



By Helen Mubvumbi

THE search for superbrands is now on following the official launch of this year's superbrand awards by the Marketers' Association of Zimbabwe on Wednesday.

The winning brands are expected to be announced at an awards ceremony to be held later this year.

This year's awards are being run under the theme: "Building Great African Brands: Inspiration and Lessons from Leading African Brands".

The organisers said local and international brands would compete separately this year, as a way of encouraging competition and growth of local brands.

MAZ announced 37 sectoral categories that cut across various sectors of the economy from which the brands will be drawn.

These include information and communication technologies, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, industrial manufacturing, human resources, consultancy and print media, among others.

Speaking at the launch last week, MAZ president Mr Godfrey Dube called upon local companies to develop consumer-oriented brands that are focused on providing customer satisfaction.

"MAZ is encouraging local companies to develop their own brands that will be successful when competing with international brands locally and globally.

"Such a brand will be well positioned to win future Superbrand awards," he said.

He added that branding was not for big companies only but should apply to every company.

"Smaller companies are increasingly competing with large well-known brands sometimes globally. So the aim of branding is to differentiate your company from your competitors in order to convey its unique attributes," said Mr Dube.

The selectors for the top brand would be looking at the brand's approach to the market, and its equity and value in the market.

MAZ adopted the Superbrand concept to develop strong brands, foster strong companies and build a more solid economy.

This year the association expects more than 100 companies to participate. Buy Zimbabwe is sponsoring the awards for the top 10 local brands, said MAZ.

South African renowned marketer Mr Thebe Ikalafeng who was the guest of honour at the launch, said Africans should restore confidence in their local brands.

"As Africans we need to have confidence, believe in ourselves and take pride in the creation and consumption of African products.

"If we look at the history of Africa we have been consuming products and services that are not ours and rejecting everything that is made in Africa. So it is time we rethink our relationship with the continent and understand that we are not going anywhere," he said.

Mr Ikalafeng added that Africans are capable of achieving superbrands as shown by a number of brands from the continent that are competing globally.

"We are capable of doing it, it is within us. It's not a matter of capability but a matter of confidence. We need the ability to take risks," he said.

He added that governments all over the world are supposed to come up with policies that create

an enabling environment but this was not the case on the African context where some governments were actually disabling the environment.

Mr Ikalafeng urged brand developers to think local and act global because whatever brands they come up with would need to show that they have got the roots and heritage that is business-minded but inspired by Africans.