



## THEBE IKALAFENG

BSc. MBA. LLM in Intellectual Property.  
Chartered Marketer (SA)

*"Thebe Ikalafeng is Africa," TedxAccra*

***"The foremost branding and reputation authority in Africa,"  
New African Magazine "100 Most Influential Africans"***

*"The chief architect of Africa's brand identity," Blaque Magazine*

***"100 Most Influential Creative People of African Descent,"***

***United Nations 'International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable  
Development.'***

*"A trailblazing Africa-focused dynamo purposefully committed  
on seeing African brands compete on a global stage,"*

*Financial Mail AdFocus Lifetime Achievement Award, 2021*

***Public Relations Institute of South Africa PRISM***

***Lifetime Achievement Award, 2022***

Thebe Ikalafeng is the pre-eminent global African authority in branding and leading advocate for a brand-led African renaissance. Described as the "the foremost branding and reputation authority in Africa" and *recognized as* one of the '100 Most Influential Africans' by respected UK based New African Magazine, and one of the '100 Most Influential Creative People of African Descent' during the United Nations 'International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development' in 2021, he has had a profound, sustained and distinguished contribution to branding in Africa and shaping a positive narrative for the continent in a career that spans over 30 years building brands *across* Africa.

Building on a distinguished corporate career that started at Colgate Palmolive in New York, USA and concluded with a lauded tenure as chief marketing officer for NIKE for Africa in 2002 where he won over 75 industry awards globally, and having been to every African country, he has purposefully committed his life's work to inspiring Africans to create and consume African brands, and building competitive brand-led industries that will transform the continent's reputation and economy, create jobs and ultimately alleviate poverty and inequality.

He is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Brand Leadership, the award-winning Africa-focused pan-African branding advisory firm which was inducted into the New York based REBRAND "Hall of Fame" for excellence in branding in 2015. In 2010 he founded the Brand Africa initiative to re-imagine Africa's image and competitiveness, and "Brand Africa 100 | Africa's Best Brands," the widely cited survey and ranking of brands in Africa, to champion a brand-led African transformation agenda. In 2020 he founded the Africa Brand Leadership Academy [ABLA] to build the capacity and talent for Africa-focused brand leadership.

Inspired by former South African president Thabo Mbeki's speech at the United Nations University on 9 April 1998 that "out of Africa reborn must come modern products of human economic activity, significant contributions to the world of knowledge, in the arts, science and technology, new images of an Africa of peace and prosperity," and Ghana's founding president Kwame Nkrumah's speech on 24 May 1963, the eve of the founding of the

Organisation of African Union (OAU) (the forerunner to the African Union), that “we must unite now or perish,” he has inspired and mobilized the continent *around* a brand-led agenda to *inspire an African renaissance and* realize this vision for a *united and* competitive continent.

His seminal Brand Africa initiative and pan-African research over the past 12 years across over 30 countries which collectively account for over 85% of Africa’s GDP and population, which is published annually on or round Africa Day, 25 May, has been reported and quoted widely globally by inter-alia, African Business, CNN, BBC, FT, New African Magazine and media in all major metropolitan Africa. Every year he tirelessly travels the continent to highlight, celebrate and champion excellent local and multi-national African brands, and inspire and empower local brand builders and entrepreneurs to build great African brands.

He was awarded a Marquette University American Marketing Association for marketing excellence upon graduation cum laude in 1992. A trailblazing and recognized doyen of branding in Africa, he was recognized with an Institute of Marketing Management (IMM) Roll of Honour in 2001, named one of the ‘100 Most Influential Africans’ by New African Magazine in 2013 and 2015 and one of the 100 Most Influential Creative People of African Descent in support of the United Nations ‘International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development’ in 2021. He has been recognized with the Financial Mail AdFocus Lifetime Achievement award in 2021 and the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa Lifetime Achievement award in 2022 for his contributions to marketing, branding, communications and the industry. He was recognized as one of the African Titans in 2022 by the UAE Africa Networking Group. His work has earned over 75 awards in marketing communications and branding globally, including Loeries, D&AD, Cannes Lions, Institute of Marketing Management, FinWeek AdReview and the REBRAND Hall of Fame.

He has served in all significant industry bodies and adjudicated most of the significant industry awards in Africa and beyond, including as the first African to judge the prestigious Red Dot ([www.red-dot.org](http://www.red-dot.org)) design awards in Germany (2014 – 2020); as the first indigenous African chairman of the Loeries, the premier advertising awards in Africa and the Middle East (1998 – 2002) and AdFocus, the landmark South African marketing and communications awards (2003 – 2004), through which he championed the creative industry’s Africa-focused transformation agenda; as the inaugural vice-chairman of the Brand Council of Southern Africa (2012 – 2015), and as a non-executive director at the Marketing Federation of Southern Africa (2002 – 2005), among others.

He has been invited to speak at most consequential Africa-focused forums across Africa and globally and written prolifically on leadership, branding and intellectual property, and has co-hosted the inaugural ‘CNBC Africa | Marketing, Media and Money’ show that navigates the billion dollar advertising industry in Africa.

A fellow of the Institute of Directors, he is a non-executive director on the Population Services International (PSI) board and a Trustee of the WWF Nedbank Green Trust. He has held extensive diverse public and private sector directorships, including a 15 years tenure at Mercantile Bank, 10 years at WWF South Africa, 10 years at South African Tourism, including one term as deputy Chairman of the board, 7 years at the New York Stock Exchange listed Cartrack Group, and served on the boards of Brand South Africa, Foodcorp Group and Nike

South Africa, and as a member of the Durban University of Technology (DUT) council, among others.

A Chartered Marketer (SA), Ikalafeng holds BSc and MBA degrees specializing in marketing from Marquette University in the USA and a Master of Laws (LLM) in Intellectual Property from the University of Turin in Italy in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in Geneva, Switzerland, and completed executive education at Wits Business School and Harvard Business School.

Born in Kimberley, South Africa and based in Johannesburg, South Africa, he has been to over 110 countries worldwide, every country in Africa and every continent in the world; summited Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and Mount Elbrus in Russia, the highest mountains in Africa and Europe, and Mount Sinai in Egypt where God is purported to have given Moses the Ten Commandments; sky-dived in Swakopmund Namibia, where the stark beauty of one of the world's oldest deserts meets the Atlantic ocean; walked the 116 km Moshoeshoe walk, that retraces the path the great Basotho King Moshoeshoe I walked as he led his people to the safety of the top of Thaba Bosiu natural fortress in the 19th century; jumped the tallest bungee in the world at Bloukrans Bridge, and took a plunge into the coldest waters on planet in Antarctica.

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