



## PROMOTING KENYAN Brands



# Increasing the buy in for local products among Kenyans

By EVANS ONGWAE >>> eongwae@ke.nationmedia.com

To paraphrase the Bible's on one of the disciples' snide comments about the town of Nazareth: 'Can anything good come out of Kenya?'

To paraphrase the Bible on one of the disciples' snide comments about the town of Nazareth: 'Can anything good come out of Kenya?'

Clearly, yes, and plenty, going by the multitude of brands and personalities that have made their mark locally and even internationally.

More and more Kenya products are gaining regional and global recognition. Money transfer service M-Pesa is a case in point. The move into the Sub-Saharan region by Kenyan banks is yet another confirmation that, products made in Kenya can attract patronage from beyond the country's borders.

Moreover, Kenyan firms make the textiles that the country exports to the United States courtesy of the America Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA).

Kenya's co-operative movement, which promotes thrift, is the best in Africa and seventh globally in value. Yet, the country is known for its low savings rate, estimated at

below 10 percent. Simply, most Kenyans are yet to widely and fully consume the saving and investment products the movement has created for them.

Some of the crafts are popular with people from other nations. Yet what the makers of these craft articles need is their products to be bought by locals to give them the base from which they can spring to much bigger markets.

As most Kenyans know, within the country's borders are some of the most fascinating tourism spots. Yet few practice domestic tourism to boost fellow Kenyans who are employed in the industry.

In the sports world, Kenya has exported some top runners who became American, European or Asian citizens after gaining fame while running for their motherland.

Many athletes have done the country proud. The likes of Paul Tergat, Vivian Cheruiyot, Janet Jepkosgei, Julius Yego, Samuel Wanjiru, Henry Rono and their predecessors such as Kipchoge Keino, Naftali Temu and Ben Jipcho have flown the Kenyan flag high. But, has the country immortalised all of them? Can children born in the 21st Century know



Eco friendly bag shop in Nairobi Kariakor Market. PHOTO | FILE

who these giants were and what they did for Kenya or is the country failing to market them even to their own people? Maybe more know about Usain Bolt than about Rono who was unfortunate never to feature in the Olympics?

Even in football, Kenyan players have shown a lot of promise, often competing well with their African peers who later shine outside the continent. Before George Weah became known and grabbed world honours, he played against Harambee Stars players and found them tough opponent. Yet the Liberian went to Europe and shone. The Kenyan stars remained on local shores and failed to showcase their skills to bigger audiences.

Players such as Ambrose 'Golden Boy' Ayoyi, Wilberforce Mulamba, George 'Fun-

di' Onyango, George 'Nyangi' Odembo, Josephat Murila, Abbas 'Zamalek' Magongo, Mahamoud Abbas and J. J. Masiga, Allan Thigo, among many others, made their mark locally, yet they could have also excelled abroad. These are Kenyan products that missed the opportunity to hit the world stage, probably because they were never marketed properly.

It is said that charity begins at home. Were local fans as passionate about local leagues, they could have patronised games more and enriched it, thus helping to catapult local stars into global fame.

The Buy Kenya Build Kenya being promoted by the government can boost the local economy. That is, if Kenyans accept that charity begins at home.

## Address product quality to achieve 'Buy Kenya Build Kenya' dream

BY PHELISTA NJERU



"Buy Kenya Build Kenya" is one mantra we have heard for a long time. However, to succeed in this drive, it is important to understand consumer behaviour.

The satisfaction of consumers determines repeat purchase and brand loyalty and as a result increased product market share and competitiveness.

Product or service competitiveness and increased demand is a key driver of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Increased product or service demand spurs income at individual and organisation level. Establishing increased

demand is one of the most important goals of any economy. Indeed, Kenya's economy would be growing in double digits if Kenyans bought Kenya.

The question lingers, though. Why does Kenya's consumer prefer to buy from outside the country? Why is it that a need for electronics, clothes, fabric will take a consumer to look for imports? Why are Kenyan consumers willing to pay extra dollars to obtain the imported product?

The unfortunate reality is that producers as well as consumers in Kenya have become the weakest link in obstructing Kenya's economic path. Consumer behaviour can only be changed by creating satisfaction and brand loyalty.

First, quality defines and drives demand. Of great importance is that all stakeholders change the narrative and perception that "what you get from outside Kenya is better quality and cheaper." This explains why Kenyans are obsessed with imported products.

Secondly, high cost of production as a result of high fuel costs, multi-

ple taxation, cost of raw materials as well as administrative, legal and illegal fees increase prices of local goods and services.

Thirdly, getting products from outside Kenya is perceived as an indicator of one's economic status. Again, this is a perception that hurts Kenya's economy.

These three deep-rooted concepts have continued to undo any gains promoted by either the government or any other players. Having identified key concepts that drive Kenyan consumers to import even what is produced locally, the Kenya Manufacturers Association has work to do to change such consumer perception. Key issues need to be on the manufacturers' dashboard - perceived or real quality concerns, products or services costs and well as availability.

The government should promote and support the qualitative and quantitative competitiveness of Kenyan products for this assures it of improved revenues and economic growth.

Kenyans should understand the impact their behaviour and preferences have on their lives. Our economic growth depends on the multiplier effect triggered by consumer behaviour. When demand for a product increases, it triggers increased demand for inputs and, as a result, increases employment at all levels.

Growth is basically driven by derived demand. Period! This is the impact Kenyans create on another country whose products we buy. Eventually, by our behaviour we inhibit our economic growth as we promote other countries' economic growth.

As a strategic move, let's promote and enhance the consumption of Kenya's own products and services in both absolute figures and as a proportion of the gross domestic product (GDP).

While international free trade contributes to economic growth of all countries involved, government control is important especially where market exchange is between developed and developing economies. Ken-

ya stands to benefit comparatively from trade between varied economic levels in various countries.

Since creating a new perception takes time, the government needs to enhance protectionism and promote block trade between countries that have no absolute advantages over Kenya. Such measures of protectionism reduce trade imbalance and improve our balance of trade.

This should not be a licence to offer inferior product but to create efficient and improved quality products supplied to our market. There are perceived or real quality concerns among Kenya's consumers and these need to be addressed.

These are realities that KAM and Kenya Bureau of Standards (Kebs) and all concerned need to be aware of. This will change the consumer's perception of locally produced goods - and consume them.

Dr Phelista Njeru is a lecturer and head of Economics Department at Mount Kenya University