

Undisputed king of the castle

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Perennial success of SAB demonstrates a firm grasp of what makes its customers tick

IN THE SA market, SAB Limited is the undisputed choice of all beer drinkers, with the first eight of the top 10 favourite brands all bearing the SAB trademark.

Led by Castle Lager, the company's brands have a commanding 74.8 brand relationship score compared with Hunter's and Heineken's 3.4, a position relatively unchanged from 2004 with the exception of Savannah dropping out to make way for one more SAB brand, Castle Lite.

Peter McLoughlin, marketing director of SAB Limited, SABMiller's local subsidiary, attributes that run of success to the group's commitment to understanding the key consumer insights behind the brand, a fine-tuned consumer value proposition and a 360° marketing programme that supports that proposition from packaging and communication to distribution.

"What sets SAB apart is the strong emotional bonds our consumers have with our brands," says McLoughlin. "In the next few years, we are investing over R5-billion in building our capacity to be a brand-led organisation that meets the evolving consumer needs."

The SA subsidiary of SABMiller has rebranded itself with a new identity as SAB Limited and launched a campaign to "reaffirm what SAB stands for in the South African market".

SAB is a major player in sponsorship of nearly all South Africa's leading sports venues, and has created some of the most memorable advertising campaigns, which could only have been conceived and delivered by way of a deep insight into their consumers.

The memorable TV campaign set in New York to the music of Africa by Toto is the sort of stuff that makes South Africans anywhere in the world insist on their favourite beer without hesitation.

Though in the past the group took a leading role in the sponsorship arena, its strategy has evolved somewhat lately, with more solid returns for the company the result.

"We've optimised our sponsorship portfolio to strike a better balance between the cost of the asset and the investment in leveraging it," says McLoughlin.

Elsewhere in the world of beers, its mother company, SABMiller, marches along briskly as it takes a commanding positioning to establish itself globally.

In the past four years, SABMiller has trebled its sales to \$14.5-billion on the strength of its acquisitions and the turnaround of global brands such as the US's Miller, Italy's Peroni and the Czech Republic's Pilsner Urquell.

No other company has dual recognition of both of its own brand and its products' brands by consumers, or can possibly justifiably claim — for beer drinkers that is — that's it's "perfectly brewed to satisfy South Africa's thirst".

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