

Sunday Times/TNS Top Brands 2015 Methodological note

Overview of the Top Brands study

2015 brings the seventh successful year in partnership with TNS South Africa for the Sunday Times Top Brands. The study applies the same methodology since 2009.

The approach looks at a brand's penetration in the marketplace whilst also examining its relative strength amongst its users and its relative attraction amongst non-users – the concept of *relative advantage*. This was accomplished by asking three questions:

1. Brands used within a defined time period (this period differed for each category)
2. Brands with which people were familiar enough to rate on a 10-point scale
3. The actual rating of all those brands on a 10-point scale

From this, an index score for each brand is generated from three variables derived from the questions above: the actual usage of a brand in a specified time period, the rating it receives from its users relative to others in the category, and the rating it receives from those non-users aware of it, also relative to competitors in the category. The non-user rating carries only half the weight of the user rating in the final algorithm.

The final index can be thought of as the brand's standing in both the market place and in people's heads. This is in line with the current thinking that brand equity is a function of both Power in the Mind and Power in the Market, coupled with the view that one must always take the attraction of competitors into account in any assessment of brand equity.

How a brand can win

A winner occurs in one of three situations:

1. If it is big AND rated above average by both its users and its non-users.
2. If it is truly big but perhaps only rated as average by its users and non-users.
3. It is smaller but very well loved by its users and is strongly aspired to by its non-users.

Why is this approach more useful?

Most brands have a good sense of their relative size – publicising this is good for the ego but not much else. The approach adopted by TNS allows more useful marketing insights to be gained: a brand can assess by how much more – or less – its users rate it compared with average – a heads-up for some, as well as an indication of the relative commitment people have to a brand. Similarly, by looking at the non-user ratings, some idea of a brand's relative "pull" amongst its non-users is gained – this is a good indication of its relative ability to attract new users. Comparing usership and these two ratings' data tells marketers much about their relative power in the mind vs their power in the market.

The algorithm is not proprietary to either the Sunday Times or to TNS, but is in the public domain.

The consumer sample represents all South African adults

The total sample for 2015 is 3493, with 2500 interviews in metro SA and 993 interviews in non-metro areas of SA. We talked to adults aged 18 years and the final results have been weighted to represent the population according to StatsSA 2014 mid-year population estimates. The study is representative of all adults across the country and is a relatively large sample in consumer research terms. Interviews were conducted in home, face to face.

The business sample represents businesses of all sizes

This sample consisted of 300 C-level business decision makers (CEOs, CFOs, COO etc) from organisations of all sizes. These interviews were conducted via TNS's CATI system.

What category changes happened in Top Brands?

One category was re-added to the consumer section:

- Chocolates

One category was removed from the business section:

- TV Channels

While three categories were added to the business section:

- Community Upliftment
- Green award (companies/ brands doing the most to look after South Africa's environment or natural resources)
- Cars

The algorithm in more detail

The algorithm is explained below via a worked example, along with the actual mathematical formulae.

The table below has five columns: usership, ratings amongst users and non-users and the extent to which these ratings differ from average. So, Brand B has a usership of 13%. These users rate it 8.80 out of ten, which is 0.28 higher than the average for all user ratings. Non-users rate it 5.59, which is below the average for non-user ratings by 0.10.

Brand	Usership in last x weeks	Rating amongst users	Ratings amongst aware non-users	User rating - average	Non-user rating - average
B	13%	8.80	5.59	0.28	-0.10
A	9%	8.68	6.03	0.16	0.34
C	11%	8.63	5.67	0.11	-0.02
H	11%	8.50	5.87	-0.02	0.18
...					
L	7%	8.26	5.49	-0.26	-0.20
Weighted average		8.52	5.69		

The algorithm first calculates Power in the Mind by taking a third of the sum of 0.28 plus a half of -0.10. It then adds usership to this to get a score. The third and the half are scaling factors to give Power in the Mind approximately the same weight as usership (this varies slightly by category depending on the actual results). This score is multiplied by 40 and 50 is added so that the scores fall between 0 and 100.

Writing this out mathematically, we first define terms:

Let:

u_i = usage of brand i

e_i = rating amongst users of brand i , the brand *experience*

a_i = rating amongst aware non-users, the brand's *attraction*

\bar{e} = weighted average of all user ratings

\bar{a} = weighted average of all non-user ratings (amongst those aware)

k_i = awareness amongst non-users of brand i , *knowledge*

Then:

$$\bar{e} = \sum u_i e_i / \sum u_i$$

$$\bar{a} = \sum k_i a_i / \sum a_i$$

The relative brand experience for brand i , r_{ei} , is given by:

$$r_{ei} = e_i - \bar{e} = e_i - \sum u_i e_i / \sum u_i$$

The relative brand attraction for brand i , r_{ai} , is given by:

$$r_{ai} = a_i - \bar{a} = a_i - \frac{\sum k_i a_i}{\sum a_i}$$

Power in the Mind for brand i , m_i , is given by:

$$m_i = \frac{1}{3} [r_{ei} + \frac{1}{2} r_{ai}]$$

The Top Brands/Retailers Index, t_i , for brand i is then:

$$\begin{aligned} t_i &= 40\{u_i + m_i\} + 50 \\ &= 40\{u_i + \frac{1}{3}[r_{ei} + \frac{1}{2} r_{ai}]\} + 50 \\ &= 40\{u_i + \frac{1}{3}[e_i - \frac{\sum u_i e_i}{\sum u_i} + \frac{1}{2}(a_i - \frac{\sum k_i a_i}{\sum a_i})]\} + 50 \end{aligned}$$