufacturing.

"Most entrepreneurs fear the costs involved but they must realise that in today's world, cost is no longer the biggest issue when it comes to building a brand. Instead, it is quality and perception," Mukhriz said.

He added that locals should draw on the country's rich heritage and aesthetics for inspiration when it comes to manufacturing products.

"Manufacturers of local brands should trust in themselves and their goods. Thus I believe workshops such as the Luxury Business Circle

will push the right buttons among the local business community," Mukhriz said at the opening of a two-day workshop.

This, said Mukhriz, was in line with the Prime Minister's vision of seeing Malaysia transformed into the high-income economy bracket.

"Building a long lasting brand name takes time and money. However, one should think of it as an asset and investment that will see multi-fold returns over time," he said.

While describing Jimmy Choo and Bernard Chandran as among the few examples of local designers who made it big, Mukhriz said Malaysian luxury brands were still in their infancy.

Mukhriz also added that Malaysia is yet to make a name as a choice destination for luxury brand shopping.

"We have some of the biggest and most modern malls in Asia - a market that is growing very fast in today's world. Many of the local retail luxury brand stores do not just rely on tourists for sales but their sales could hit a high note if more locals buy designer



Showing gratitude: Okonkwo (left) presenting a copy of "Luxury Fashion Branding - Trends, Tactics, Techniques" written by her to Mukhriz after his keynote address.

items locally," he said.

He cited the example of locals who prefer to buy luxury items from overseas when they are on holiday because they feel it is part and parcel of their trip. But little do they realise that the prices of designer goods back home are just as competitive or even cheaper.

The workshop is organised by Paris-based Malaysian company AB & Artho and conducted by Luxe Corp, France. It aims at enabling luxury brands, designers and entrepreneurs to understand and apply business strategies essential in developing luxury brands.

Speakers include Luxe Corp executive direc-

tor and founder as well as founding editor of Luxe-Mag.com, Uche Okonkwo, business strategist Nora Salvaggio and Luxe Corp research analyst Anouk Lacroix.

"Emphasis is placed on harnessing the power of the Internet and social media. It is a great tool for growing businesses," Okonkwo said.

She said two good points about the Internet is it has shrunk the world and just about anyone can find any business on it.

"All businesses including established luxury brands have the same opportunity for the same space. It's also cheap," Okonkwo said.