

Will the 112 year bond between Brand ANC and its followers be enough in 2024?

By [Dr Kuhle Zwakala](#)

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Strong brands are built over time; it is their longevity, competitiveness and consistent market dominance that qualifies them as strong brands.



Source: © SABC [SABC](#) In an election year, Dr Kuhle Zwakala examines the 112-year-old brand ANC and its bond with its followers

Therefore, the audit of strong or less dominant brands is retrospective based on historical performance in those markets.

However, brands may draw strength from past positive market performances for leverage, moreover, brands may create points of association based on their noteworthy and memorable historical events and episodes including positive customer experiences.

This means that when a brand's historical performance is intact, managers have points of reference or sources of equity to consult in instances where those brands lose relevance to the present, this is a differential advantage that brands with rich history and heritage possess.

ANC one of the oldest and dominant brands in SA

At 112 years old, the African National Congress (ANC) is one of the oldest and currently dominant brands in South Africa among brands such as Groot Constantia, Old Mutual, PPC Cement, among many others.

Its performance indicators are the successive terms in governance office from 1994 to date, with Western Cape Province being the exception.

The popular belief is that the ground is fertile for opposition parties to make inroads and form a coalition government in 2024 if the ANC dips under 50%.

This is the dichotomy in approach between a strong political party brand with a rich history and less dominant brands.

On the one hand, brand ANC is striving towards keeping the *status quo* and remaining dominant, on the other hand, the rest of the political party brands are bargaining on brand ANC's probable poor performance at the voting stations.

This paints a very grim picture of competitor brands, as, in essence, no singular opposition party brand believes they can contest and topple the 112-year-old brand ANC.



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Rich history and heritage brands survive

My submission is that strong brands with a rich history and heritage can easily repel negative word of mouth, they can survive temporary shortcomings and recover because the temporary negative brand image is often inconsistent with what the brand is known for.

For instance, in 2015 the Volkswagen brand image was tarnished due to its carbon emissions scandal. However, the brand remains dominant globally – currently, the VW Polo is the highest-selling car in SA.

In the same year, the Ford brand suffered a setback, their EcoBoost Ford Kuga range caught fire, nonetheless, the brand remains dominant to date.

Different contexts yes, but the common denominator is a brand with a rich history and heritage.



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Brand ANC delivers

Even though the ANC has conceded to some of its shortcomings in recent times, I argue that it is brand ANC that may deliver the organisation into government and not necessarily individuals.

Its supporters somewhat differentiate between the brand ANC and individual leaders within the organisation, and some have corroded the image of the brand.

However, even if the ANC lose the 2024 general elections, its strong brand would resuscitate the organisation back to competitiveness in the future.

The current trend suggests that if the ANC loses power in government, a coalition government is imminent. However, the public has witnessed a pilot of coalition governments in the few municipalities that have been a chaos of musical chairs, an advantage to brand ANC.

Brand resonance

It is widely accepted that a considerable number of true supporters of brand ANC have absconded from voting in recent years due to despondency because of lack of performance and corruption.

Some have attributed the dwindling numbers at the voting station to voter apathy.

Nonetheless, a state of despondency is indicative of the emotional bond that brand ANC has built over time with its followers.

Instead of brand switching, emotionally connected followers turn to 'armchair' commentators in protest against their brand and its shortcomings.

For instance, regardless of how many years the trophy cabinet has been empty at Manchester United or even Kaizer Chiefs in recent years, their supporters will not easily divorce their brand, instead, they would protest due to lack of performance and abscond from the stadiums.



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My contention here is that Brand ANC resonates with many South African voters due to its rich history, this intense psychological and emotional bond between the brand and its followers has been built over 112 years.

Their performance at national elections corroborates my position.

The consequences of brand resonance can sustain a brand so that it persists into the future, its followers become enthusiastic brand ambassadors, whereas neutrals may be drawn towards those enthusiastic brand communities and ultimately affiliate with that brand.

It is against this backdrop that I posit that Brand ANC should carry the ANC to persist into the future. However, if corruption and corruption allegations recur, its brand equity will eventually diminish.

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