

PR & MARKETING: WHAT SYNERGY?

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INTRODUCTION

Until the lions tell their story, only the hunters will be heard.

I think you will agree that this is a powerful message and that we are indeed translating a new vision into a reality. While we in South Africa are recovering from the euphoria of being given the right to host the Soccer World Cup in 2010, we also witnessed on 19 September 2004 the inauguration of the first President of the Pan-African Parliament, the Honourable Ambassador Gertrude Ibengwe Mongella of Tanzania at Gallagher Estate in Midrand, Gauteng Province, under the theme of “One Africa One Voice”.

It was former President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana who said, “*if we are to remain free, if we are to enjoy the full benefits of Africa's rich heritage, we must unite to plan for our total defence and full exploitation of our material and human means in the full interest of our peoples. To go it alone will limit our horizons, curtail our expectations and threaten our liberty*”.

Events of the past week at the World Economic Forum Africa Summit in Cape Town have furthered expectations of a new dispensation for Africa. A centrepiece of last week's deliberations was the introduction of the Investment Climate Facility for Africa. This aid mechanism is intended to help create a business-friendly environment in African countries by lowering the cost of doing business with us.

The facility aims to disburse \$550 million in grants to African governments over seven years. After the launch in October this year, African governments that have signed up for the New



Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) peer review will be offered grants to study and implement improvements in government regulations and procedures affecting business. It also aims to promote greater political space for business through greater government responsiveness to their needs.

This unique initiative was one of several programmes discussed at the Group of Eight (G8) summit to be held at Gleneagles, Scotland. Speaking at the last session of the World Economic Forum's regional summit on Friday our President (Thabo Mbeki) said although the powerful G8 countries differed on how best to finance aid and debt relief for Africa, he believed they were committed to doing so. You may be aware that British Prime Minister Tony Blair's Commission for Africa called earlier this year for about \$25 billion a year extra in aid until 2010 and about \$50 billion a year by 2015. The Commission wants the immediate cancellation of the debt of poor countries and a real increase in aid for infrastructure development in Africa. It also called for greater investment in creating the capacity for good governance on the continent.

Now, although there has been broad agreement with the Commission's comprehensive recommendations, G8 leaders have not agreed on how best to fund them. As you are aware, Italy, France, Germany and the UK have supported an international finance facility proposed by the UK Finance Minister Gordon Brown, but Japan, Canada and the US have refused to commit themselves to it. Debt relief has also been an issue, with industrialized nations and multilateral lending institutes having different ideas about how it should be done. So disagreement on how to come up with money could delay efforts to begin implementing the Commission for Africa's recommendations. This year's Africa Economic Summit focused almost solely on the Commission's recommendations in an attempt to achieve consensus ahead of the crucial G8 meeting next month, which, as you know, will be chaired by Tony Blair.

You will have been following too President Mbeki's recent meeting with President George Bush in the United States. He reported back that President Bush's refusal to make a commitment to the international finance facility should not be taken to mean that the US did



not want to contribute, only that it would have to do so in a way that was consistent with its budgeting system. The same consideration, he said, applied to the other G8 countries. The clear message from all these meetings was, in his view, a strong belief that all G8 leaders want practical outcomes from the G8 meeting in Scotland.

I have taken some time to sketch these latest developments because they have a direct bearing on PR/marketing synergy and the aphorism I have chosen for my presentation – *Until the Lions tell their story, only the Hunters will be heard* – I believe as the events unfold next month for us the Lions, this becomes our moment of truth and destiny! I have been involved with public relations for the past 30 years both in the consultancy and corporate sector. I have seen the profession grow in stature and reputation to a point where our advice and counsel have been recognized and acknowledged. We are no longer a part of marketing but a key strategic player in a combined group effort to further the aims and objectives of the organization we work for.

No better way is this illustrated than by the case study I will be sharing with you in terms of the International Marketing Council of South Africa and its Brand South Africa strategy. Such is its success that Botswana, Kenya, Zanzibar and Tanzania have called on their services to improve their brand images. At our PRISA National Conference held in my home city of Durban last week another joint PR/marketing initiative was introduced when Unilever South Africa agreed to second Tourism South Africa, and mandated one of its top marketing and PR executives to assist them in their efforts. So the combined talents of what I would term the marketing communications specialist, the new breed of professional, is bearing fruit and epitomizes what I believe is the new direction in which we may be heading. But let me repeat the essential hallmarks of our profession – advocacy, honesty, integrity, expertise and loyalty. These form part of the new Protocol on Ethics in Public Relations, which some 60 Associations throughout the world will be ratifying by the end of 2006.

We will be pledging to conduct ourselves professionally, with integrity, truth, accuracy, fairness and responsibility to our clients, our client publics, and to an informed society; secondly, to improve our individual competence and advance the knowledge and proficiency of the profession through continuing education and research and where available, through the



pursuit of professional accreditation; and, finally, to adhere to the principles of the Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations. Now let us look at the main findings from the latest Future Fact survey, which was used for the South African National Perception Audit. This, in fact, is the third audit conducted for the International Marketing Council, the previous two being conducted in the first and third quarters of 2003. Thus, for the third time in two years, a representative sample of South African adults were asked to place themselves on a continuum of agreement or disagreement with 11 statements specifically pertinent to identification with the country, its ethos and its prospects. Three underlying factors came out strongly: *Confidence, Willingness and Involvement*. The Willing factor is further subdivided into two parts, namely, the Social citizen and the Economic citizen. *The Social citizen* is distinguished by people who are very focus-oriented, holding beliefs in equality for all, being proud to be South African and willing to do their bit to make South Africa a better place for all its people. *The Economic citizen*, on the other hand, is more business focused believing that South Africa has the potential to be a truly wealthy nation, is aware of the value of tourism and investment for the country economically and has a willingness to be involved in making the country a better place.

KEY THEMES IN AN EVOLVING COUNTRY

These three factors have been used for determining the 2004 South African mindsets and here are some of the main findings of the latest report: South Africans clearly share a pride and enthusiasm in their country. They try to keep well informed about events in South Africa so that they can defend their detractors; they buy South African products whenever possible, and are willing to do what they can to help South Africa become a better place.

While some white South Africans, particularly those over 50 years of age appear to be finding it harder to commit, signs are that not only are others on board, they are well into the journey and are even enjoying the ride!



South African Pride and Identity Audit

- I am proud to be South African (93 per cent);
- SA has the potential to become a truly wealthy and powerful nation (87 per cent);
- SA should play the leading role in African politics and development (83 per cent);
- I am willing to do whatever I can to make SA a better place (80 per cent);
- SA is a nation of ordinary people doing extraordinary things (77 per cent);
- I always try to purchase/buy locally manufactured/made goods whenever I can (68 per cent); and
- When I am with people who try to run SA down I use my sensitive knowledge of South Africa to give them a better picture (66 per cent).

What is somewhat surprising is the extent to which South Africans live with difficult circumstances and still appear to be relatively contented. There are lots of things they would like to have but they have most of what they need. They are worried about crime but feel safe in their homes and do not condone theft as a means of survival by poor people. They are worried about HIV/AIDS but believe they have access to good medical care and their families will take care of them when they are old or sick. They are worried about unemployment in South Africa but believe that people like themselves could always find a job. However, as a safeguard they favour a monthly grant from the government to poor South Africans who cannot find work.

Quality of Life and Sense of Well-Being Audit

The following are the values that emerged from the quality of life and sense of well-being audit:

- I try to uphold the traditions of my people (91 per cent);
- I feel safe and secure in my home (89 per cent);
- All members of my household have a warm and comfortable place to sleep (87 per cent);
- I have family and friends who will look after me when I am old/sick (85 per cent);



- I feel happy and satisfied (84 per cent);
- Poor people have no choice – disagree (78 per cent);
- I have good access to healthcare and medical attention when and if I need it (78 per cent);
- In this household we have access to good education (75 per cent);
- I want lots of things but I have most of what I need (75 per cent);
- The only way to get things done is by doing it ourselves (66 per cent);
- We often go to bed feeling hungry – I disagree (63 per cent);
- I believe people like me can always find work/get a job (63 per cent);
- I have been or am prepared to be tested for HIV/AIDS (56 per cent);

Ten years of democracy seems to have rubbed off on most South Africans. People are moving away from divisive racial attitudes and are looking for ways to work together. We have, therefore, “healthy levels of unity in diversity and diversity in unity”.

Breaking with the Past

- It's no use blaming South Africa's problems on the past (90 per cent);
- To be an African, you have to be black – disagree (70 per cent);
- I make an effort to speak to/understand people of other race groups and language groups in South Africa (66 per cent);
- I/ have friends/socialize with people from other racial groups (61 per cent).

CONCLUSION

While it is not possible to put the substantial positive shift in attitude and behaviour solely to good public relations and marketing, there can be no doubt that the International Marketing Council can take much credit for the dramatic shift in public opinion. Certainly by working together with other bodies and through the participation of various government, business, commercial and tourism organizations, an improved climate of opinion and optimism have been created during the past 11 years. It remains for the Council to harness the enormous



goodwill that prevails and to develop an even stronger participative impetus among the various mindsets. Where there is a will there is a way forward and I believe we have an even more exciting future ahead of us.

