

Political parties are big brands



By [Bonnie Ramaila](#)

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The other day I had a rude awakening around brands and corporate identity. I wore a red beret, no, it did not have Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) or African National Congress (ANC) logo on it - it was just plain.

I went about my shopping and noticed unpleasantness towards me from sales people but ignored it as I went about my errands. The cherry on top was when I was waited at the traffic lights for the green light, car windows opened, a guy in a luxury car pulled beside me, had one look at me, and started hurling insults at me saying 'you f&\$%# idiot'. I was honestly dumbfounded because I did not know where that came from. I winced and looked at my daughters bewildered, it was then they told me that the red beret is eliciting negative attitude towards me from people.

I was finished.

And it got me thinking, are political parties aware of the fact that their 'brand' is important. An organisation's corporate identity is exactly that, identity. People identified me with a particular party, EFF in this instance. Now, the perturbing thing is, if organisation's reputation or that of its leader, Malema in this instance, are or is thought of being fond of life threatening idiocy, what more about its members and supporters. smh ... shaking my head!

Make or break

I realised how most politicians do not know or not aware that brands make or break an organisation. If EFF leader is 'effing' things up, it 'eff's' (no pun intended) it's brand and supporters too. I realised that it really doesn't matter whether the political organisations vision, mission and its values mean well and it exists to advance the course of society, the character, behaviour and social standing of its leader forms part of the brand essence and its dna, unfortunately. And I think this goes for any FMCG or blue chip brand or product.

The only difference is political organisations are about the personality of its leader and partly core values, and the rest of the FMCG and blue chip brands are about its offering and core values.

Political organisations need a crash-course in 'branding 101' urgently before the local elections in 2016. One political organisation that has managed to promote its brand very well and appeal to its supporters is the Democratic Alliance (DA). The former leader Helen Zille did a good job with ensuring that the brand is established, people understand what it stands for and what it means to be a DA member or supporter. Even when we read in the media about the spats and the in fighting in the DA, it rarely taints the brand of the party because it's core values are rooted.

Established brand

Now that Maimane is the newly elected leader, he doesn't need to worry about building the brand and its ideologies, that's sorted, his mammoth task is maintaining that brand not only in terms of its constituency, but also his demeanour and how he responds to media and people in general, that's just a teensy-weensy part of his job.

Unlike the EFF, given the response I got when I wore the red beret, if Malema wants to be taken seriously and his brand to grow, he must go back to basics and mind his demeanour. Thinking about it, he started a long time ago to tarnish the image of his brand (himself and his party), long before it was formed. He was such an irritation before he took power, a problem now he is in power and an absolute nightmare for everyone in Parliament and the country.

It doesn't look as though his behaviour and that of its members in Parliament concerns them. They are completely oblivious to the fact that they are tarnishing the reputation and image of the brand they built. Every given opportunity they pull stunts, throws temper tantrums and hurl insults at the elderly, hence I was seen as such in my red beret. Needless to mention that I gave away that beret. I don't want to bear the cross that doesn't belong to me. I'm not even an EFF member!

They are in trouble not only as a political party, but also from a brand perspective. Unfortunately brands don't exist in isolation to the core values of its organisation, the two are intertwined. Political organisations need to take marketing and its principles seriously.

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