
The new South Africa - a Season of Hope!

WE BEGAN OUR WORK in 2006 by holding the highly successful January 8th Rally at Athlone Stadium in Cape Town to celebrate the 94th anniversary of the foundation of the ANC. As usual, our National Executive Committee issued its anniversary statement spelling out our tasks for the year.

Because this year, on 1 March, we will hold our 3rd local government elections, we also took advantage of the January 8th Rally to launch our Local Government Election Manifesto.

A central theme runs through these documents, the January 8th Statement and the Election Manifesto. It is that, during this year, we must do everything possible to accelerate our advance towards the achievement of the objective of a better life for all.

This means that what we do this year must demonstrate to all our people that we are correct when we say that our liberation, after centuries of colonialism and apartheid, introduced, for all of us, a Season of Hope.

As the year 2005 ended, the media reported a highly positive piece of news about our country, reflecting the results of an international survey carried out by Gallup International, intended to capture the "Voice of the People". The survey was carried out in 62 countries.

This survey showed that 60% of our people are optimistic about our future, believing that this year will be better than the last. This is double the figure recorded in 2002. The survey showed that in our country in 2005, there were three times as many optimists (60%) as pessimists (20%).

The figure recorded in our country put us eighth in the world in terms of the level of country optimism. Ahead of us were such countries as Vietnam, China, India, Venezuela and Nigeria. And registering a lower level of optimism than ourselves were such countries as New Zealand, Canada, Greece, the United States, Philippines, Portugal and France.

Responding to the survey results, Mari Harris, director of Markinor, who conducted the poll in South Africa on behalf of Gallup International, said: "I've been doing this for 12 years, and I've never seen South Africans so positive about the future - the figure is really

amazing when you think that there were once (in 1993) actually more pessimists than optimists in the country."

Not long after the publication of the Gallup International poll, a US company, iExplore, issued a report reflecting what it described as "The Top Ten World Travel Destinations in 2005", based on actual purchases of its vacation offers.

iExplore is described as "the leading online seller of adventure and experiential travel. iExplore offers hundreds of made-to-order, guided tours that visit the farthest corners of the earth, particularly the man-made and natural wonders of the world". For five years in a row, the prestigious Forbes Magazine has judged iExplore the "Best Adventure Travel Website".

According to the iExplore report, last year South Africa emerged as the 6th Top Destination in the world. In 2004, we occupied the 13th place. Our 2005 ranking meant that for the first time since iExplore started its rankings, our country broke into the group of the Top Ten Destinations in the World.

This achievement put us ahead of such countries as France, Italy, New Zealand, Jordan and Argentina. Leading the Top Ten were Egypt, Peru, Galapagos Island, China and India, in that order. This is not difficult to understand, given the "man-made and natural wonders of the world" to be found in these Top Five world destinations.

The message communicated by the Gallup International survey and iExplore is that our country has a highly positive Brand Image, to use the language of the marketing world. This holds true both within our country and internationally.

An interesting book written by Dr Nikolaus Eberl and Herman Schoonbee, "Internal Branding: The IziCwe Code", says that "a brand is an expectation of an emotional experience, created by a certain brand promise". It quotes Hannah Arendt saying that promises constitute "islands of certainty in the sea of uncertainty that the future is".

The authors say: "Through promises we manage and control the uncertainty, whilst trust is the attitude required by authentic promise-making. That is why leading brands often command a market share of 50% or higher... In other words, a brand is 'the most valuable real estate in the world, a corner of the consumer's mind'. It is therefore the Brand Promise that creates the Brand Expectation and is the foundation of building the Brand Image...

"Retaining clients over time requires not only that they have a positive experience with

the Brand, but also that they can identify with the Brand character - this being the people in the company and the degree to which they can be trusted to deliver the Brand promise."

All of us should by now be familiar with the slogan used by our International Marketing Council to market or project the new South Africa at home and abroad - Alive with Possibility!

Using the analytical tools contained in the passages taken from "Internal Branding..." to reflect on the Gallup International and iExplore reports, we can say that:

- the brand image of democratic South Africa in the public mind, domestically and internationally, conveys a credible Promise, of vibrant and limitless possibilities for a better life for all, in a world characterised by troubling uncertainty about the future;
- this credible Promise evokes a firm and definite Expectation that indeed the period ahead of us will be characterised by the translation of the limitless possibilities into actual positive results; and,
- when our country meets this Expectation, giving the people at home and abroad "a positive experience with the brand", we will be able further to build our brand image, enlarging the "corner of the consumer's mind", the identification with "the brand character", that constitutes "the most valuable real estate in the world."

Our country's success with regard to all the foregoing is reflected in the fact that in terms of the Gallup International survey, we have progressed from the situation when there were more pessimists than optimists in 1993, to the 2005 achievement, representing a doubling of the optimists since 2002. With reference to the iExplore ratings, we jumped from 13th to 6th in the world rankings in one year.

This progression is based not only on the Promise of the brand image, and the resultant Expectation, but fundamentally on what our country has achieved, which has proved both the Promise and the Expectation to be justified.

There are many things we can cite, to show what has been achieved, which has resulted in the identification with our "brand character", inspiring the positive results reflected in the Gallup International and iExplore reports. This includes many things which many among us take for granted. For example, in this regard, we can say that since our liberation in 1994:

- in spite of our history and the persisting legacy of our past, and despite the fact that



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we are one of the most racially diverse countries in the world, since 1994 we have not had any destabilising racial conflict or riots, such as those that broke out in Australia towards the end of 2005;

- contrary to the painful experience represented by what happened during the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, we have emerged as an important example of what can be done to build a non-racial and multi-cultural society, ensuring national reconciliation even where there had been antagonism and conflict among different nationalities and racial groups;
- we have helped to place the critical issue of the emancipation of women firmly on the agenda of the global process to build a more equitable social order, and therefore the creation of a truly non-sexist human society;
- our democratic processes have survived various tests, leading to the universal acceptance of our country as one of the world's strongest democracies, characterised, among other things, by regular two-way interaction between the elected representatives and the electorate;
- we have achieved steady progress towards the restructuring of our economy so that it gains the organic possibility to grow, expand and develop, producing greater volumes of wealth, demonstrating the possibility for a country of the South to stand its ground and advance, even in the context of a highly competitive and inequitable process of globalisation;
- we have also shown that it is possible to manage the divide between a developed ("1st") world and an underdeveloped ("3rd") world, to achieve resource transfers from the 1st to the 3rd world, without destroying the capacity of the 1st to produce the necessary resources to develop the 3rd, focused on the transformation of the latter to catch up with the former: this confirms that it is possible to adopt and implement policies and programmes that can actually result in the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment, perhaps the deepest structural fault in contemporary global human society;
- we have managed to unite our diverse population to oppose international terrorism, which has exacted a high toll in human lives in many countries since we achieved our



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liberation in 1994: thus we have enhanced our country's image as a haven of peace; and,

- we have positioned our country as a contributor to the global effort to build a peaceful, democratic and just world, dedicated to the task to address the needs and aspirations especially of the poor and marginalised billions in Africa and the rest of the world.

The excerpts from "Internal Branding..." we have cited include the critically important statements that identification with "the Brand character" essentially means identification with "the people in the company and the degree to which they can be trusted to deliver the Brand promise". The authors also make the critically challenging point that "trust (in the Brand) is the attitude required by authentic promise-making".

In our January 8th Statement and our Local Government Election Manifesto, we make various promises to the people, consistent with the brand image of the new South Africa. The people will accept these promises and the brand they represent only because they have the necessary trust and confidence in us that we will do the necessary things to meet the expectations created by our promises.

What we will do, proving that our country is indeed Alive with Possibility, is what will transform our undertakings into "authentic promise-making", without which the highly positive Brand Image of South Africa will turn into its negative. Significantly, "Internal Branding..." warns - "Nothing kills a poor product faster than good advertising".

We will, and must, continue "advertising" democratic South Africa as a country Alive with Possibility, which is basking in a Season of Hope that communicates an optimistic message to all humanity. However, we must take the greatest care that we do not conduct an attractive advertisement campaign, only to find that ours is "a poor product".

We must therefore ensure that we create the situation such that our "market" at home and abroad identifies with "the people in the company and the degree to which they can be trusted to deliver the Brand promise" of accelerated progress towards the achievement of the better life for all, to which we are committed and which we have promised.

To meet our commitments to the people, domestically and internationally, the five critical questions we will have to answer practically during this year of our 94th anniversary and the



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holding of our 3rd local government elections are:-

- Are the members and supporters of the ANC sufficiently inspired by our Brand Image to discharge their responsibility to generate the kind of energy, commitment and actions that will ensure that the people, at home and abroad, sustain their confidence that the ANC can be trusted to honour the Brand Promise!
- Are those who constitute our machinery of government sufficiently inspired by our Brand Image to discharge their responsibility to generate the kind of energy, commitment and actions that will ensure that the people, at home and abroad, sustain their confidence that our government at all levels and in all its spheres, including the local, can be trusted to honour the Brand Promise!
- Have the members of the ANC and those working in government identified with and committed themselves to the success of the Brand Image of democratic South Africa that resulted in the outcomes reflected in the Gallup International and iExplore reports!

In this regard, with regard both to the ANC and the government, have we achieved the "Janus effect of Internal Branding" according to which "the face a company presents to its customers and the general public is in large part a reflection of the face it presents to its employees...If people in an organisation are to deliver on a company promise to customers, they should live the promise in their work environment as well"!

To achieve our objective to accelerate our progress towards realising the goal of a better life for all our people, what must we do, this year, to motivate our members and supporters and those in the structures of government to be as inspired about our Season of Hope as the millions whose optimism about our future is reflected in the Gallup International and iExplore findings!

Thabo Mbeki.