

Azam is the jewel of East Africa in continental brands ranking



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Azam, the brand name for Bakhresa Group of Companies, was the toast of East Africa region in Africa's premier listing of the most admired brands announced last week.

Azam was Tanzania's number one top of mind brand and came at number five in the ranking of most admired African brands when prompted, according to the 2020 Brand Africa 100 survey.

The survey is the continent's best brands highlight which is done every 10 years. The last one was in 2010 during the FIFA World Cup in South Africa. It is a consumer-led survey which seeks to establish brand preferences across Africa.

To make the list of the Top 100 Most Admired Brands in Africa and the Most Admired African Brands, the brands had to be available and mentioned in the survey in at least one country other than their domicile market.

The latest study was conducted in 27 countries which represents 50 per cent of the continent, covering all economic regions and with an estimated 80 per cent of the population and the GDP of Africa. The

research yielded over 15,000 brand mentions and over 2,000 unique brands.

Data collection and analysis was conducted by Brand Africa partner Geopoll (www.geopoll.com), a leading mobile survey platform with a database of over 250 million respondents in emerging markets around the globe.

Azam brand preference was among the only three brands in Africa that topped the list in respective countries, outwitting well established foreign brands which were dominant in all the other countries. The other two indigenous brands which ranked number one in their countries were Econet in Zimbabwe and Trade Kings in Zambia.

In Liberia, an African brand from another country, MTN of South Africa, took the one spot, but in all the other countries, it is a non-African brand: Nike (11 out of 27), Samsung (4/27), Coke (3/27) and Adidas (2/27) that lead the way, with Tecno, Orange and Airtel each dominant in one country.

According to the ranking, powerhouse African brands, such as Dangote in Nigeria, Safaricom in Kenya and MTN in South Africa, don't even make the top spot in their domestic markets, and in North Africa, all the Top 10 most admired brands in Egypt and Morocco are non-African.

Made in Africa

Azam's apparent growing popularity was not only in Tanzania where it is gaining trust and confidence among consumers of its wide range of products. The brand was said to have been the single-most contributor to East Africa's strong showing in the ranking of favourite brands which showed the competition pretty even between East, South and West Africa.

The organisers said compared to last year, East Africa increased its contribution by four per cent, to 36 per cent while West Africa came in with 28 per cent of those brands represented and Southern Africa with 36 percent.

"A key driver for East Africa's growth is the Tanzanian conglomerate Azam, with a diverse portfolio that spans media and consumer goods, and a rebranding that has started to reap rewards and endearment from the region's consumers," said Thebe Ikalafeng, Brand Africa and Brand Leadership founder and Chairman.

Bakhresa Group Corporate affairs director Hussein Sufian attributed the achievement to the company's commitment to providing high quality and affordable goods and services. He said the key to success for building a sustainable brand was its massive investment in technology for each product.

"This achievement did not come by chance. Our aim has always been to be the Number One African brand," Mr Sufian told The Citizen by telephone yesterday, adding: "We will continue producing innovative products which meet both domestic and international standards to meet our clients' needs."

Mr Sufian said the company would keep on expanding its operations to other parts of Africa.

"We plan to strengthen our position in Central Africa even as we are also in the process of expanding our operations to West Africa....We are not afraid of competition. We are always ready for it."

Azam jumped 13 places up from the 2010 preference ranking of 18 to settle at number five in 2020, only behind Dangote (1), MTN (2), DSTV (3) and Ambessa (4). But while all the other brands either remained stagnant or dropped in preference, Azam and Ethiopian Airlines (7) recorded the highest growth in recognition. The Ethiopian carrier jumped 14 places up from 21 ranking in the last survey. Glo (6), Vodacom (8), Shoprite (9) and Innoson or IVM completes the top 10 most admired African brands.

"It's concerning that in the 10 years since the triumphant FIFA World Cup in South Africa which globally highlighted the promise and capability of Africa, and despite the vibrant entrepreneurial environment, Africa is not creating more competitive brands to meet the needs of its growing consumer market," said Mr Ikalafeng, during the unveiling of the survey which was streamed live to thousands of people across Africa.

"African brands have an important role in helping to build the image, competitiveness and transforming the continent's promise into a real change," he pointed out. "We have a lot of talent, we have a lot of enthusiasm, we have a lot of excitement and drive but unfortunately we don't see enough resources, patience and patronage that will support their growth," he said in an interview with Africa Business magazine which this week premiers its June edition with the survey report.

Mr Ikalafeng who was Nike's Marketing Director for Africa 20 years ago was referring to findings that nearly 60 per cent of African brands dropped along the way between the two surveys and that in the 2020

list, only 13 per cent of the brands were of African origin. A whopping 87 per cent of celebrated brands in Africa were mostly from America and Europe.

According to him, African governments and businesses must work together to build on the strong enthusiasm for building African brands and cut down on the rhetoric which does not match the reality on the ground. His advise is for African brands to strive for own identity and avoid the pitfall of copying or trying to shadow the foreign brands.

“African brands cannot and should not compete with the French on how to be French. They don’t have the authority or the authenticity. We need to take a distinctive African narrative to the world. It’s what at Brand Leadership we call “thinking locally and acting globally”. In other words, we should be inspired by our African identity and heritage but deliver to a global standard.”

Of the ongoing economic and health crisis brought by the coronavirus pandemic, Mr Ikalafeng feels there lays in there an opportunity for brands in the continent to grow. He says; “As our Africa’s Best Brands initiative shows, we have mostly relied on non-African brands for luxury but on African brands for essentials. During this crisis, where the non-African and other luxury brands have been put on pause, we’ve relied ever more on the essential brands, mostly African, for our day to day.”

“Out of this crisis those essential brands that have delivered with empathy, urgency and necessity will be rewarded. The time out of the global spotlight due to the pandemic has created an opportunity to deepen local brands’ engagement with African consumers in their time of need beyond just their functional needs and has laid a foundation and an opportunity once more for African brands to rise to the challenge.”

Contributions from the audience suggested that African brands that will succeed are those that take advantage of the continent’s added advantage in areas such as food, art and more, but also remain customer centric in their approach. Innovation, technology, especially in the area of e-commerce, quality, good governance and empathy too are key to winning brand loyalty.