

Branding lessons learned from religion (Part 1)

By  Jimmy Tembo

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When we try to find the common denominator between a business and church, we easily appreciate the fact that the first intention is to attract people.

Businesses want to attract people so that they may sell their services and products just as churches want to attract people in order to achieve their purpose. It is for this reason that we can always look into one of the world's oldest operations in terms of how they have positioned themselves as a brand and continue to attract millions of people every day: religion. I will deliberately focus on Christianity and how businesses may derive branding lessons from it.



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Location, location, location

Old as an adage this may be, it is also worthy to mention that religion has utilised this the best. In his book titled *Brand Sense*, Martin Lindstrom mentions how almost all the oldest Catholic churches in Rome were strategically positioned at the highest point of land in communities. A factor which reminds us of 'out of sight out of mind', let alone that your brand always has to be easily accessible. In a South African perspective, we could give credit to the old McDonald's who were always placed on corners and Makro.

What are you selling?

Objectively thinking, have you ever wondered how relevant religion would still be if you got all your promised things here on earth? Religion sells us hope, but most importantly it sells us eternal life. Something which we can 'attain' only when we die, so we are sold something bigger than the pastor that we go to. How difficult does that make it for a competitor (albeit some are still trying to) to outdo that? One of my favourite brands today is Plascon paint, because to me they don't sell you paint, they sell you colour. An infinite product, if they sold paint then they would compete on pricing and quality with a lot of other industry experts.

Activations

Given the faith one has when tithing, it is envisaged that one will benefit from their inherent good deed. It is through this activation induced by the Pastor that the church increases both in size and financially. Your royalty programs will come

handy in this instance, besides perceptions being reality, every time a person goes to a church, they do not want to be the only ones left alone after seeing hundreds in attendance. With your brand, celebrate your client stock and expose it to the public.

Face of your brand

Without the famous face of Jesus Christ, it would have taken much longer to convince the consumers of Christianity as a brand, it has taken more than 2,000 years to come up with the friendly image that we have become accustomed to. I watch with a bitter taste in my mouth as small businesses rush to conclude with their logos, the logo must be parallel to what your brand is about and what it stands for. Equally, it must be subtle and never lead your consumers to fatigue.

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