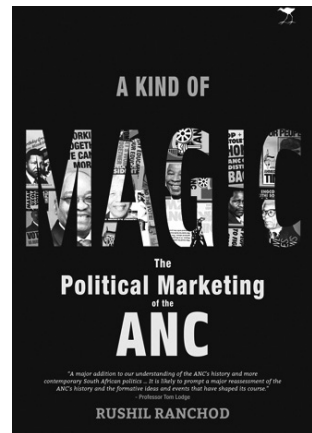


Rushil Ranchod, *A kind of magic: The political marketing of the ANC*. Sunnyside: Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-4314-0827-6, Printed book, 196 pages.

The format and presentation of the book is clear and easy to use, with interesting chapter headings, powerful opening sentences in the form of quotations, and well-structured paragraphs. The clear endnotes at the end of the book as per chapters and index make the book an accessible source for academic use.

Ranchod offers an original and thought provoking study on how the African National Congress (ANC) has sorted its branding into being a recognisable liberation movement and later ruling party in South Africa. Written in an energetic and engaging style, Ranchod provides the reader with a user-friendly introduction to a fascinating and complex marketing and branding process which the



ANC has developed over many decades. The author's meticulous research, which started as a PhD thesis, provides a wealth of detail that adds an extra dimension to the historical facts concerning the history of the ANC. The book, utilising the lens of political marketing, examines how the ANC came to predominance in the South African political landscape. It demonstrates how, through the employment of a set of strategic calculations, it captured the public realm, exciting imaginations and building the foundations of enduring allegiance. On page two of the book, Ranchod *inter alia* states, "Since its founding one hundred years ago, the ANC has developed a rich representational stock from which it is able to construct and develop its brand. Its public identity is deeply invested in its history."

The book shows the adapting nature of the ANC over time. Starting from its formation in 1912, the ANC changed drastically during the course of its history. This was done to make it relevant and appealing to the oppressed masses of South Africans. The author follows a particular framework based on the ANC's historical discourse. With the writing of this book, the scientific point of departure is that the issue of the branding and marketing of the ANC amounts to more than the mere narration of the ANC's history but provides the strategies that the organisation used in sustaining its image prior to and after democratisation in South Africa. Ranchod acknowledges the fact that the question of "marketing" did not really exist in the ANC's political vocabulary. This "marketing" process really started during the apartheid era when the ANC branded its image to attempt to win the hearts and minds of the masses both within and outside the country. In order to

achieve the above, the author suggests that the “bonds of intimacy” and the “bonds of solidarity” had to be forged. Construction of these ties was focused particularly on the black, African marginalised classes.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is an introduction wherein the author gives a synopsis of the reasons behind undertaking such a study. Furthermore, in this chapter, Ranchod highlights the issue of branding and marketing in the early history of the ANC. Chapter two demonstrates the importance the ANC ascribed to its marketing functions. Winning people’s hearts and minds was an important strategic consideration during its campaign of struggle against apartheid. In attempts to achieve the above, Ranchod argues that the ANC invested considerable organisational skill and energy in bolstering its marketing capacity. This was implemented with the notion of liberation being the central idea in its mission. Therefore, liberation functioned as an orientation framework around which the ANC marketed itself. The use of propaganda, publicity and promotion were a crucial part of the exiled ANC’s strategic approach in the struggle against apartheid. In this chapter, the author also highlights the role played by the Department of Information and Propaganda (later Publicity), located in London and Lusaka that directed and informed the ANC’s communication operations nationally and internationally. In this regard, formal ANC publications, such as the periodicals *Mayibuye* and *Sechaba* functioned as an important platform from which to communicate with specific sectors of its constituency.

The third chapter examines the role of the Freedom Charter in the struggle for liberation. It provided the idea and vision of the ANC’s governing project and demonstrated the constancy and endurance of the quest for liberation. Ranchod questions the origin of the Freedom Charter. According to the author, “Most of the scribes lacked the sophisticated skill of summarizing the sense of the meeting in a single sentence. They wrote their summaries on scrap. of paper, backs of envelopes, pages torn from school exercise books, and often the backs of our own handbills. There were only a few carefully formulated opinions about such general issues as the economy, civil rights, democracy and racism” (p. 51). In view of the fact that 2015 is the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, it remains to be seen if research will be undertaken on the topic. Furthermore, the role played by the document called *The call to the Congress of the People* is highlighted.

In chapter four the author interrogates the ANC campaign during the 1994 general elections under the slogan of “A better life for all”. During this period, the ANC had to navigate an organisational, political and ideological terrain which would later directly determine the direction and pace of its election operations. The campaign for the 1994 election placed the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) at the centre of its campaign manifesto. The chapter highlights the election strategies used by the ANC to mobilise and attract the electorate’s

support. The victory in the election introduced the ANC to the challenges of governing South Africa. Interestingly, Ranchod further highlights the role played by Nelson Mandela as an electioneering machine for the ANC during the 1994 elections. Mandela, who was the President of the organisation crisscrossed around the country to galvanise support for the ANC. His image was used by the ANC as a “reconciler”. Without doubt, as mentioned in this chapter, the ANC achieved this purpose admirably.

Chapter five scrutinises the economic challenges which the ANC faced as the ruling party in South Africa. It focuses on the politics and marketing of the ANC’s economic policy. The party aimed to reveal the more nuanced operation of political marketing, emphasising the symbolism of policy functions as a means of promoting the party, government and state. In this chapter, the author stresses the ANC’s crusade to contain the onslaught by financial and political interests against nationalisation. It argues that Mandela was dispatched to key corporate centres to convey the ANC’s credentials as a pragmatic economic partner, within the country and abroad. Furthermore, the ANC embarked on the *Masakhane* campaign in order to promote and strengthen good values. The ability to shape attitudes and transform behaviours through the *Masakhane* campaign was supplemented by allowing the government a more public facilitation role in reconstruction and development.

Chapter six examines the means by which the ANC sought to cleanse itself of the leadership battles that the organisation had encountered. The ANC tried to pull out all the stops during the 2009 elections when it was clear that the party was facing the threat of a decline in support and a real challenge to its electoral dominance.

Chapter seven highlights the attempts by the ANC to cleanse itself by invoking its history and tradition, as well as appealing to the youth, which was said to have voter apathy. The chapter also discusses the Mangaung Conference of the ANC where Jacob Zuma became victorious over Thabo Mbeki as President of the ANC. It was at this conference that all top six positions of the organisation’s leadership were taken by Zuma’s loyalists, thus dividing the organisation even further. The chapter also examines the election campaign of the ANC with Zuma as the face of the organisation. However, this period brought a dynamism to the South African political landscape with the emergence of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), led by the former ANCYL President, Julius Malema and Agang SA, led by Mampela Ramphele.

Ranchod’s work makes a significant contribution to the historiography of the ANC and it is recommended to all those interested in the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa or elsewhere on the African continent.

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