

# What is a challenger brand?

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Reversing the food chain is never easy. This is especially true on the African continent where many categories are dominated by large legacy businesses. It's not just that these brand leaders are bigger and enjoy proportionately greater benefits; it's that the superiority of their advantage increases almost exponentially, the larger they get.

But, despite an environment of scarce resources and ongoing threats of international competition, there are advantages to being a challenger in Africa. You don't have to be all things to all people. You can choose a place to stand and something to believe in. And if some choose to navigate by you, and others choose to sail right on by, well, so be it; the one thing we don't want to be is what Wal-Mart calls 'the mush in the middle'. To be just another second-rank brand is to put yourself into the mouth of the big fish and wait for its jaws to close.

Being a challenger is not about a state of market; being number two or three or four doesn't in itself make you a challenger. A challenger is, above all, a state of mind. It is a brand, and a group of people behind that brand, whose business ambitions exceed its conventional marketing resources, and, in consequence, it needs to change the category decision making criteria in its favour, to close the implications of that gap.

If we want or need to think like a challenger, there are some core principles for us to live and thrive by. These principles have been captured in the Challenger Strategic Approach and in further articles we will unpack the Eight Credos of successful Challenger Behaviour:

1. Embrace Intelligent Naivety
2. Build a Lighthouse Identity
3. Become a Thought Leader
4. Create a Symbol of Re-evaluation
5. Sacrifice
6. Overcommit
7. Enter popular culture
8. Become ideas centred

This is such an important concept for African business. It enables us to channel our larger-than-life ambitions together with our ingenuity and people-first mindset to create African solutions to African problems.

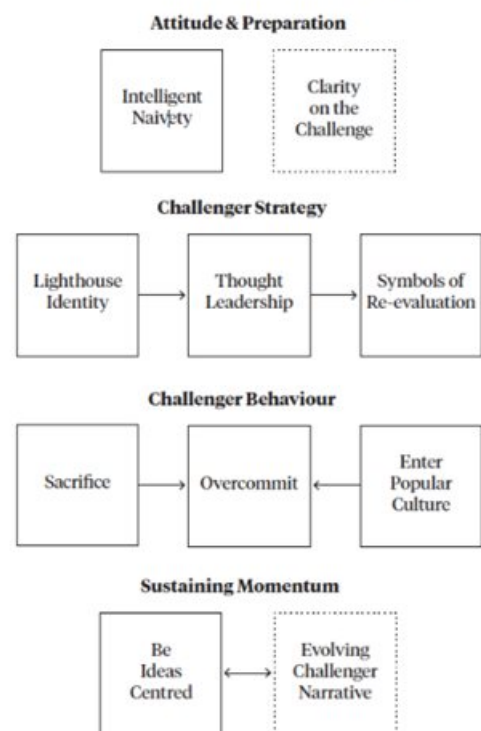
There are three fundamental criteria for a challenger brand:

**1. State of market:** Challengers are by definition not the number one brands, nor are they niche.

## 2. State of mind:

This is what really characterises challenger brands - being number two (or number six or eighteen) is at some level simply an accident of birth.

### The Challenger Strategic Approach



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Challenger brands have a mind-set that encompass two key differentiators: ambitions that exceed their conventional marketing resources, and a preparedness to accept the marketing implications of the gap between their ambition and their marketing resource.

The latter is an important distinction — ambition in a marketing plan is not enough; being smaller and hopeful, without a preparedness to behave in whatever way is necessary to fulfil that ambition will lead to nothing but being small and disappointed.

### 3. Rate of success

Challenger brands enjoy significant and sustained growth through their marketing actions. This is not to say that they are still and always growing, but that there is a period of their life from which to learn from.

Conversely there are some leaders who still profess to deliberately adopt a 'challenger mindset', even after becoming market leaders.

Challenger behaviour is not confined to the new or the small. Regardless of category, competition, heritage or personality, all brands can benefit from adopting a Challenger mindset to drive more ambitious growth and make the impact they desire.

Over the next few months, we will be unpacking the challenger concept to highlight, by example, the opportunities that exist for us to challenge the system, create new markets and new opportunities for innovation and growth, and own our destiny.



eatbigfish. is a strategic brand consultancy whose unique focus is challenger thinking and behaviour. Our expertise is grounded in The Challenger Project - our study of how challenger brands succeed by doing more with less.

We act as catalysts rather than consultants and, through our collaborative approach, we provide inspiration and frameworks which enable 'would be' challengers to deliver breakthrough solutions for their teams and brand.

If you would like to speak to someone, please call or email our local representative for Africa Middle East: Delta Victor Bravo (Pty) Ltd

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