

SA fails to brand itself at IAAF World Championships



By [Bonnie Ramaila](#)

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While watching the recent International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Championships (held in Daegu, South Korea) on TV, I critically observed that most athletes' T-shirts, especially those from Europe and Asia, proudly displayed the names of their countries with big, bold letters.

You could see the name of the country from the kitchen and you did not even have to be close to your TV set to do so (okay, I'm exaggerating but you get the point!).

Struggled to read

However, I struggled to read our country's name on the shirts of Caster Semenya and Lucky Mohale, even when the cameras zoomed in on them.

I asked myself, "What has happened to branding South Africa, especially at such high-profile events?"

Okay, I know it sounds like the International Marketing Council's responsibility, but in this case, I am talking about the marketing "branding". Our country's branding was conspicuously hidden - its letters on the T-shirts were small, and to make things worse, they were written in green. "For the life of me, couldn't they do better?" I pondered.

Who decides and manages the branding of our country on athletic gear for such important international events? We certainly lost an opportunity to market our country.

We need to be rigorous

We need to be rigorous in how we brand our country at every given opportunity. The IAAF was an unpaid medium and SA organisers could have used the opportunity to showcase our country's beautiful heritage through the athletes' kit. Not only was their gear colour and SA name not visible enough, they somehow blended in with the rest of the other countries, whose predominant colours were similar to ours, thus creating confusion, especially if you are not familiar with your country's athletes.

Something needs to be done to address this anomaly.

The principles of marketing "branding" cannot only be limited to corporate and FMCG services and products. The marketing people heading these organisations must be creative and influence the branding of our country on athletic gear. Advertising

sells and such opportunities are another way of branding and marketing our beautiful country to the rest of the world.

I hope the branding for our Olympic team will be a vast improvement. I want to see SOUTH AFRICA written in **BIG, BOLD AND BRIGHT** colours - so that we can be different and stand out of the rest.

Something for the world to talk about

We need to leave some legacy; even if we don't bring the gold medals home, at least we would leave something for the world to talk about. Let's give the "fashion police" a different angle to their stories.

Nor do I want to hear tales about Olympic prescriptions on the type of gear a country needs to have, the material, the writing, etc. There is always a way around these prescripts, if we think out-of-the-box and be creative enough to make a difference.

South Africa is full of creativity; let's showcase it through different opportunities given to us.

For more:

- IAAF photo gallery: [IAAF World Championships Daegu 2011](#)
- YouTube: [IAAF World Championships Daegu 2011](#)
- Google Image Search: [IAAF World Championships Daegu 2011](#)
- Flickr: [IAAF World Championships Daegu 2011](#)

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