

Reshaping the global narrative around our continent

Africa stands at a pivotal juncture. If we are to realise our potential, we as Africans must first believe in our own narrative.

By [Maphefo Mphaho](#) 26 May 2025



Source: © 123rf [123rf](#) Maphefo Mphaho, VML strategist says as we celebrate Africa Day, it's time to start looking at how we reshape the global narrative around our continent – and there's plenty to work with

Despite its rich resources and dynamic population, Africa often contends with entrenched stereotypes that overshadow its progress.

Persistent conflicts, economic disparities, and governance challenges further complicate its image.

It doesn't help that there's a tendency among some Africans to emulate international cultures, which can inadvertently diminish the continent's unique identity.

But with a burgeoning youthful population, abundant natural resources, and a growing influence on the global stage, the continent is poised for transformative progress.

How Africa perceives itself

The WPP BAV (Brand Asset Valuator) Best Countries report measures how the world perceives different countries and how those countries perceive themselves.

Overall country rankings are determined by where a country stands across 10 different areas: power, movers, agility, entrepreneurship, quality of life, cultural influence, social purpose, heritage, open for business and adventure.

The data reveals a marked discrepancy between the perception of Africa from outside the continent and the lived experiences of African citizens on the ground.



Appreciation for heritage

African respondents hold a deep appreciation for their heritage, ranking Africa 14th globally in terms of cultural heritage, while the world ranked Africa 66th.

This self-perception is rooted in the continent's vibrant fashion, diverse music, and flavourful cuisines, which span all 54 countries.

Africa is a continent where traditional values and communal practices are still passed down through generations, further reinforcing this cultural pride.

Cultural contributor

In the realm of entertainment, Africa respondents see the continent as a significant cultural contributor – and rightly so.

The rise of Nollywood and the global popularity of Afrobeats exemplify the continent's creative prowess.

Yet, once again the world's perception was notably less favourable, ranking Africa 54th.

Tax environments

From an economic point of view, African respondents perceive their tax environments favourably, attributing this to progressive reforms in various sectors.

They ranked Africa 37th. The world ranks Africa 68th.

Plight vs opportunities

Global media have traditionally highlighted the “plight of Africa”, creating a perception of helplessness.

Africans see the opportunities that exist.

Many African countries have established special economic zones (SEZs) that provide businesses with tax holidays, reduced corporate income tax rates, and exemptions from customs duties and value-added tax (VAT).

These incentives lower operational costs and encourage both domestic and foreign investment.

Entrepreneurial spirit

Entrepreneurial spirit is another area where African respondents rate the continent highly, ranking Africa 35th compared to the world's ranking of Africa as 66th.

With a predominantly youthful population, there's a palpable drive to identify and seize opportunities,

particularly in the informal economy.

Athletic talent

Athletic talent is also a source of pride, with nations like South Africa and Kenya producing world-class athletes in rugby and long-distance running, respectively.



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How the world sees Africa

Despite our self-assuredness, external perceptions often focus on challenges such as crime, economic inequality, climate crises, and corruption.

These narratives have tangible consequences; for instance, negative media portrayals cost African economies an estimated \$4.2bn annually in lost investment opportunities.

However, it's not all bad.

There are areas where the world views Africa more positively than we do ourselves.

International observers recognise Africa's uniqueness and diversity, often seeing the continent as a leader in innovation, particularly in technology.

Africa's advancements in mobile banking, renewable energy, and digital connectivity are a testament to its growing tech expertise.

Leveraging Africa's strengths

Africa's wealth in natural resources is unparalleled.

The continent holds approximately 30% of the world's known mineral reserves, including significant quantities of gold, cobalt, and diamonds.

These resources are crucial for the global transition to a low-carbon economy, with Africa producing about 70% of the world's cobalt and iridium.

Countries like Botswana have capitalised on this by developing local industries for diamond cutting and polishing, adding value beyond mere extraction.

In the technological arena, Africa is making significant strides.

Sub-Saharan Africa has become a global leader in mobile money adoption, with services like M-Pesa revolutionising financial inclusion and allowing millions to participate in the formal economy.

The continent is also experiencing a surge in e-commerce, driven by increasing internet penetration and mobile connectivity.

Africa's cultural diversity and communal values are equally significant assets.

The continent's rich traditions and collective ethos foster resilience and innovation.

Notably, Africa has contributed to global advancements, such as the development of the CAT scan, underscoring its capacity for groundbreaking innovation.

Africa: Grounded in heritage, rising with innovation

To shift global perceptions, we as Africans must proactively craft and disseminate our own narrative.

The strategic vision: "Grounded in Heritage, Rising with Innovation".

As storytellers on the African continent, we need to highlight Africa's fusion of traditional and modern, showcasing success stories in technology, entrepreneurship, and cultural preservation.

By positioning African brands as embodiments of progress, diversity, and strength, we can attract international partnerships and investments.

However, rebranding Africa is not merely about altering external perceptions – we also need to foster internal confidence and unity.

Elevating African culture, innovation, expertise and creativity can start to shift the self-limiting idea that glob is inherently better.

By embracing its unique identity and leveraging its intrinsic strengths, Africa can redefine its place in the world – not as a continent in need, but as a vibrant, innovative, and indispensable global partner.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maphefo Mphahlo is a VML strategist.

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