

Is SA's positioning of "Inspiring New Ways" right?

 By [Rolf Akermann](#)

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As a proudly SA person, I am very concerned regarding the image of SA world wide. As a marketing strategist I am even more concerned.

Countries are nothing other than brands and as such should be marketed in the same way we market any brand. Countries have all the features of a brand; intrinsics, extrinsics, tangible and intangible benefits etc. Sure, it is a very complex brand with many different benefits, features and target markets, but this does not mean it is not possible to build a brand with a very distinct and competitive positioning that benefits all the role players.

Marketing SA

According to Brand SA's website: "The primary objective of Brand South Africa is to develop and implement a pro-active marketing and communication strategy for South Africa, and to promote South Africa. Our role is to create a positive, unified image of South Africa; one that builds pride, promotes investment and tourism, and helps new enterprises and job creation."

My question is how did Brand SA get to a positioning/strap line that states "Inspiring new ways"? To my mind the process would have been (or should have been), research then strategy development and lastly creative. This then should once again have been researched amongst the target markets.

As a frequent international traveller, I always try and market our beautiful SA. Other than "The rainbow nation" I have never known/been informed as to how SA should be marketed. Only by chance did I go to the website and saw the positioning, which I do not believe is beneficial. Is SA the country to invest in or visit because we "inspire new ways"? New ways of what? Are we the leading country when it comes to inspiring? Are these new ways better than before? If so, why? How will this attract tourists and investors? Will Mercedes Benz invest more in SA because we will inspire new ways for them? As for the potential tourists, will it speak to them?

Nowhere on the website is there any explanation or motivation for this positioning. Neither are there any clues in the research summaries. A positioning of a country is critical to its success. So too is the awareness of all players/parties of the desired positioning sought by the country, as well as the reasons why. How else can we help if we are not informed?

Different marketing angle

I could also question the activities of Brand SA. If a strategy is wrong then so is all else. It is dangerous to propose a

strategy without the insight of research and consultation with all role players. But with my experience of place and tourism marketing I would suggest using DIVERSITY as a positioning. This we can claim for the following reasons;

- Diversity of people (the rainbow nation)
- Diversity of cultures/languages
- Diversity of nature/landscape/climate/fauna/flora
- Diversity of mining/minerals (resources)
- Diversity of manufacturing (industry)

- Diversity of agriculture ... and so on.

Australia for example has done, in my opinion a reasonable job of positioning themselves:

One word UNLIMITED says it all. We should be able to do better. After all we beat them (mostly) in cricket and rugby!

ABOUT ROLF AKERMANN

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