

if this is a case study, what does it illustrate?

 By [Walter Pike](#)

28 Feb 2012

I have a slide in my deck which I often pull out when I want to talk about how advertising has lost much of its power. It's a [research-based index](#) of the trustworthiness of various professions. There is no surprise that, at the bottom of list, taking pride of place as the least trustworthy of all professions are politicians.



Second from the bottom are advertising specialists.



Not hard to understand why

It's not hard to understand why this should be so. The industry's promise is to change the perceptions of people and it does so with advertisements, not by changing product performance or delivery but by the message, often alone.

When Standard Bank [announced on Twitter](#) late last week that it was planning to take FNB to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) for misleading advertising in print, it genuinely believed that it would be thanked by commentators and the public alike for being the good guys.

Instead, it was shocked by the response of some the online public, who saw this as a ploy to divert the public's attention from its own service inadequacies. Standard Bank was "telling tales" on its opposition and this sparked a large increase in the volume of mentions on Twitter. A conversation had been initiated and most were talking about FNB - but what were they saying?

Data on sentiment

I asked BrandsEye, the online reputation management specialists, to get me data on sentiment. It had [just launched a new tool](#) where it gets "the crowd" to verify the sentiment expressed to obtain very accurate, human-verified ratings and I thought these would be useful.

According to the analysis I got back, in most of the commentary where FNB was the focus (88% of the volume of mentions), the bulk of the comment (66%) was neutral in sentiment towards FNB.

These results surprise me but it appears that there was more a sharing of the information, than an outright condemnation or support.

The stuff of which conference case studies are made?

So, will this incident be the stuff of which conference case studies will be made? Maybe it will be, but what will they be illustrating?

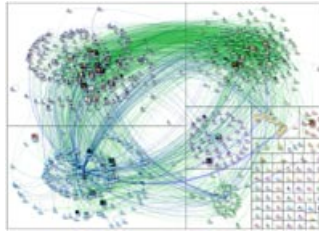
Will they illustrate that Standard Bank managed its social media response badly?

No, because the social media reaction was a reaction to the ASA decision, not to poor social media management. The handling of the response was thoughtful and restrained, in keeping with Standard Bank's approach, and the fallout was minimised.

Less total negative comments

Although of the mentions focused on Standard Bank, 50% of the comments were negative, only 12% of the total mentions were focused on Standard Bank - which gives it less total negative comments than FNB received.

Having said that, the real analysis will take into account who said what and the roles they play in the social network, as illustrated by this network diagram for this incident - but that's for another day.



Courtesy of Marc Smith

[click to enlarge](#)

Will the conference case study illustrate that the FNB social media approach is working? Yes, maybe, in that it has managed to create a community which likes the brand and with whom it is friends, and who will come to its defence.

I don't think that's the real story, though.

Lipstick on a pig

I have just received a piece of bank category research from the SpeakUp campaign which has bearing upon this. It reveals that less than 40% of bank clients are happy, that only 10% think that their bank managers are doing a good job, and 15% would move if they thought that it would make the slightest difference.

So maybe the insightful case study will reveal something else completely, that while you can put lipstick on a pig, it's still a pig.

- It seems that people are not overly concerned with the claim that the FNB advertising may be misleading and untruthful because that, after all, is what you expect from advertising.
- The FNB fans are prepared to rally in support of their online friend but few will recommend; only 4% of the comments in the BrandsEye analysis were rated very positive towards FNB and, even if you add all the positive sentiment, it only amounts to 14% of the total mentions vs 20% of the mentions in which the sentiment is negative towards FNB.
- This, I am sure, will be a shock to FNB.

Overall, this is more a commentary on the category and on advertising. While we enjoy FNB's current fun and entertaining campaign - of which the 'Steve' radio ads and the print ad are but a part - we think that banks suck and we are so immune to advertising claims that we are unlikely to take them seriously. We will, however, react badly when the pot starts calling the kettle black. Which is what has happened here.

Talk is cheap

All the banks really need to get their acts together to deliver a customer experience that people are prepared to defend, not just talk about. Talk is cheap, after all.

For more:

- Bizcommunity: [#bankwars: Standard Bank tries to do a Frankies](#) by Walter Pike
- Bizcommunity: [But is it lies? 'Steve' vs Standard Bank](#) by Tiffany Markman
- TechCentral: [Standard Bank defends its tweets](#) by Craig Wilson
- Memeburn: [What Standard Bank should have done instead of going after FNB on Twitter](#) by Tony Seifart

ABOUT WALTER PIKE

Walter has decades long experience in advertising, PR, digital marketing and social media both as a practitioner and as an academic. As a public speaker; Speaks on the future of advertising in the post - broadcast era. As an activist; works in an intersection of feminism & racism. He has devised an intervention in unpacking whiteness for white people. As an educator; upskilling programs in marketing comms, advertising & social in South, West and East Africa. Social crisis management consultant & educator. Ideaorg founder

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