

# Big names know all about endurance

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IN A decade that has ushered in brand mania like never before, the stalwarts have stood the test of time.

In the 10 years since Markinor began conducting its survey on brands, Coca-Cola — the global standard for building brands — has remained the most admired brand by South Africans.

Perennially ranked the most valuable brand in the Business-Week/Interbrand Survey of the World's Most Valuable Brand, the Big Red is the only non-South African brand that has remained in the top 10.

In a comparison of the top 10 brands of 1995 with those of 2004, the top five admired companies of 1995 — Coca-Cola, Eskom, Telkom, SAB Ltd and Pick 'n Pay — remain the most admired brands of 2004.

Reflecting the equity built in the past 10 years through innovative and integrated marketing investment in retail (Vodaworld, Vodashop), advertising (Yebo Gogo), sponsorship (Rugby Tri-Nations, Vodacom Challenge), products and services (4U, Vodago) and reach (10 million-plus subscribers), Vodacom is the only brand that features in the top 10 in 2004.

It is not surprising that Vodacom is one of the few brands established in the past 10 years that features overall or within the various functional brand categorisation.

A global study concluded by Interbrand confirmed that brand-building is a long-term process anchored on trust between consumers and brands.

Led by Coca-Cola (1886), the study established that 64% of the world's most valuable brands were established before 1949, and only 10% were created since 1980.

In a study replicated in SA by Interbrand Sampson, the same conclusion was established about local brands.

What is common among those brands which have stayed in the top 10 and those that have entered the rankings is sustained marketing investment in communication and brand identity.

Absa, the most admired financial services brand; Telkom, the star performer in global telecommunications; Eskom, Africa's leading energy company; Standard Bank, the most admired bank; SAB Ltd, the world's second largest brewer, and SABC have all invested significantly in refining their brand architecture, consolidating their brand identity and value proposition, product and services innovation and crafting award-winning and brand-building advertising and sponsorships partnerships with key properties and events that are close to the hearts and minds of most South Africans.

Whereas Toyota, Woolworths or OK earned their most loyal consumer equity primarily among different race and social groups — Toyota (black taxis), Woolies

(suburban supermarket) and OK (black grocers) — the top brands of 2004 are relevant and appeal across social and racial structures.

Reflecting the consumer driven requirement of brands to reinvest in the communities they service, most of the top brands have invested heavily in corporate social investment.

In a national 10-year survey by Corporate and Social Market Research, the top 10 brands in the Markinor Survey, bar SABC and Shoprite Checkers, have ranked in the top 10 annually as the brands rated by consumers as the most caring companies.

These companies have also been ranked among the brands that have done the most to uplift communities.