

Reflective moments for marketers

 By Percy Shangase

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I am sure you will agree with me when I say the business landscape in general, and marketing more specifically, is littered with thousands of pages of "How To's" in the wake of the crippling pandemic. Brand equity is under attack more so in some industries than others. Brand promise is no longer in sync with brand delivery in most industries, and the communication strategy needs a serious bargaining effort as it cannot self-correct.



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I sometimes wonder about the relevance, and accurateness, not to mention the practicality of these "How to survive" in the middle of the pandemic articles. The real question I respectfully submit should be, "How are our customers or consumers surviving" under these treacherous times?

More importantly, marketers should shy away from the fancy boardroom, assumptions making talk, and start interrogating ways of how to make the navigation of their consumers/customers easier and more bearable. The tone of the message has to change, yet engaging and reflective. How to challenge the ways they have been reaching out to them, and what should the texture of the message be?

The level of engagement should take another meaning altogether. If we spend more time learning about their challenges, dreams, aspirations, and how these have changed? The richness of insights from that exercise will be immeasurable, thus enabling the marketers an opportunity to realign their thinking process and correct the direction and trajectory of their brands.

Unfortunately, the opposite holds true more often than not. We are pre-occupied with the eroding market share and the bottom line, I dare say that consumers/customers are treated with disdain or passive arrogance as we re-model business structures at the boardroom level.

It is my conviction that whatever turnaround strategy we engage in, is ill-conceived and frankly, a total waste of time if consumers are missing in the equation. I read that [Bain spends a considerable amount of money on research, to make an impact on their employees who in turn provide an enjoyable brand experience](#). Without any form of reserved cynicism, I pray that many South African and African companies take a leaf out of this experience. Africa is pregnant with a number of opportunities that remain untapped or exploited, at worse, there seems to be an aroma of falling short on offering an unforgettable brand experience.

By the way, are we still referenced as a "dark continent?". If that is still the case, it demonstrates naïveness and outright arrogance which must be addressed collectively. In conclusion, being consumer-centric as rhetoric is not going to offer customers/consumers a memorable brand journey experience.

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ABOUT PERCY SHANGASE

Percy Shangase is the 1st Black person to win the Prestigious Alan Paton Literary Award. He runs a Marketing and Research Consultancy, despite living with a disability - below knee amputation, however he drives and flies wherever is necessary. He has an insatiable appetite and passion for Marketing meshed with Research and has elaborate experience spanning over 20 years. However, he fails to fathom why Marketing/Research spend are always the 1st to get chopped when market conditions are not conducive.

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