

Brands, cats and the ANC all have nine lives

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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I was asked to comment by a few business newspapers last week about the impact on the Ocean Basket restaurant brand following a complaint that it sold some dishes using freshwater fish...

My answer was that it would not even slightly damage their brand. And it hasn't.

My substantiation was that there are thousands of brands worldwide, the names of which are in contradiction to what is actually being sold.

Many products have misleading names that purport to indicate either their origin or ingredients, or both, while actually doing neither. For example:

- Shield BLADE all-purpose household cleaner does not contain a blade in any shape or form. The use of this word simply denotes the "cutting power of the degreaser in the product.
- Kellogg's ALL BRAN cereal is in fact not all bran" but only 80% bran.
- Pyotts Bacon Kip biscuits contain no bacon whatsoever but a "nature identical" flavouring.
- "Tomato," "Cheese and Onion" and "Smoked beef" potato chips do not contain Tomato, Cheese, Onion or Beef but artificial flavourings.
- Easy-Off BANG detergent is completely silent.
- "Buffalo Wings" sold in most SA restaurants are in fact, chicken dishes.
- "Panama" hats sold by the millions worldwide, including in SA, are not made in Panama but in Ecuador.
- Chinese gooseberries available in most supermarkets worldwide are not from China but from New Zealand.
- Bombay duck not duck at all, but dried fish.
- Cream crackers contain no cream, and are pale brown in colour.
- Head cheese is a traditional sausage made from gelatine and beef or sheep head parts and contains no cheese.
- Hot dog does not in actuality contain dog meat.
- Refried beans are fried only once.

My point is that it takes quite a lot of effort, mudslinging, bad service and producer or retail apathy to damage a brand.

How to turn good profits into great profits

One only has to look at mobile phone networks and banks to realise that they all prosper very well indeed in spite of being hated by probably the majority of their customers.



Zuma and the ANC have faced heavy criticism for what many believe to be their betrayal of Nelson Mandela's ideals, but people still vote for the party - despite the perceived betrayal, and among other issues, corruption, mismanagement, waste and poor service delivery... (Image: GCIS)

In the past four or five years, the ANC brand has diverted almost completely from the brand custodianship of Nelson Mandela. It has played fast and loose with democracy and self-enrichment.

But the ANC still commands more than 60% of the vote.

But, while brands rarely suffer terminal damage from one of even a string of brickbats being hurled at them, the tragedy is that they could be doing much better, making more profit and entrenching themselves far more with their target markets.

If the ANC had continued along the path established by Nelson Mandela, my bet is that they would probably have 80% of the vote and the South Africa economy would

be far better than it is now.

If the country's big retail giants protected their brands more they would find that their already good profits would become great profits.

That is the whole point of branding strategies. It is to move from being 60% successful to being 80% successful. Oddly enough, one of the most inexpensive investments any company or organisation can make is to commission a detailed audit of those areas of their branding that are letting them down. What they need to do to make things more efficient.

Not only is this a modest investment but it most certainly pays dividends in terms of additional profits.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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