

Biotrade promotion

Generic marketing strategies for indigenous plants, products and ingredients

South African Rooibos Council



ABioSA GUIDE

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THE ABS
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A glossary of biotrade terms can be found at www.abs-biotrade.info/resources.

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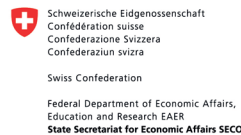
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What is generic marketing?

Generic marketing is promotion of a product rather than a brand. It is the marketing of something available from more than one organisation.

For example, generic marketing would see the promotion of oranges as a source of Vitamin C, or red meat as a source of protein; rather than individual orange and meat farms or brands. It is usually done by trade bodies acting in the interests of multiple brands or producers.

Generic marketing is typically aimed at consumers or people who buy and distribute products on their behalf. It raises awareness, communicates benefits and stimulates demand. It may also be aimed collectively at future product developers, and can be used to dispel myths as well as promote truths.

In biotrade, generic marketing may be applied to a species or its ingredients rather than to a particular product from one company.

Generic marketing takes place in the pre-competitive space where companies have common interests and benefit from doing things collaboratively for a collective and equal benefit.

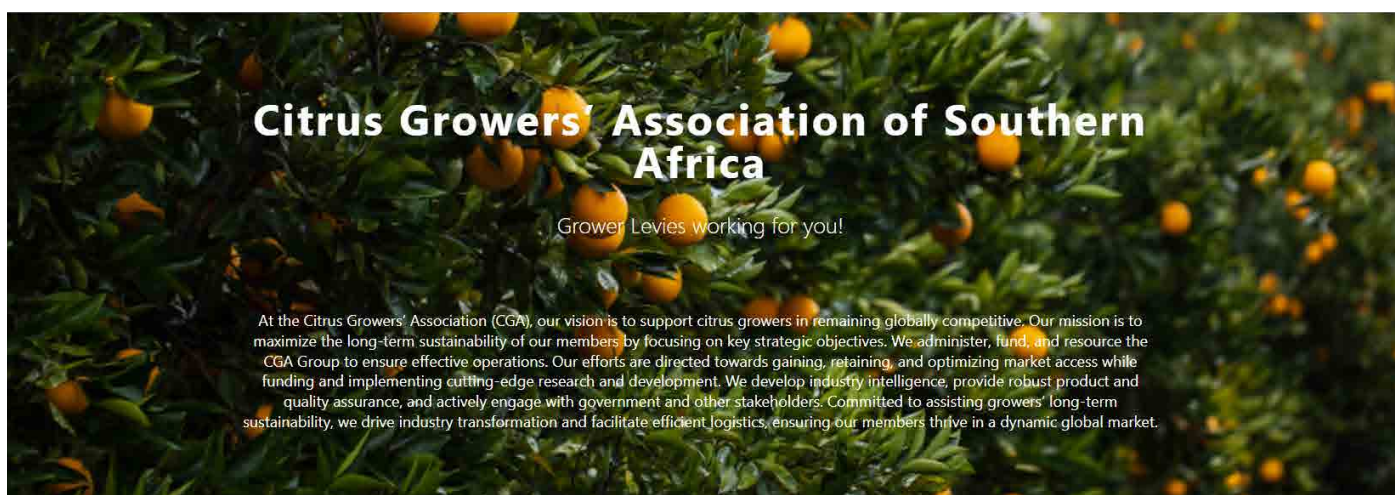
It aligns with a commonality of purpose and the meta-level sector development approach taken by southern African biotrade species including Baobab, Marula, Sceletium, Buchu and Honeybush.

How can the biotrade use generic marketing?

Generic marketing is a powerful strategy for biotrade promotion. Many biotrade species and the ingredients sourced from their leaves and fruits are not widely known outside of the areas where they grow.

Generic marketing could be used to educate people about the species, including what it looks like, where it grows, and the culture and knowledge of the people who have traditionally used it for food, medicine or ceremonies.

Generic marketing can also be applied to the ingredients produced from biotrade species. It can communicate health and nutrition benefits, and promote different products based on biotrade species, and how to use them.



CGA Group Calendar



Industry Dashboards



Industry Statistics

This is the home page of the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa, which supports citrus growers in becoming globally competitive and promotes their long-term sustainability.

Generic marketing strategy

Strategies for generic marketing typically arise from a collective need identified by an organisation representing the producers of a product or ingredient.

The approach will depend on the current state of the sector, consumer awareness, trends and economic or market conditions.

For example, everybody already knows about red meat as a food group, but the producers of red meat might want to keep promoting it as an available and healthy option in a market where alternatives to meat are being promoted.

The citrus sector may want to remind consumers that orange juice is a healthy drink in the face of competition from high-sugar synthetic energy beverages.

In the tourism sector, organisations like [South African Tourism](#) promote the country as a whole, rather than particular provinces, resorts or hotels. [Brand South Africa](#) promotes South Africa as a destination for investment, trade and export; and [Proudly South Africa](#) encourages consumers to buy local to stimulate job creation.

Promoting biotrade

Most biotrade ingredients and products have a comparatively low-level of recognition so there is a significant long-term opportunity to use generic marketing to raise awareness.

The strategy would typically start with matching the needs of the producers and the potential appetite of consumers for a product or ingredient. This would form the basis of the promotional messaging.

The messaging may want to consider issues such as origin, availability, safety, traditional use, health benefits and taste.

Generic marketing strategy must take account of current consumer awareness, what a new ingredient or product might be replacing, and potential gaps in the market.



This is the home page of Brand South Africa which promotes South Africa as a destination for investment, trade and export.

What are the tactics?

Generic marketing tactics should be tailored to suit available budgets and based on where the target audience can be reached reliably and cost-effectively. It also requires a sustained long-term campaign.

Decisions about generic marketing tactics should be based on consultations with sector association members; and where possible through focus groups and surveys with target consumers.

Cost effective generic marketing approaches include publicity in trade and consumer magazines, participation at trade shows, and social media.

Marketing materials should also be produced for the existing communication channels of producers and suppliers, including websites and social media platforms, and direct communication with customers.

And generic marketing should also be applied inside an organisation so that staff and partners are aware of the messaging, and can reinforce it in their interactions with suppliers and customers.



This is the home page of Milk South Africa, an organisation which promotes the image and consumption of South African dairy products among consumers.

Success factors

The following are some of the necessary elements behind a good generic marketing campaign.



There needs to be a critical mass of support and consent from those who the generic marketing campaign is acting on behalf of. It should be aligned with the needs of large and small companies, and in the biotrade should include communities, producer groups, cooperatives etc.



There needs to be equality in the strategy and messaging. The campaign should benefit everybody equally and should not favour any single region, company or sub-sector.



Generic marketing needs to be well funded, carefully targeted, and sustained.



The messaging needs to be supported by evidence. Claims need to be verifiable. So if consumers want to check something they should be able to do so on a sector association website which links claims to the research.



Producers need to be able to deliver against the offers and promises made in a generic marketing campaign. So if an ingredient or product is promoted it must be available to purchase.



Be aware of industry and consumer trends. You are communicating in a market which is overloaded with messaging. You need to know where your messaging fits.



Use visuals like photography and graphics. Consumers need to SEE what you are talking about. Invest in professional photography and video and good graphic design. Remember that words can convey facts, pictures convey emotion.



The campaign needs dynamic leadership and project management, preferably a team in a sector organisation and not only associated with a single brand or company.



During the campaign there needs to be means to monitor its reach and its impact. This could be through before and after consumer awareness surveys. Or a campaign could have a call to action. Some of the best monitoring is the simplest – did sales increase or was there increased traffic on a website and growth in trade enquiries?

GENERIC MARKETING CASE STUDIES AND SUCCESS STORIES IN THE AFRICAN BIOTRADE

Building appetites for Baobab

About twenty years ago the southern African trade association PhytoTrade Africa began to run generic marketing campaigns for Baobab. This was a response to the need of their Baobab-producing members. Production was bigger than sales so they needed to identify new markets.

This aligned with PhytoTrade's mission to support sustainable growth, increase sales and create jobs in its members' biotrade value chains. Several campaigns were devised with producers and partners.

The Better Breakfast campaign showed how Baobab could be added to different breakfast options – and its effect on the glycaemic index. The messaging pushed the nutritional content and composition of Baobab to the nutraceutical sector while being careful not to make health claims without scientific evidence.

PhytoTrade targeted sports nutrition with Baobab promoted as something to prepare for exercise, as fuel during exercise, and useful for recovery. This responded to trends for functional foods and supplements for physical health.

PhytoTrade also ran a campaign in bars and at trade shows – with a cocktail mixologist using Baobab as an ingredient. This resulted in a gin being produced with Baobab as a flavour.

PhytoTrade monitoring and evaluation showed that generic marketing generated growth in sales volumes and jobs.

The African Baobab Alliance (ABA) primarily conducts generic marketing of baobab through its website.

The site launched in July 2023 with details of Baobab's many uses. ABA membership grew from 40 to 81 members with applications from individuals, universities and NGOs or community organisations focused on different areas of Baobab research.

ABA develops marketing materials about Baobab products, based on scientific research to substantiate health claims.

ABA's social media platforms LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook are used for generic marketing of Baobab. Followers on these platforms increased significantly in the past two years, showing the impact of generic marketing. LinkedIn followers increased from 367 to 755, Instagram 22 to 68 and Facebook 106 to 416.

These platforms are used to communicate and respond to both positive and negative issues around Baobab. An example is a statement in response to an article on Baobabs dying due to climate change.

ABA members also conduct generic marketing through participation in trade shows. Because Baobab is a good news story from Africa, the industry is also able to leverage substantial amounts of free publicity from the media.

Another key tool is the use of influencers who are paid to promote Baobab through their own channels.

One very important measure is the adoption of a coordinated approach towards Baobab marketing. Key players in the industry have agreed to concentrate marketing around a few health benefits rather than the previously scattergun approach of marketing a wide range of different benefits that ultimately confused consumers.

Now consumers are receiving more consistent and focused messaging and so have a better understanding of what baobab does for them.



PhytoTrade Africa

The benefits of Buchu

The Buchu Association was formed in 2019 and had generic marketing as a core strategy from the beginning. The first step was the association website, which is a central platform for information about Buchu, including its history, traditional knowledge, production, benefits and availability.

The website increasingly contributes to industry visibility; and has clear value as a credible and trusted voice for the industry and an accessible channel for communicating to partners, the market and consumers. The linked email address is effective in enabling enquiries and communication to potential producers, the market and other interested parties wanting to learn about Buchu.



The Buchu Association is a collective working to promote, protect and support the growth of a sustainable buchu industry that is inclusive of all its stakeholders.

The home page of the Buchu Association's website.

Healthy Honeybush

Generic marketing is a priority activity at the SA Honeybush Tea Association (SAHTA), which uses a local agency to create campaigns and share content. Its focus is on traditional knowledge, communities, health and wellness benefits, taste and aroma, and trends around sustainability and biodiversity protection.

SAHTA promotes Honeybush through social media campaigns, using members' retail products to introduce Honeybush to new followers.

The campaigns are supported by the board and members, with a dedicated team and a social media service provider driving this activity. Sales growth has been aligned with the campaign and for SAHTA the monitoring and evaluation shows that generic marketing really works.

The focus will remain on audience growth, increasing engagement, and driving greater awareness of Honeybush tea. SAHTA hopes to build deeper connections with its audience while continuing to position Honeybush as a wellness staple in households.



Representing Rooibos

The SA Rooibos Council (SARC) has applied generic marketing since the inception of the organisation, but has increased efforts over the past 10 years with significant results. It is one of the key portfolios of SARC and is run in a proactive and structured way with a dedicated budget.

The main focus of SARC's generic marketing is sharing information on the health benefits of Rooibos supported by SARC research. It has evolved to include more lifestyle content and information on areas of importance such as the environment. The campaign also monitors public media for misinformation that it needs to correct, and helps to manage perceptions of issues such as drought and its impact on Rooibos supply.



Alongside traditional media engagement, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are increasingly used, bolstered by the use of influencers. SARC is promoting Rooibos not just as a drink but as a lifestyle. It promotes the stress-lowering and brain-enhancement benefits of Rooibos during exams, and highlights that its low caffeine content makes it better than high-sugar energy drinks.

SARC uses a professional agency to drive its generic marketing with 12-month media plans and mechanisms to track consumer responses.

SARC has shown the benefits of a long-term investment in generic marketing, and the benefits of partnerships. It has a productive working relationship with international bodies which share all of SARC's marketing information. This gives the Rooibos sector huge additional reach and audiences for almost no cost, including the membership of the tea promotion bodies in Canada, the UK and Europe.

Value of media exposure in 2024

