

Are African brands out of touch with Africans?

By [Pat Mahlangu](#)

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African brands are not getting enough love from home and we need to resolve this. According to the annual Brand Africa survey for the 100 most admired brands in Africa, only 13% are home grown while the rest of the list is dominated by European and North American brands.



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Data from Brand Africa also reflects that for the past decade, on average about 20% of the leading brands admired by Africans are made in Africa. This figure stood out for me as it signifies that we have a huge task ahead of us in making sure that people fall in love with African brands.

We need to interrogate what makes global brands likable in Africa. A beer brand like Guinness for instance is consumed more in Nigeria than in Ireland where it originates.

Not to say that there is anything wrong with Africans consuming and admiring foreign brands. But the imbalance is so wide that it cannot be ignored. Brands are entities that represent the image, aspirations and vision of the people who craft them.

It is only fair for us to imagine a better world as one where Africans embrace the brands that are created at home. At the end of the day people support brands that they love, and this translates into profit margins and on a larger scale impacts on the economy.

The rankings are based on a comprehensive pan-African survey across at least 25 countries spanning all the five economic regions. This accounts for over 80% of the population and over 80% of the continent's GDP.



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Crafting brands that win admiration at home also shows that we have confidence in our own ability to inspire growth as a people. The African Renaissance movement calls upon us to achieve economic, cultural, and scientific renewal. We cannot achieve this, without investing into the local brands in our respective countries.

The work is not only cut out for marketing and PR agencies but also for African brands themselves. Some learnings we can take from global companies is that they invest a lot into branding, they aggressively pursue customer connections, and they create impactful experiences for their customers.

African brands must do much of the same so that they can gain prominence. There is nothing stopping South African brands the likes of Bathu or Drip for instance from kicking American sports and fitness giant, Nike from the number one spot on the list. Nike has secured the number one spot on that list for the past four years.



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There is also room for others to join African brands like MTN and Dangote to be amongst the 100 most admired brands on the continent. It is not like African people from Uganda, Zambia, Libya, Nigeria and elsewhere on the continent have not been coming up with innovative businesses.

But how we share the story such enterprises will make all the difference. The best marketers in the world have figured out the key to winning their customers hearts in an information intense world. Creating and sharing great content seems to be one of the secret ingredients. People admire brands that speak to them and provide solutions to their problems.

African brands must be the leaders when it comes to creating content that answers the questions to African challenges. We cannot always be looking outward for progress.

View the [Top 100 Most Admired Brands in Africa](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pat Mahlangu is a marketing expert and the founding CEO of Lerato Agency