

7 Steps to nation branding

The hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup gave South Africa the chance to rebrand the nation and the African continent to present a positive and credible brand image to the travel industry and business leaders

By Paul Bannister, South Africa IMC

Given the timing, it would be natural to expect a strong focus on the 2010 FIFA World Cup as the pinnacle achievement within South Africa's nation branding strategy, but truthfully, the World Cup is a high-point, but, more importantly, it is a proof-point and a potential springboard for the fledgling nation brand that is South Africa.

The South African nation brand journey began some 20 years ago with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and his later installation as state president. As the 1990s drew to a close, it became clear that the democracy dividend would not last indefinitely and, in 2002, the International Marketing Council (IMC) was created as a public-private partnership to oversee the reputation management of Brand South Africa (see panel, p27).

It is tempting to trace the development of Brand South Africa chronologically, but it is perhaps far more useful, as a case study, to analyse the seven key success factors.

1 Leverage 'defining moments'

There is no doubt the political events in South Africa between 1990 and Mandela's election win in 1994 changed

the way the rest of the world looked at the country and, perhaps even more significantly, the way the nation looked at itself. The latter point was captured in the recent movie *Invictus*, which reflected a nation's rebirth and the importance of sport in terms of facilitating social cohesion and winning (the Rugby World Cup in 1995) - something which Australia has recognised and leveraged.

South Africa's first 'defining moment' in 1994 gathered the kind of global publicity that exceeded any advertising campaign. There have been other significant moments since, but there have been none to match the hosting of the FIFA World Cup in June-July 2010. The successful delivery of this event will provide critical proof that South Africa, and indeed Africa, is 'alive with possibility', as the Nation Brand advertising has claimed for several years.

2 Align all key stakeholders and develop a true public-private partnership

Although the IMC was founded on the underlying principles of a public-private partnership (PPP), arguably this was not truly brought to fruition until recently. For its first six years, the IMC produced inspirational advertisements and attractive marketing collateral, which it disseminated to carefully targeted global audiences

True Colours: a nation branding ad campaign called on South Africans to 'Fly the Flag'.

Photograph: Chris Kirchoff/
MediaClubSouthAfrica.com



on branding



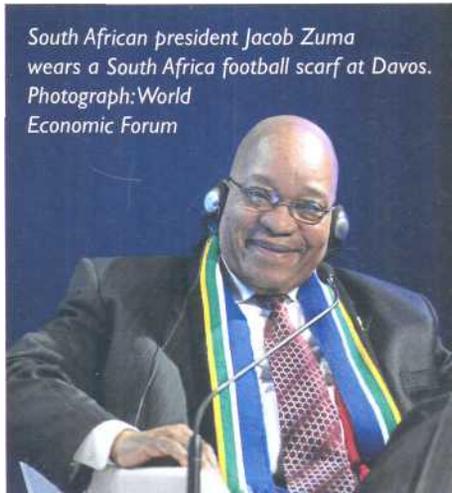
to support the specific government agencies designated to attract tourists, attract investments and encourage trade. The business model proved to be difficult to sustain, given the need to buy media in hard currency and the intensity of competitive activity. The IMC's mandate and *modus operandi* was reviewed in late 2008 and evolved into a 'McKinsey meets McDonald's' model, whereby the IMC generates marketing and communication concepts in response to market needs and challenges (McKinsey) and goes to market collaboratively with key stakeholders (McDonald's). There is one significant difference, however; the 'franchise' relationship is voluntary and based on inspiration, rather than enforcement, since the IMC, despite reporting directly to the presidency, has no direct line of authority over the various stakeholders responsible for delivering the brand experience.

Two recent developments demonstrate the power of this business concept. First, after a long consultative process, the government of South Africa agreed to use one single Brand SA logo when marketing any aspect of the country internationally. This now enables the harnessing of departmental, provincial and city marketing budgets effectively into one global marketing campaign. This symbolic action of 'one nation, one logo' is backed up by alignment in value propositions, imagery and messaging. The second illustration of the power of this collaborative concept was the presence and performance of Team South Africa at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2010 (see panel, p26).

3 Ensure the optimal enabling environment for the Nation Branding organisation

Much has been written about the benefits of having a lead agency or ministry

South African president Jacob Zuma wears a South Africa football scarf at Davos. Photograph: World Economic Forum



SOUTH AFRICA AND DAVOS 2010: HOW DAVOS WAS LEVERAGED

- 1 Agenda inclusion – leveraging the 2010 World Cup's topicality, the country lobbied to get itself and the continent on to the conference agenda by demonstrating that South Africa and Africa matter.
- 2 The creation of Team South Africa – a unique collaboration of corporate South Africa and government members (under the direction of the Department of Trade and Industry) came together into Team South Africa under the tight project management of the International Marketing Council. South Africa's presence at Davos was jointly funded through customised sponsorship packages.
- 3 Messaging – one succinct messaging construct that had to convincingly demonstrate 'why South Africa matters'.
- 4 Presence – creative thinking, conceptually, and in terms of placement and channel. Exemplified by: the South African scarf, which was placed in each delegate's registration pack; the hosting of the main bar at the iconic Belvedere Hotel; and the final night's extravaganza for more than 1,000 guests.
- 5 Creative idea – the core idea was to invite the delegates to 'Experience South Africa' by reaching out and touching all of the senses. The creative theme was woven into the total Davos presence in an integrated, 360-degree campaign.

shirt, mostly the national team) to focus the minds of citizens, employees and schoolchildren as to what they can do to make the World Cup a success, and what the World Cup can do for the country.

5 Getting the basic brand fundamentals in line

In 2001, as part of a very inclusive 'brand key' development process (Unilever let the IMC use its proprietary tool), a remarkably prophetic insight was revealed: "Perhaps the developed world does not have all the answers when it comes to global development."

The ideal essence to speak to that insight was "inspiring new and different ways to do things", but, at that stage, South Africa was not consistent in its ability to live up to the essence and a "holding brand essence" highlighted the 'possibilities' that South Africa presented. This gave rise to the long standing pay-off line 'Alive with Possibility', which has been well-recognised and received.

The coincidence of the current global economic recession and the tectonic growth plate shift in favour of the emerging economies presents a unique 'levelling of the playing fields' opportunity and, courtesy of strong fundamentals and a particularly secure financial services sector, South Africa is now well placed to take advantage of the post-recession recovery by promoting its competitiveness, in terms of: its intrinsic; its role as a regional facilitator and catalyst (Africa is the world's last economic frontier); and, its increasingly significant global role (as symbolised by its role in the agreement of the BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) at Copenhagen and its membership of the G20).

In these circumstances, South Africa is poised to leverage the springboard of a successful 2010 World Cup to take a new and competitive value proposition to the world during Q3 of 2010. The value proposition territory that has been identified, but which still has to be translated into a creative idea and into a memorable pay-off line (to replace 'Alive with Possibility'), will be informed by the drivers of sustainability, equitable growth, innovation, integrity and dynamic adaptability.

4 Work from the inside out

The IMC is arguably incorrectly named as its core activity begins among South Africans who both need and deserve to be inspired to 'live the brand' and, in so doing, deliver upon the values and behaviours that define South African-ness.

The lesson came from the millennium tourism campaign when, prior to the launch of a multi-million rand global advertising campaign, the nation was exposed to the 'Welcome' tourism initiative campaign (the logo was conceptualised by the author) encouraging all South Africans to be good hosts because every eight tourists generate one permanent job. It mobilised the nation, it is one of the country's best known logos today, and tourism is now larger than gold mining as a contributor to the GDP.

The success of the 2010 World Cup will not only be dependent on the quality of South Africa's infrastructure or stadia - these will be world class - but will also be as a direct result of the personal experience of the visitors and the media, particularly at those key 'moments of truth' (immigration, hotel check-in, cash withdrawals, transport). The IMC has initiated two core domestic mobilisation campaigns ('Fly the Flag' and 'Football Fridays') to focus on these moments of truth. 'Fly the Flag' is a literal and symbolic celebration of the nation's symbols (flag and anthem) to evoke pride. 'Football Fridays' are a societal movement (replacing casual or dress-down Friday with the wearing of a football



6 Cutting edge creativity

South Africa is well known for its creativity in the arts and the field of communication (South African ad agencies have consistently boxed above their weight at global awards events like Cannes) and more recently film making (*District 9*, *Invictus*, *White Wedding*). Brand South Africa has always sorted breakthrough ideas in terms of both content and delivery channels and this has given rise to powerful communication campaigns which have extended well beyond the traditional, or 'expected' media into digital, eventing and media management. South Africa works off a relatively small marketing budget, so all communication has had to have the added 'watchability-wow' factor.

Ironically, many of the most powerful and impactful ideas are simple and inexpensive, such as giving every delegate at Davos a South Africa football scarf to wear.

7 Be measurable, be accountable

Countries compete to strengthen their economies and develop and create a better living environment for their citizens. Competition extends across a broad range of issues from trade to investment, skills to infrastructure and tourism to global events. In so far as public and private sector funds are being deployed, it is vital that the nation branding activities are accountable. It has to be acknowledged that a large number of the global metrics

available are based on perception in addition to absolute measures.

The IMC measures Brand South Africa in terms of a performance dashboard that covers stakeholder and staff satisfaction at one extreme and global competitiveness at the other. Two of the most significant indices are the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index and Anholt-Roper Nation Brands Index.

On these indices, the most relevant metrics and longer-term objectives are: South Africa to achieve a top 30 position in the WEF Competitiveness rankings by 2020 (currently at number 44); and South Africa to achieve a top 20 position in the Anholt/Roper Nation Brand Ranking by 2020 (currently at number 35).

One could easily extend the number of key success factors to include: select and retain the best resources (both in-house and as service providers) and work as one team. And one should not underestimate the potential of a nation's diaspora to enhance or sometimes denigrate a nation brand's reputation (in this regard, South Africa makes good use of a select body of global South Africans to support the Nation Brand). However, the seven factors described above will remain the most critical in moving South Africa up the global agenda in terms of interest and competitiveness.

THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA (IMC)

- The IMC was formed in 2002 by the South African government to run in tandem with the President's International Investment Advisory Body.
- Its primary purpose is to provide an overarching reputational management framework for the nation brand, within which the various functional government departments (such as tourism, trade and investment) operate in terms of their specific departmental and functional targets (eg the National Dept of Tourism target is 10 million visitors to South Africa in 2010).
- The organisation's purpose is best expressed in terms of the its mandate: "To build South Africa's Nation Brand Reputation in order to improve SA's global competitiveness."
- The IMC therefore operates within the operational context of the government's overarching national agenda and vision, and specifically, the need to grow the GDP on a sustainable basis, create meaningful and sustainable employment, reduce poverty and increase social cohesion within the SA population.