Bank on SA’s most valuable brand in ’21

11 January 2021 - Despite increased economic uncertainty, FNB, the most valuable brand in SA, is increasing its focus on building even more trust and further assisting their customers to thrive. According to Jacques Celliers, CEO of FNB, businesses and individuals now have the advantage of hindsight, and those that are able to apply many of the difficult lessons going forward will be better equipped to survive the challenges the next few years bring.

“FNB was in no way immune to the many business impacts and challenges of the last year, and we have once again learnt many difficult, but valuable, lessons,” Celliers says, “arguably, the most important of which is the vital importance, for any business, of building a strong, purpose-led brand as a key way of surviving challenges and crises, cushioning against shocks, and enabling a quicker return to growth and sustainability when normality is restored.”

Celliers points out that FNB’s recognition by BrandZ as the Most Valuable South African Brand was no fortunate accident but instead testament to its 182-year commitment to investing in the strength of its brand. He says that FNB’s increased brand equity across all BrandZ measures, and particularly the categories of meaning and salience, is humbling as they aim to ensure the FNB brand remains a beacon of trust, resilience and most importantly help across the countries and markets they serve. This becomes especially important during a particularly difficult year. When asked what aspects of the FNB brand have helped to make it rise to the top of the most valued brands list in SA, Celliers has no hesitation in highlighting that the role of adopting an innovative approach to modernisation and contextual customer centricity which begins and ends with the concept of trust is what sets the brand apart.
“With a proud history that extends through the “Sun and Tree” logo across the 8 African countries where we operate, FNB is built on the ethos of trust, help and ongoing relevance, enabling the progression of our customers and the communities we serve.”

“For us, customer centricity starts with the appreciation of just how much emotion and anxiety is at play when it comes to one’s finances. At FNB, a bank account is not just a bank account, nor is a mortgage just a mortgage or an app just an app. While we certainly ensure we leverage top-end technology we realise it truly is not about the tech, but instead about winning the hearts and minds of our customers. Our approach is to build trusted experiences that assist personal and business customers to remove the anxiety associated with managing their money.

Leveraging modern data and technology capabilities, our world-class control panels (app, online, etc) put customers in charge of their finances 24x7x365. Under the ‘Consumerism’ and ‘Businessism’ themes the FNB teams wake up each day focussed on innovation aimed at removing anxiety/frustrations associated with everything they do from buying or selling a home or vehicle, starting or selling a business, getting insured or claiming, short or long-term financial planning, all the way to dealing with fraud in the unfortunate event it occurs.”

“We have also recognised that, in a highly dynamic global environment, it’s not enough to simply keep on offering traditional banking products and services and expect to add the value to your clients that they expect,” he explains, “which is why we have invested massively into becoming a fully-fledged platform-led organisation that is positioned to leverage digital advances to offer solutions matched to the context of each customer, and add real value to all areas of his or her life. Much like modern music platforms are able to present customers personalised playlists,” Celliers explains “so too FNB’s platform journey allows us to deliver highly tailored solutions that transcend traditional banking and meet our customers where they are on their own journeys and help them progress towards the goals and outcomes they desire.”
History also shows that FNB is not only a fair-weather brand. Instead, it boasts a proud 182-years track record of responding purposefully in times of challenge. Dealing with events such as droughts, fires, floods and the current COVID-19 pandemic also has the potential to bring out the best in mankind. At the height of the pandemic, many people and brands demonstrated levels of care and empathy that exceeded anything witnessed in recent history, and again FNB played a meaningful role.

“While our amazing employees and partners continue to deliver incredible acts of kindness on the ground on a daily basis, a significant component of FNB’s COVID-19 specific response involved assisting our customers navigate their financial affairs by both keeping our business up and running under the essential services mandate and through various credit and fee relief measures. Additionally, via various partnerships we helped fund and accelerate the scaling of critical care capacity and feeding schemes in communities and societies where we operate.”

“The uncertainty brought about by COVID-19 has definitely highlighted the value of FNB’s brand building focus over the years, and reminded us of the importance of making customer centricity, relevance and innovation the strategic focus points that underpin our brand and strengthens its value, irrespective of the external challenges we, or our customers, may face.” concludes Celliers.

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