

DA members must live, support, deliver new brand values



By [Thabani Khumalo](#)

10 Dec 2008

Last month, the Democratic Alliance (DA) unveiled the rebranded and repositioned logo and vision. The new brand is an essential element in the modernisation of the party, and a device to accept, suggest and promise changes.



Before the 2004 election, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) warned political parties to address the way in which they were perceived in terms of racial exclusivity and group preferences: "The racial profiles of parties seem to have a large impact on voters' evaluations of their credibility and trustworthiness, and that, in turn, affects voting choices. Political choices would be determined and dominated by inflexible and incompatible racial ethnic identities, thus cementing enduring cleavages."

The DA seems to have heeded the warning. When ex-leader Tony Leon launched the DA's election lists for the 2004 election, he said, "Today we have heard many of them speak about their lives, their beliefs and their goals. We have seen that they come from all communities, from all walks of life. In the DA, we do not say to one person or another 'This one will represent this group of people, and that one will represent that group of people.' Instead we say 'You, and you, and you, and I - we each represent all of South Africa. Each and every one of us serves all of the people.'"

Strategy did not work

Unfortunately, the strategy did not work as the DA failed to attract the targeted number of black votes. Now the DA has relaunched itself.

"The relaunch is the culmination of an internal process of self-examination and assessment of how better to convey what we stand for to all the people of SA. What we unveiled on Saturday is not just a new logo or a different look. It is an entirely new approach -- to SA, to the voters, to the future. There will be a new offer; a new style of campaigning; and a new determination to transcend the racial divisions of our country's past," said Helen Zille, leader of the DA, on 15 November

2008.

Will the DA succeed this time? Or this is another publicity-generating activity before the 2009 elections?

In recent years, political parties have turned to techniques of brand marketing strategies as techniques to establish party values, differentiate themselves from competitors, package their policies and principles, to broaden their political appeal and to further their interests and support. Branding is about perception, and in politics perception is what really matters to attract followers and supporters.

The fact is that political brands are constantly changing and often demand to be restructured, re-launched, repositioned, revitalised or rejuvenated to improve their product, appeal and support base. This happens not only for political brands which may not be doing well but also for brands that are doing well but would like to do better.

Secret of political branding

What is the secret of political branding?

It is not only about a beautiful logo and a lyrical slogan, but about a balance between expectations and experience. Relaunching a political brand means thinking beyond a new design, a new name and a new vision. It means "going deeper" in terms of content and execution.

Any rebranding strategy should aim at achieving three things for a political party. It has to retain the loyal support base, woo members from competing parties and attract the undecided voters.

Unfortunately, most of rebranding initiatives fail to deliver the desired outcomes because they are not backed by the involved human capital. The bottom line is that, for any political brand to sell, it has to be driven by a strong brand culture embraced in the hearts and minds of leaders and membership.

Again political rebranding is not about the launch event, publicity, advertisements, advertorials or the distribution of branded merchandise, but it should encompass the whole organisation and emphasise a balance between brand promises and deliveries.

Bring brand to life

The challenge facing the DA is to bring the new brand to life - by empowering its members to understand that they are the ambassadors of the brand. They need to live, support, and deliver the new brand values. Every single interaction that takes place within the DA's membership base and between DA and the rest of the country's citizen should reflect the new brand's values and vision.

And each interaction should convince black voters that they're welcome and that the DA's ideas on education, health, economics, rural development, equal opportunities, and other issues share their frustrations, desperations and aspirations.

Whether DA will manage to do that between now and possibly April [election date], it remains to be seen. Until and unless the DA grasps this, its brand relaunch will fail to deliver the desired goals.

For now, my perception is that most of the DA's membership is neither liberals nor democrats, but a group of people whose main interest is to protect and preserve the privileges gained during the oppression and exploitation of black people. And the failure to elect Joe Seremane as a leader of the party confirmed this perception.

ABOUT THABANI KHUMALO

Thabani Khumalo is a researcher, writer and commentator with various radio stations and newspapers and MD of Think Tank Marketing Services, a marketing, communication and

media consultancy. Contact him on +27 (0)83 587 9207, tel +27 (0)31 301 2461 or email ttms.ystd@telkomsa.net.

■ Media matters in poverty and starvation matters - 16 Oct 2012

■ Why Brand ANC needs to be re-charged - 2 Oct 2012

■ Marketing intelligence can accelerate municipality's service delivery capacity - 13 Aug 2012

■ Brand Africa - flexing its muscles in the 21st century - 25 May 2012

■ Co-regulation of a co-dependent coalition - 3 May 2012

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>