

Doing good is good for business: How brand purpose can steer your sustainability journey in Africa

By [Adeola Tejumola](#), issued by [Kantar](#)

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With the definition of sustainability shifting beyond solving environmental, social and economic issues to also include issues of access, inclusion and equality, there's no denying that sustainability is Africa's top untapped business opportunity in 2021. Here's how we'll help you authentically solve the value-action gap and guide you along your brand's sustainable transformation journey.



With the Covid-19 pandemic placing a stronger spotlight on topics such as racial and economic inequality; as well as health and wellbeing; and Greta Thunberg's bugbear, climate change; it's the ideal time for brands to demonstrate action on these topics. Little wonder then that leading global brands, from [Walmart to Unilever](#), are all singing the same tune – 'doing good' is actually good for business.

But what about Africa? Add our verse to the song sheet, because [C-19 Barometer*](#) reveals 90% of consumers in Africa also feel it's important to buy products from brands that support causes they care about. But to get this right, you need to take the time for strategic planning before jumping in with purpose. You'll need to link your sustainability goals back to your overall brand purpose and ensure this is clearly communicated internally to staff and stakeholders alike before you start putting your messaging before the public.



Boosting brand purpose by solving value-action gaps in Africa

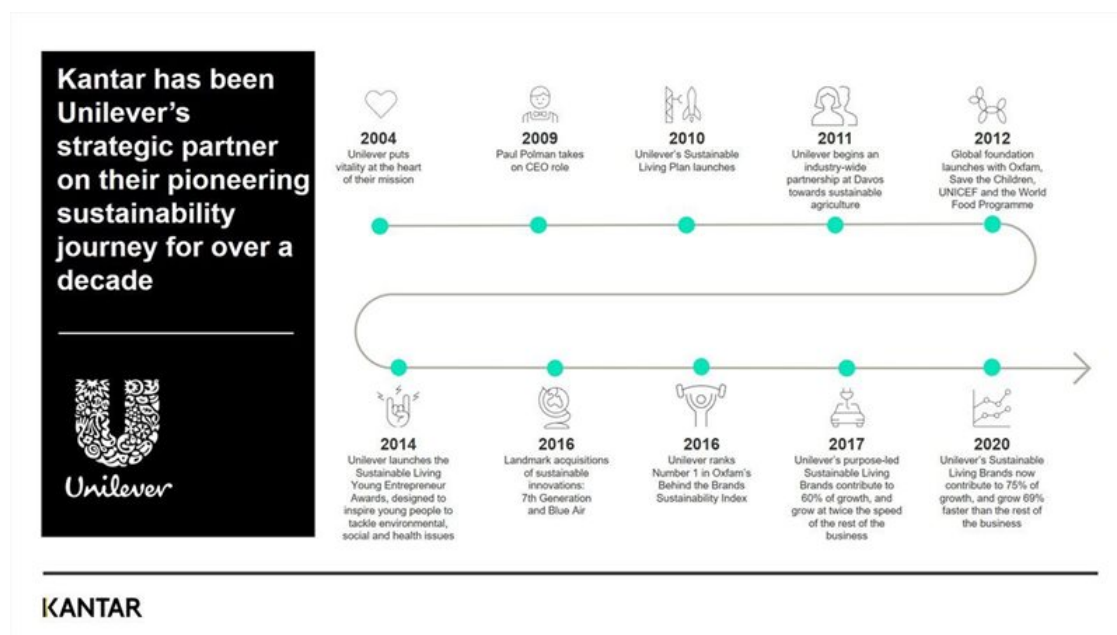
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Building purpose-led brands for real sustainable transformation

True sustainable transformation is about more than ticking the CSR tick box. It needs to be truly embedded across the

business, so you first need to clearly understand and articulate your brand purpose. Only then can you identify a value-action-gap to close with authenticity, to harness sustainable brand growth. Because business success today is no longer about just profit, but about profit with purpose. Take Unilever as an example:



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We've helped guide Unilever's sustainable transformation journey for the past decade, and it's only just getting started with its new inclusive beauty vision that sees a shift away from the word 'normal'.



Unilever adopts new inclusive beauty vision, bans the word 'normal'

11 Mar 2021



But this may have come across as inauthentic if it hadn't already made a continuous and consistent commitment to building purpose-led brands.

Nor would it make sense for a car brand to make the same claim about inclusive beauty. Instead, it'd need to focus on carbon emissions and the manufacturing process. After all, Unilever CEO Alan Jope says it best: "One of the most dangerous mindsets in the world is to set up a false dichotomy between sustainability and economic growth."

The intersection of brand purpose, strategy and sustainability

After all, we're living in a world where there's an accelerated need for brand purpose to be clear and for sustainable action to be first and foremost. Consumers expect businesses to lead the way and help them make sustainable brand choices.



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If consumers in Africa only cared about climate change, it would be difficult for brands to create meaningful and creative responses to fill the gap. Take your cue from the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which vary across pillars of profit, like avoiding child labour and worker exploitation; the people pillar, where there's a need for quality

healthy products and safe packaging; as well as the planet pillar of sustainable sourcing.



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You can certainly align with more than one SDG, if it feels authentic to consumers in your category and makes sense for your brand. Be sure to not only align your sustainability purpose with consumers' values but also communicate this clearly and consistently, to avoid being seen as simply 'jumping on the bandwagon'.

The ability to overlay your brand strategy or purpose with wider societal concerns is becoming crucial for brand development and growth. Especially as purpose itself is no longer limited to the functional and emotional delivery of your brand. Increasingly, to be meaningful, brands and businesses need to stand **for** something that goes beyond category, often informed by the wider social or sustainability lens.



The evolution of purpose

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In the 1980s, the prevailing philosophy was that 'the business of business was business' but, today, doing good is good for business. The public keeps a watchful eye on brand behaviour and is quick to comment on social media when they feel something is inconsistent or dishonest.



So, chat to [Astrid Ricketts](#), Kantar's client partner leading the foundational study in Africa. Fieldwork is set to begin in May across South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Senegal, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and will be nationally representative on age, gender, region and social class. These insights will give us a feel for the sustainability issues that are top of mind for consumers in Africa, to help your brand drive the long-term, data-driven sustainability conversation in your boardroom. Whether you're keen to begin your sustainability journey or you've already begun but need to better understand the route, reach out for guidance and partner with us for actionable results.

Find out more [here](#) and join the conversation on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) to keep up to date with our comms.

*Kantar's C-19 Barometer, the leading syndicated study into how Covid-19 is influencing consumer behaviour, attitudes and expectations across 60 markets.

ABOUT ADEOLA TEJUMOLA

As the new managing director of the insights division for Middle East and Africa at Kantar, I'm big on investing in the future and strongly believe in developing our people to fulfil their own potential in their work.

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