

Branding is more than marketing, warns consultant

By **JANICE HENG**

SMALL and medium enterprises (SMEs) need to pay more attention to branding, and realise that the concept extends beyond marketing and advertising, a consultant has warned.

Jorg Dietzel, of Jorg Dietzel Brand Consultants, spoke to SMEs about the importance of responsible branding last week. The perceived social responsibility of a company influences consumer decisions, he said — and companies, “regardless of size”, must understand their social impact.

The talk was organised by the UOB-SMU Entrepreneurship Alliance Centre, a collaboration between United Overseas Bank, Singapore Management University, and local SME partners. The centre provides subsidised consultancy services to SMEs, and organises activities such as talks and workshops.

“Many SMEs in Singapore, because of the way they developed, have weak brands,” Mr Dietzel told reporters the next day, elaborating on what he had said earlier. “They are very product-driven.”

Many SMEs also have the misconception that branding is a matter of marketing and advertising, said Mr Dietzel. But they should also consider internal branding — making their staff believe their brand message — and

“touch-point management”. “You have to look at every single touch-point where there’s an opportunity to let the consumer meet your brand,” he said. This involves such details as the way phone calls are answered.

Mr Dietzel said the biggest challenge was convincing owner-led SMEs that they need to refresh their brand, as owners may be reluctant to change a brand with which they “identify so closely”.

Nonetheless, Mr Dietzel said he felt that SMEs are opening up to the idea of

Companies, regardless of size, must understand their social impact.

— *Jorg Dietzel*

branding. “Overall, in Singapore, many SMEs have realised that they have a lot of catching up to do,” he said.

“Branding certainly is one area which we are keen on,” said Ang Ser Keng, director of the alliance centre and senior lecturer of finance at the Lee Kong Chian School of Business at SMU. The centre is currently helping a large maritime SME with its internal branding exercises, having earlier advised the company on its proposed international branding.