

Will Mangaung arrest a decline in confidence in South Africa's future?

 By [Dr Nikolaus Eberl](#)

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With the 53rd Elective Conference of the ANC now on in Mangaung, and 33 prominent business leaders calling for a joint effort to "arrest a decline in confidence in South Africa's future" (a clarion call joined by members of the banks and the clergy), there is the question as to what exactly will restore both investor and consumer confidence post the event that is causing so much anxiety throughout the nation.

Certainly, throughout the second half of 2012, South Africa's international reputation has weathered many a storm, from the bloodshed at Marikana to the much bandied around article in the *Economist* titled "Cry, the beloved Country" to the downgrading of South Africa's credit ratings by the international rating agencies and the bottom raking (143 out of 144 nations surveyed) for its labour market practices, the plummeting exchange rate and, most recently, the plunge in retail and mining figures.

Still the same country

Whilst everybody is decrying the sorry state of affairs, what exactly can be done to demonstrate to the world that this is still the same country that hosted the best world cup ever and not long ago was hailed as the most progressive democracy on the continent and a landmark success for young democracies worldwide.

In other words, just how can we instil confidence in the collective abilities of Brand South Africa, both at home and abroad? Once considered the exclusive domain of personal branding, instilling confidence has now become paramount for countries to manage not only their reputation but also importantly their social cohesion. And, as other nations have proven successfully, a key tool in the nation branding armoury is archetypal branding.

Throughout the history of humankind, the concept of archetypes has played an important role in everything from simple communication and decision making to brand building and commerce. First deciphered by Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, archetypes are "forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myths and at the same time as individual products of unconscious origin."

Positive and negative

We intuitively 'get' archetypes. They are a shortcut to meaning. They transcend time and place - and are the key to blockbuster movies like *Star Wars*, *The Matrix* and *Harry Potter*. The most successful brands imbue product lines with meaning. Nike ("Just do it") advocates heroic athleticism (Hero). Starbucks expresses images of exotic lands (Explorer). Totalling 12 personality types, archetypes are the meaning magnets of the psyche, as they provide a bridge between the deepest human motivations and felt experience that fulfil, or promise to fulfil, fundamental human needs.

Each archetype holds both a positive and a negative connotation (the so-called shadow). As Donald Trump once said, "if you don't manage your brand, somebody else will ... and most likely that somebody will be your competitor!"

This was the case with former President Thabo Mbeki who in the run-up to the 2007 elective conference held in Polokwane clearly was branded The Ruler by his competitors. This archetype holds a rather precarious position within the trifecta of brand equity:

- **Motto:** Power isn't everything, it's the Only Thing
- **Core Desire:** To exert Control
- **Goal:** To create a prosperous, successful Community

By allowing his opponents to brand him as an autocratic ruler who did not broker any differing views, Mbeki lost the media battle long before he stepped onto the podium at Polokwane and then gambled away his remaining brand capital by delivering an overly academic lecture rather than an emotive call to action.

On the other hand, President Zuma emerged victorious by embracing the archetype of The Regular Guy and constantly positioning himself as a man of the people with a common touch - and at the same time very astutely allowing himself to be portrayed as a victim by the Mbeki regime who allegedly suffered many an injustice at the hands of his adversaries - thereby playing on the national culture code of STRUGGLE. The latter is a very powerful notion of the internal brand image of a country, very much like the self-image of an individual and - according to Prof Claude Rapaille, the originator of the concept of The Culture Code - the key to tapping into the collective unconscious of an entire nation (such as the culture codes of DREAM for America, IDEA for France, CLASS for England, and ORDER for Germany).

The archetype of The Regular Guy is positioned as follows:

- **Motto:** All men and women are created equal
- **Core Desire:** To connect with others
- **Goal:** To belong

Most recently, Zuma's brand archetype has lost much equity as his common touch has been severely compromised by reports in the media that have portrayed him very different to the image of the Regular Guy who is in touch with the needs of the ordinary people.

Rebranding?

Interestingly, the recent ceremony at his homestead in Nkandla saw elders from Zuma's old homestead, Entembeni, extolling his virtues as a former freedom fighter and struggle icon, presumably in an effort to transform his brand archetype to that of The Hero - whose motto is to prove that "Where there's a will, there's a way".

Interestingly, the nemesis of the ANC, expelled Youth League Leader Julius Malema, can almost be considered a master at the art of archetypal branding, as both his acts and his communication style fit the archetype of The Outlaw hand in glove:

- **Motto:** Rules are made to be broken
- **Core Desire:** Revenge or Revolution
- **Goal:** To overturn what isn't working

Clearly, Malema owes much of his popularity to this almost perfect archetypal alignment - to such an extent that at Malema's visit to the Lenasia demolitions last weekend an elderly woman turned to her icon and stated: "I want you. I'm from the Free State. I am 64 and I want you. You are a leader."

Zuma's apparent opponent at Mangaung, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe, is at this stage probably the hardest candidate to decipher as an archetype. However, based on his previous communication style and his brief tenure as state

president in 2008/09, the closest brand archetype could possibly be The Sage:

- **Motto:** The Truth will set you free
- **Core Desire:** To find the Truth
- **Goal:** To use Intelligence and Analysis to understand the World

As the recent US presidential elections have demonstrated, the show is not over until the fat lady sings and it stands to reason that the remaining few days running up to Mangaung may count the most - as in the case of Obama, who had lost much of his lustre from the 2008 presidential campaign and only re-emerged as the front runner in the aftermath of superstorm Sandy - a calamity that allowed Obama to reclaim the archetype of The Creator:

- **Motto:** If you can imagine it, it can be done
- **Core Desire:** To create Things of enduring Value
- **Goal:** To realise a Vision

In fact, it was due to Obama's communication skills as the creator of hope that allowed the United States to quickly reverse their nation branding fortunes after the dark era of George W Bush (who not surprisingly allowed himself to be branded the shadow archetype of the Ruler) and within the first year of Obama's Presidency to ascend to the number one spot on the nation brand index.

And, closer to home, it was none other than former President Nelson Mandela who almost single-handedly rebranded the beloved country by adopting the archetype of the Magician who transformed the villain of nations to the much admired Rainbow Nation within of short period of time:

- **Motto:** To make things happen
- **Core Desire:** Understanding the fundamental Laws of the Universe
- **Goal:** To make Dreams come true

What country archetype will emerge from the proceedings at Mangaung? Maybe it is time to bury the hatchets of division and return to Madiba's call to action that he issued at the unveiling of his mentor Walter Sisulu's tombstone, when he challenged South Africans "to build a Nation of Champions, where all of us are Winners."

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