

Search for SA's oldest brands

Affinity Publishing is researching a book on the history of brands and branding in South Africa that will include the early days of brands and intellectual property protection from the mid-1800s, as well as the further development and success of branding up to today. For the past 17 years, it has produced an annual *Brands & Branding: The Encyclopaedia of Brands & Branding in South Africa*.

 By [ActivRetail](#) 28 Jan 2010

When Ken Preston, Affinity's publisher, read that Coca-Cola and Mercedes Benz were founded in 1886, he thought it amazing that that a soft drink and an automobile brand could have been a part of global society for nearly 130 years. However, it also prompted him to consider how South African brands square up in the longevity stakes. His research showed that our brands had fared surprisingly well. Nederburg, for example apparently dates back to 1810 and Mrs Ball's to 1852.

"Considering South Africa was distanced, at least geographically, from the branding mainstream 120-plus years ago, you might be surprised to know that of the 330 locally active consumer and corporate brands we investigated recently, 124 were over 70 years old and 70 over 100 years old. This is if you regard, and we do, the registration of a trademark as the founding date of what has today become a far more complex entity than the brand," he says.

The following are trademark applications made in the Cape Colony in the late 1800s:

1877 - Henry White & Co for Red Heart Rum

1880 - Singer Sewing Machine Manufacturing Co, New Jersey US for Singer Sewing Machines

1882 - James Crossley, Middlesex for Eno's Fruit Salt

1887 - Lever Brothers for Sunlight Soap

1888 - Corn Products Company, US for Maizena

1888 - Royal Baking Powder Company, New York, USA for Royal Baking Powder

1889 - John Johnston for Bovril

1889 - L Rose & Co for Rose's Lime Juice

As Preston adds, "While these are not all of South African origin, they are a clear indication of the country's involvement with brands and branding. Some more truly South African brands with histories dating back to the turn of the last century include Barnetts, which is 113 years old, the 106-year-old Bradlows, the 101-year-old All Gold, the 93-year-old Ackermans and the 82-year-old Afrox."

Preston is also fascinated by how few changes have been made over the years to some heritage brands' labels or logos. In particular, he pointed to Royal Baking Powder as a prime example of one that has remained virtually unchanged. "It should win an award for consistency."

Branding influence

Jeremy Sampson, chairman of Interbrand Sampson, the Johannesburg office of one of the world's leading strategic branding and design consultancies, wrote in the 2009 edition that having a glorious past is no guarantee of a prosperous future, but a successful past helps build a winning culture.

"When companies start out they are not immediately brands - that takes time. South African history is littered with those who announced the launch of a new 'instant' brand only to see it quickly slide into oblivion," he states.

"Some would argue that brands have become too important in our lives and that they are overly powerful and influential, but the thing about brands is that we make them what they are, and they touch our lives continually in different ways.

"There are some who claim to still march to the tune of the anti-branding, yet when you enquire into the intimate details of their private lives, not surprisingly, it emerges that they are much more brand-reliant and [brand-] conscious than initially they were prepared to admit. In some cases, they simply didn't realise the influence brands exert on their lives.

"Look into the homes of those over 70, and you will find their brandscape differs from those a decade younger. Drop a couple more decades and the under-40s will differ again. Get to those under the age of 18 and they already have their brand friends. The challenge for many brands is to span as many decades as possible, by being adopted early and then staying relevant," he concludes.

If you have any information about brands that might prove relevant or useful for the forthcoming book, contact the company on tel +27(0) 11 442 2366.

ABOUT ACTIVRETAIL

The strategic partnership between ActivRetail and BizCommunity offers the best news of its kind to the retail industry. In a strategic positioning agreement, ActivRetail and Retail.Bizcommunity have created an association by bringing a joint offering to this sector in terms of news, information, research, services and product news. This creates the best media, business and trade services to stakeholders within this vibrant industry. Please continue to submit news and updates to editor@fmcg.co.za. Or visit: [ActivRetail](#)
[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>