

Rebranding should incorporate consumer input, opinions



By [Thabani Khumalo](#)

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Brands go through various stages of evolution in their life cycles and often may need to be restructured, reworked, repositioned, revitalised, relaunched or rejuvenated to improve their sales, grow their market shares and increase their profits. These are done in response or in anticipation of changes in the market.

Such changes happen not only for brands which may be struggling in the market but also for brands that are doing well but would like to do better.

Desired outcomes

Unfortunately some changes fail to yield the desired outcomes because they are done to make a quick, positive impression upon the board, shareholders and investors; done simply because competitors do it; or lack employees', partners', consumers and clients' buy-in and support.

Any interference with a brand means thinking beyond a new design or a new name. It means, "going deeper." Corporate brand identity is not about a beautiful logo, lyrical slogan or exclusive layout, but about a strong brand culture shared by employees and partners, received and embraced by the current brand consumers and appealing to untapped potential markets.

Last year, I monitored with interest brand changes that involved two traditional brands namely, the since-1930 AmaZulu Football Club and 1903-established *Ilanga* newspaper. Both brand changes were received by brand consumers with questions and resistance.

Not consulted

For AmaZulu, followers threatened to boycott its games because they were not consulted when the change was made. The *Ilanga* is probably the oldest African newspaper in the country. Its motto is "Lihluba udlubu ekhasini", which means covering news in details without fear or favour. But when it reduced its size, readers questioned whether the paper would have enough space to continue covering news in details. They expressed dissatisfaction with their new-look paper, which is now similar to free community newspapers.

Brands are symbols of something that consumers value; therefore, rebranding needs to incorporate inputs and opinions of consumers who should embrace the new brand logo. When rebranding takes place, the current culture, customs and values need to be considered before any changes are introduced.

Such a consultative and inclusive process creates momentum within the consumers of the brand. The bottom line is that consumers love brands that always value them as brand consumers. Brand loyalty is about both rational and emotional decisions.

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