

## Diaspora-Driven Brand Strategy: Unlocking Trade and Investment Opportunities between the U.S. and Africa

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### Abstract

The African Diaspora has become a significant asset and agent for local development, economic growth, and technological advancement. This article examines the impact of Diaspora-Driven Brand Strategy and the role that the African Diaspora plays in promoting and marketing African products and services. Through analyzing the role of the African diaspora in brand promotion, policy frameworks, and strategic marketing approaches, the article tackles the full scope of African-made products in the US market. Policy frameworks have been proposed to ensure smooth cross-border e-commerce between Africa and the US. Additionally, case studies on successful African products have been highlighted to showcase the application of strategic marketing and the existing limitations to hitting maximum potential.

**Keywords:** Brand; Diaspora; Investment; Trade; Strategy

### 1. Introduction

Africa boasts a reputation of being the second most populated continent in the world, with population estimates exceeding 1.5 billion as of 2025 (Worldometer, 2025). Approximately 60% of the African population is youths aged between 15 and 34 years. This energetic and youthful force is a significant asset in driving innovation, labour, and entrepreneurship locally and internationally. The African diaspora is estimated to be 350 million globally and roughly 5 million in the United States. Africans mostly migrate to Western countries to seek work opportunities and education or to escape insecurity and political instability in their home countries. While human capital depletion related to migration is alarming, Africa has benefited greatly from remittances, skills upgrades, business advice, inventions, and insights channeled by Africans in diaspora (Abidde, 2021). The summation of these benefits leads to national development of the host nations and technological advancement. Technically, over the past few decades, Africans in diaspora have been the source of connection of fellow Africans for opportunities in education, career, and business. Currently, the most significant effort is directed towards using the diaspora connection to market African goods and services.

Africans are innovators and business-minded like every other continent, bringing much-needed products and services that fill human wants. The challenge arises when they cannot find enough market for their products locally and have to rely on Africans in diaspora to market their products. Notably, the United States recognizes the entrepreneurial force of the African population and has adopted policies and frameworks that create room for the expansion of markets for

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African products and services. The U.S has experienced firsthand witness to the vast culture that Africans boast. Africans in diaspora have served as unique ambassadors and the bridge of culture and commerce in the United States market. While there is a massive increase in desire by American consumers to have African culturally rooted and ethically sourced products and services, most of these original products never find their way to the U.S market (Owusu & Otiso, 2021). Efforts to propel the Africa-U.S. relationship have been furthered through the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and Prosper Africa (Britz et al., 2024). Despite the vast potential in harnessing this opportunity, the full potential has not been realized due to a lack of awareness, limited marketing, and diplomatic inefficiencies.

The cultural fluency that the African diaspora carries, coupled with their closeness to the U.S and local market, makes them uniquely positioned to promote the economic agenda, products, and services of their host continent. The knowledge of the U.S market consumers and the African product stories helps make them the ultimate bridge that gives credibility to African products and services in diaspora. The efforts of brand building by the African diaspora have, however, been underperforming, which calls for the need to create strategic marketing that can boost the cross-continent commerce.

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## 2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

The impact of the African diaspora on its home continent has been extensively studied over the years. Gnimassoun and Anyanwu (2019) explored the effect of African diaspora on African economy based on literacy levels. In their finding, they assert establish an obvious connection arising from income and remittance by those in diaspora. The positive relationship attributed in their study signifies the importance of African diaspora on economic development.

According to Hamilton (2025), it is important to gauge the influence of self-identity on Africans in diaspora. Hamilton emphasizes on the image creation and perception of Africa based on their identity. Identity unlocks opportunities and provides room for recognition and brand of the African heritage.

Darkwa (2018) explored the impact of remittances on African GDP and compared the human development index. In his studies, Darkwa identified key challenges that hinder effective use of diaspora remittances in specific African countries.

Chrysostome and Nkongolo-Bakenda (2019) dived deeper into the challenges and limitations of African diaspora on entrepreneurship. Their study sheds light on the emerging issues that negatively affect African Diaspora businesses and recommendations to deal with the mess. Through keen explanation of diaspora entrepreneurship, Chrysostome and Nkongolo-Bakenda seek to enlighten global economists on the scope of African entrepreneurs on global stage.

Ideally, these studies have focused on issues such as benefits of African diaspora on Africa to limitations on entrepreneurship but very few handle the ideology of strategic marketing of African products and services in the US market. This article seeks to find and fill the arising gap.

### 2.1. Cross-Border E-Commerce and the role of African Diaspora communities

Traditionally, global business gets done through the shipping of products and services, and the market gets firsthand experience with the products on the ground. The rapid growth and use of technology have changed the way everything is done especially business (Marshall, 2021). Digital transformation leaves no one behind, including Africans. E-commerce, which involves the use of digital and online platforms to market, sell, buy, transact, and track the delivery of products, is the new way of doing business. Platforms such as Shopify and Etsy are at the forefront of the e-commerce business (Purnomo, 2023). However, consumers are skeptical as ever and rely on the power of storytelling to influence their purchasing decisions. The appetite to buy and feel authentic products has grown massively in the U.S market, and everyone is looking for a service and product that can connect them to African heritage (Thiebaut, 2024). However, the most insistent problem is the presence of counterfeits and inauthentic products, and the lack of a brand that sells itself as being of African heritage. Governments and powerful businesspeople have adopted strategies to promote African-made products and services. Notably, the efforts have not yielded the maximum potential results (Gillespie & Swan, 2021). Alliances and support between Africa and the US government have intervened to boost the promotion of such products, but still not enough for brand selling.

The gap in marketing and promotion of African-made products and services is rapidly being filled by the African Diaspora. Ideally, the number one brand ambassador of your product is the regular user of the product. African diaspora play a key role in validating the authenticity of an African product and service through brand storytelling, which in turn builds trust in buyers (Chrisben et al., 2025). African diaspora builds trust in African products by buying them on e-commerce platforms and leaving reviews that are drawn from the heart. Moreover, African diaspora communities may

post success stories and the satisfaction they get from African-made products and services they get by using them. The awareness will create a cycle of trust in the product and thus boost export of the product from the African continent (Chrisben et al., 2025). African diaspora can promote African fashion products by proudly wearing the clothes in their daily activities. This act alone will lure the US market to buy the fashion line. The same can be adopted in all products and services, and indeed, a fast influence will be realized. The most obvious advantage of the African diaspora is the original knowledge of the product and its use, which places them in a position to market the product with passion and even partner with giant e-commerce platforms to market the product.

The US is home to the biggest e-commerce market and thus a target for global products. Playing home to a black population who are directly inherent to their history, the US has the potential to buy almost all African cultural and authentically produced goods and services. Most citizens have the desire to try African foods, wear, technology, and language. This desire creates a market that e-commerce vendors have sought to fulfill (dos Santos, 2025). African diaspora communities provide the room to give credibility to such services as being the ambassadors and the face to promote such products and services (Adepoju, 2021). In summation, cross-border e-commerce relies greatly on the African diaspora communities as its building blocks. Marketing strategies are essential in defining the success of African-made goods and services.

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### **3. Strategic Marketing Approaches to Position African Products in US Retail, Tech, and Consumer Sectors**

The role of the African diaspora in selling the heritage of African products and services cannot be over emphasized enough. However, the US markets are diverse, sophisticated, fast-moving, and highly segmented, therefore, a highly calculated marketing approach must be employed to make an impact in the market. Strategic marketing which involves targeting a certain market group must be used in order for African products to have a share in the retail, tech, and consumer markets of the US (Folorunso, 2021). Strategic marketing is long-term, data driven, and highly cultural resonant so as to satisfy the need of the target market. Strategic approaches ensures a product gains a competitive advantage by exploiting the specific needs of the market. The rich heritage of African products is the building block for strategic approaches to marketing the products. Strategic Partnerships, Identity-Driven Niche, Cultural Storytelling, Retail Readiness, Metrics-Driven Growth, and Community and Content approach are some of the strategic marketing approaches that can effectively position African products in the US markets.

#### **3.1. Strategic Partnerships**

Success in a diaspora market is highly dependent on the hosting nation. African diaspora entrepreneurs need to collaborate with local businesses who are non-African but value-aligned so as to get a platform to brand and market their products in a manner that builds trust among consumers (Amey & Eddy, 2023). To successfully penetrate and position a cosmetic product, for example, a collaboration with notable salons and cosmetics shops is necessary to effectively introduce the product in a trust-building way.

Seeking a partnership with the US Chamber of Commerce is key to learning the general market of the US. The chamber of commerce can provide platforms to hold product exhibitions and promote African culture in a manner that resonates with the culture of US citizens. Additionally, the US Chamber of Commerce opens up a collaboration with US cultural institutions, which would fast-track product awareness and build the market effectively.

Entrepreneurs can make use of the diaspora alumni network by tapping into their knowledge of the American market and gaining from mentorship programs. Promotion from known African diaspora will help sell the product fast and gain a position in the competitive market.

#### **3.2. Identity-Driven Niche Marketing**

Consumers tend to resonate more with products that they can trace their identity to. This strategic approach incorporates the use of personalized marketing tactics that speak directly to a focused market (Maffei, 2024). The use of dialect-specific content, such as Swahili ad slogans, helps build an identity for the product, thus gaining a competitive advantage. Moreover, the marketing team can use widely known celebrities who represent African culture as well as American vastness to promote their products. Consumers of today are more concerned with the identity of a product rather than what it say it does.

### 3.3. Cultural Storytelling

Most African products and services are rooted in deep cultural and historical meaning. Incorporating these meanings and stories in the products helps in selling the product faster and easily. Most US consumers need products that they can associate a story with. Attaching such content to products rather than behind-the-scenes myths makes the products valuable and acceptable in the market. Such stories can be published on the products' website or through short and catchy phrases that highlight the production journey. Another platform to take advantage of is the gap in calendars that speak directly of Africans, such as Black History Month and Africa Day. Such days can be utilized by making specially themed products and thus utilizing an extra consumer market.

### 3.4. Retail Readiness

The US retail market is highly competitive. It is very strategic to conduct high-end research on packaging needs, pricing, and product positioning in the US market. This is important as the entrepreneurs make products that meet US retail demands while maintaining African heritage. Ensuring your product packaging showcases the African-made phrase is important in winning consumers who target culturally made products. Moreover, the focus on retail should be on maintaining the environment and promoting African culture associated with purity, wellness, and nature.

### 3.5. Statistics-Driven Growth

Marketing goes beyond persuasion to numbers. While it is important to push on with traditional marketing approaches, it is important to be strategic and make use of analysis to gauge growth. Analysis helps in identifying customer lifetime value and employing strategies to retain valuable customers. Additionally, statistics from e-commerce platforms such as Shopify help in identifying high-selling approaches and themes to maintain.

### 3.6. Community and Content Approach

Most products sold in today's world, and especially in the US, are sold digitally. It is imperative to maintain a kind of relationship between brands and consumers in order to capture their attention on social platforms. This can be achieved through the use of celebrity models to promote products, or create content on platforms like YouTube that promote a certain lifestyle, such as modern ways to wear Ankara or how to use Afriex. This can also be achieved through the sharing of content via emails or direct messaging, whose content speaks of the product you are dealing with. Making ambassadors out of loyal community members can also easily promote your product through referrals and content promotion.

Strategic marketing is significant in creating a brand powerhouse out of African products. The strategic mixing of culture and business ideologies helps in penetrating the market, such as the US. There are notable cases of African products that have been successful in the US market through strategic marketing.

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## 4. Case Studies

African diaspora communities have, over the last decade, influenced the global e-commerce and reshaped the US market by moving from conventional ways of business. The community has utilized online platforms such as Instagram to market and sell Afrocentric fashion, Etsy for the Shea butter business, and as the force behind logistic technologies that bridge US consumers and African enterprises. The surge in such businesses has been enabled through the economic diplomacy fronted by US policies and frameworks, and the easy accessibility to e-commerce platforms such as Amazon Marketplace, Shopify, WooCommerce, and Paystack, among others. These platforms have eradicated the need for large storage facilities or shops and replaced them with home-based businesses armed with stories that tell of the heritage (Gamlen, 2019), culture, and authenticity of the product, which resonates with the US consumers. However, problems such as inconsistent logistics, general disbelief in the standard of African products, and quality maintenance remain the stagnating forces of African-made goods and services, making it in the US. Despite such barriers, there are notable cases of success stories in the cross-border e-commerce between Africa and the United States. This article looks at a case study of Shea Butter, Ankara, and Afriex.

### 4.1. Shea Butter

Predominantly found in West Africa, shea butter harvested from the shea tree was used primarily as food, skin treatment, and to perform traditional rituals by natives. Shea butter gained its fame a little over two decades ago, thanks to efforts by African diaspora entrepreneurs and their free branding (Goumbri et al., 2021). African diaspora would largely carry a product of shea butter in their travel and tell of the story behind its use and efficiency to curious Americans. The adoption and use of shea butter by a significant population of the US prompted the skin care giants and

organic product producers to study and make commercial use of shea butter (Elias & Carney, 2025). Currently, shea butter is one of the biggest sought after ingredients of cosmetic products. African diaspora not only promoted the product but also served as the bridge between African producers and the US market.

The role of the African diaspora in creating market access is undeniable. The African diaspora community exploited their knowledge base by explaining fully the natural benefits and use practices of shea butter. The vast understanding and storytelling behind raw shea butter and its finished products enabled a quick uptake and adoption of the product in the US market (Elias & Carney, 2025). The marketing efforts of the African diaspora were not in vain as their explanations rooted on culture, ethics, and authenticity boosted trust among American consumers, which finally built a brand for shea butter. The consistent use of African diaspora to exploit the US market and market shea butter made it easier to develop a working logistics system and bring on board large companies that saw the benefit of using shea butter as an ingredient in making their product.

There are a lot of success stories by African entrepreneurs who deal in the shea butter market. Notable brands such as Nubian Heritage and Alaffia started small, primarily in homes and farmers markets, and grew to be global players and a huge brand in e-commerce platforms like Amazon. Most of the success of such brands is rooted in the efforts of the African diaspora in storytelling the cultural heritage of shea butter and educating the US buyers' market about the product (Elias & Carney, 2025). Africa, globally, has the reputation of being linked to beauty, nature, and wellness and thus products authentically sourced from Africa can easily sell as wellness products. While there are notable success stories of shea butter, there are challenges in exploiting the full potential of the product.

The most outstanding challenge in cross-border business of shea butter is the logistics question. While e-commerce is easy to do, the supply chain is disrupted when it comes to sourcing the raw product from Africa. Large companies have a higher demand for the product and depend on a consistent supply of the same. However, landlocked countries that highly depend on air transport find it hard to maintain a consistent supply, as it is costly (Nounagnon et al., 2024). Nonetheless, these challenges have not stagnated the growth of the shea butter market, which in 2022 had a revenue of \$511.2 million and is estimated to hit around \$1 billion in 2032. These figures are reflective of the effects of strategic marketing on African products.

#### **4.2. Ankara Fashion**

African culture has been staged globally through its sense of fashion. Afrocentric fashion wear and products have taken the American market by storm. Ankara, originally a fashion reserved for specific traditional events, has been reinvented to take a modern wear scope. The African diaspora community embraced Ankara as a fashion, representing their heritage and culture. The rising desire by Americans for the Ankara fashion prompted a sense of entrepreneurship among the African diaspora (Batur & CELIK, 2021). The success of selling Ankara as a fashion is highly attributed to social platforms and e-commerce giants. Instagram engagements play the role of telling the story of fashion, while Etsy, Shopify, and Amazon have played the role of providing a market for the African-made product. Ankara has featured on the biggest fashion runways in America.

The traditional link of Ankara is associated with African identity despite using Dutch wax printing sets. Hand-woven African wear used to tell stories and represent special symbols in the life cycle of Africans. Despite being a cultural attire, the African diaspora branded Ankara as a fashion fabric which took the fashion world by a storm. Ankara has an appealing power to consumers while remaining rooted to African culture. Ankara prints have been woven into all sets of clothes including sneakers, jumpsuits, bags, swimsuits, bags, and blazers. The market for Ankara products has been fueled by e-commerce platforms.

E-commerce platforms include social media platforms as sellers are able to advertise their products on social platforms such as Instagram and Tiktok, give it a story, and get prospective buyers from the platform. Conventional e-commerce platforms such as Etsy have bridged the formal market that Ankara has eagerly needed (Purnomo, 2023). Most businesses centered on Ankara fashion are African-owned and few occasions owned by first-generation African immigrants. The ability of African diaspora entrepreneurs to express cultural identity and African creativity in Ankara prints has greatly fueled the uptake of Ankara as a brand that represents meaning and substance. Marketing strategies adopted by Ankara marketers include celebrity endorsements, limited edition drops, high-impact visuals, and African pride branding. Like all businesses, Ankara fashion has been plagued by a number of obstacles.

Finding a consistent source of high-quality fabric is the biggest challenge faced by African diaspora entrepreneurs. Additionally, high-end fashion houses have picked up Ankara print design without proper recognition and compensation. Production costs and supply chain opaqueness deter the growth of the Ankara fashion business.

Nevertheless, most Ankara fabric is originally produced in Asia and Europe, diverting much-needed business to local Africans.

The success story of Ankara fashion illustrates how the African diaspora not only seek personal interests but also serve as ambassadors of culture, pride, and economy of their host country.

#### **4.3. Afriex**

Afriex is a fintech company developed by Tope Alabi that enables instant transfer of money between the US and African countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Ghana. The systems have made it easy, fast, and efficient for cross-border business to be conducted (Amungo, 2022). A shea butter farmer or Ankara print maker in Africa can easily do business through the platform with American entrepreneurs. African diaspora who have started businesses in their adoptive countries can develop a monetary relationship with their suppliers in Africa through such platforms. Afriex serves as an original African fintech that speaks to the needs of local Africans who, for long, suffered from the high costs, inconveniences, and slowness of traditional remittance methods.

Afriex is not only used for remittance purposes but also for crypto trading, business to business payments, and all e-commerce financial needs. The vast usefulness of the tool positions it as a key player in running the African economy and making cross-border business effective for all (Amungo, 2022). The brand of Afriex has largely been sold by the African diaspora, who have invested their trust in the tool. It is an easy-to-use tool that can be accessed through mobile devices and solves the accessibility difficulty presented by traditional methods.

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### **5. Case Studies Conclusion**

The African diaspora is the backbone on which cross-border commerce relies. Their role in promoting shea butter, Ankara, and Afriex has been magnificent in making the African products and services a success on US soil. The application and use of marketing strategies have helped boost the development and economic prowess of host nations in the African continent. The efforts have not only yielded business for locals but have prompted tourists to visit Africa and feel the heritage and authenticity that the products represent. Incorporating strategic marketing in African products and services through the African diaspora stands to bring a lot more gain in the form of exports and revenues to African countries.

#### **5.1. Frameworks for partnerships between U.S. chambers of commerce and African entrepreneurs**

The success of Shea Butter, Ankara, and Afriex is one of the very few success stories of African products. Most African entrepreneurs are still struggling to penetrate the US market despite putting in magnificent efforts. Economically, they are hindered by a number of factors, including regulatory and new market phobia. To deal with such disappointments, it takes efforts from both African entrepreneurs and the US Chamber of Commerce to create frameworks and partnerships that benefit both groups (Carter & Price, 2021). These partnerships will make it easy for African entrepreneurs to connect to finance, infrastructure, and the market with ease. Identifying diaspora as a source of a strong business ally will help in shaping these frameworks.

Firstly, the US Chamber of Commerce, through its subdivisions of culture and minority-focus, can restructure its department and create room for public-private partnership. An introduction of diaspora business councils in the chambers of commerce of both the US and African states would help bridge the legal requirements and ease the process of introducing a product into the US. The chambers can also organize trade missions that put African products directly to the US consumers. Moreover, the chambers can help organize annual Diaspora-Africa Summits for Africans to showcase their products and innovations to American wholesale and retail markets. Active participation of the US chamber of commerce in affairs of the African diaspora business gives a sense of legitimacy, policy access, and expanded networking in the American market.

Secondly, the economic diplomacy of the US can allow for a setting of a framework that allows African entrepreneurs access to digital and physical infrastructure. Such frameworks can be reinforced through policies that allow more allocation and access to Export-Import Bank (EXIM) financing to African ventures (Kukharyk & Nubling, 2021). Moreover, this can be attained through state-level corridors such as the Washington-Nairobi corridor. Infrastructural and financial frameworks help new African ventures to access the market with ease.

Thirdly, the US Chamber of Commerce can secure partnerships between Universities/Innovation Hubs and African entrepreneurs. The Universities play host to a lot of African diaspora and can be a hotspot for showcasing African

products and brand building. Through grants and technological support, Universities give African products credibility and mentorship.

Lastly, the US Chamber of Commerce should establish a partnership with African governments. Individual entrepreneurs find it hard to penetrate the US market because of the taxation and regulations set by African countries. A one-off consultation and collaboration with African governments, the US Chamber of Commerce will make it easy for African entrepreneurs to enter the US market (Abendin & Duan). This could be achieved through city-specific trade envoys, free trade areas, and dual-taxation agreements.

Adoption of these frameworks and partnerships will make it very smooth for African entrepreneurs to do business in the US. Eventually, the American market will be satisfied, African communities developed, and the global supply chain smoothed.

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## 6. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Remittances are the most popular thing associated with the African diaspora. However, the African diaspora represents a global economic network of investors, marketers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers. Backed by such power, the African diaspora has the power to reshape the global market and specifically the US market. African products such as Shea butter and services such as Afriex not only represent a business front but also export with them African values, trust, innovation, and heritage.

Ideally, to fully exploit the potential of US-Africa e-commerce, significant support in the form of frameworks and partnerships is needed. Conventionally, Africa-US relations are based on aid, whereas they should be anchored on opportunities that ensures African made products and services penetrate the US market in a systematic global supply chain. Strategic marketing is key in ensuring products find their way inside the retail, tech, and consumers sectors of the US.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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