

# Covid-19 is an opportunity for brands to enhance their positioning

By  Malesela Maubane

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The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, which is a health crisis, has perhaps presented an opportunity for brands to enhance their positioning and product delivery. As German theoretical physicist, Albert Einstein said "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."



Screengrabs from Youtube.

The banking sector is also in the mix in the jostle for brand positioning and equity. The similarity between Absa Group 'I can' and Standard Bank 'It can be' campaigns make for interesting reading. The question then is what sets one from another?

Africanacity marketing campaign might well resonate with most of the customers.



WATCH: Thulani Sibeko on Standard Bank's new brand repositioning

Jessica Tennant 23 Jul 2020



The campaign is part of the Absa rebranding and was introduced when Barclays Africa sold their shares in the banking group. Let us then look at the meaning of 'Africanism', which is described in several texts as "A feature of language or culture regarded as characteristically African."



Absa embraces Africa with new brand

11 Jul 2018



The Africanism concept which clearly inspired the Africanacity campaign might bring resonance with customers within the context of the 'Ubuntu' concept, usually defined as "a quality that includes the essential human virtues; compassion and humanity."

Absa Group's 'Africanacity' campaign has signs of giving power to customers, with its message tactic 'I Can'; and the spirit of collectivism is in contrast to Standard Bank's 'It Can Be'. This view is further supported by Absa Retail and Business Banking's "We Do More So You Can" campaign.

## **Battle between brands**

The battle between the two brands is not only about equity but also the battle for the share of the continental market. Though

it does not only have South African customers, Absa banking group's purpose statement 'Bringing possibilities to life' has a resemblance with Brand South Africa's 'alive with possibilities'.



## BCSA welcomes Brand South Africa's new slogan

13 Mar 2012



The two banking groups have also changed some brand elements in the form of brand name, logo, theme line and graphics. Absa, usually called the red bank, seems to have won the battle over Standard Bank, the blue bank this time.

It was perhaps overdue for Standard Bank to 'move forward', the question to ponder is if they are moving forward in collaboration with their customers! My own experience with Standard Bank during my student days in the late '90s was not a pleasant one.



## Standard Bank 'moving forward', launches staff social network

Simone Puterman 16 Jul 2009



In the midst of the global Covid-19 pandemic, banks like most businesses will be called upon to up their game on research and development, in order to ultimately innovate on the digital front, though on the flipside digital has meant the loss of jobs for many.

## Live up to promises

Brands should live what they promise their customers and as American author, salesman and motivational speaker Zig Ziglar said:

*“ If people like you they will listen to you, but if they trust you, they'll do business with you. ”*

The jury is still out on which bank between the two can lay claim to being a truly African bank as the brand positioning and equity battle is going on! My take is still that the red bank is winning on the Africanism front, though this concept has a different meaning for different people.

For now, it is our hands to safely navigate through the turbulent Covid-19 pandemic waters, though its aftermath will have a devastating socio-economic impact on the majority of South Africans and the global population.

## ABOUT MALESELA MAUBANE

Malesela Maubane (CRRP) is Managing Director of Oo Mbkgatla Media and a former President of the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA). His areas of specialisation include media relations, crisis communication and change management, a 17 years' career spanning the private and public sectors, mostly within the local government sphere.

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