

Why South Africa would vote for Siya Kolisi in 2024 if they could

 By [Dono White](#)

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As things slip for South Africa across the board, the Springboks are our country's most reliable brand, and Siya Kolisi displays the leadership qualities we yearn to see in the people in charge of our nation.



Source: © SA Rugby Mag [SA Rugby Mag](#) Siya Kolisi displays the leadership qualities we yearn to see in the people in charge of our nation says Dono White, strategic planning director at VMLY&R South Africa

The Springboks' Rugby World Cup loss to Ireland in the pool stages felt worse than a break-up. I went to bed that night and dreamt in a loop, playing that Libbok kick over and oover and ooover again.

The next day I kept refreshing the RWC app to check if I was living in a nightmare. Even worse was opening social media to see the world calling "Saffas" arrogant supporters made me even more depressed.

Why was I hurting so much? What drives our love for the Boks? I turned to Brand Asset Valuator (BAV), WPP's brand equity measurement tool to find answers.



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3 reasons for BAV

What makes BAV unique is, firstly, that it's a brand measurement methodology built in partnership with the likes of VMLY&R, University of Oxford, Wharton University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University. With over 14 billion data points on 57,000 brands worldwide, BAV is the largest and longest study of brands in the world.

Secondly, it views the definition of 'brand' as being broader than the name of a product or service and includes concepts such as countries, sports teams, tournaments, politicians, and celebrities.

Thirdly, BAV's insights are completely localised to a specific country, recognising that, for example, a South African's view of a brand will be different to that of New Zealanders, Americans or French. Therefore, it is a pulse and barometer of the brand's connections to culture.

The first South African study commenced for 2022/23, measuring over 1001 brands in SA among 12,500 South Africans, representative at the provincial, racial, gender and language levels. As the 2023/24 study gears for release, data is already showing shifts and trends in South African culture among the increased 1601 brands measured.

Springbok Rugby stronger than Brand South Africa

The 2023/24 BAV Best Countries report saw South Africa as a nation brand slip from being the 42nd best country in 2022/23 to 46th. Our biggest declines came due to a slip in South African quality of life, power on the global stage, social purpose and agility.

Interestingly, our biggest growth came in the areas of Cultural Influence, Movers and Shakers, and Athletic Talent.

“ In a country where we are constantly let down, the brand Springbok has become the symbol of hope since 1995 ”

It all comes down to brand esteem – and this is what sets the Springboks apart from not only our nation's brand but also its state-owned enterprises (SABC, Post Office, South African Airways, Denel and Putco) in delivering consistent and reliable quality. Sasol was the only SOE on par with the Boks here in 2022/23.

The latest results in 2023/24 show the growth of almost 20% in Springbok BAV, shifting upwards in multiple dimensions out of the 1,061 brands measured leaving the Boks:

- 7th in Leadership
- 13th in Energic brand
- 17th Dynamic Brand
- 16th Most Progressive Brand
- 18th Most Rugged Brand
- 34th Most South African Brand (Officially giving heritage status)

In a country where we are constantly let down, the brand Springbok has become the symbol of hope since 1995. We can deal with load shedding of electricity, but we can't deal with Bok-shedding on top of that.



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Springbok Rugby stronger than Bafana Bafana and Proteas brands

Likewise, in the category of sport, the Springboks are seen as natural leaders and stand out ahead of all other sports events and teams across rugby, soccer, and cricket.

While the Boks are perceived to be “bold”, “established” and “dependable”, South Africans are indifferent to Bafana Bafana and find the Proteas rather fatigued.

Year after year, we see our national soccer brand as “distant”, “low quality”, “not bold” and “not inventive”. Even more so for Bafana claiming the 12th most arrogant spot.

Ahead of the Cricket World Cup, our cricket guys are seen as “established”, yet “not dependable”. The 2023/24 study has recognised the Proteas as the 27th most progressive brand and the top sports brand when it comes to equality and the environment.

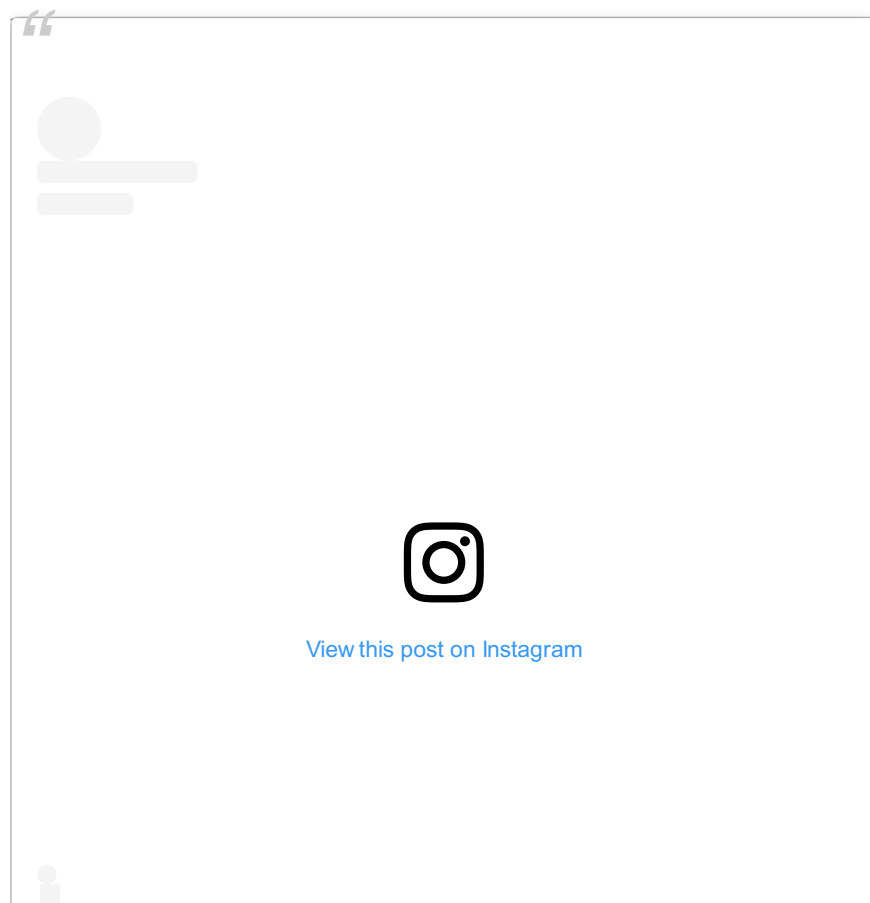
Overall, South Africans feel their sports brand of choice – the Springboks – displays a perfect balance of “innovation”, “intellect” and “playfulness”, which not only drives resonance but also “our preferred brand” status.

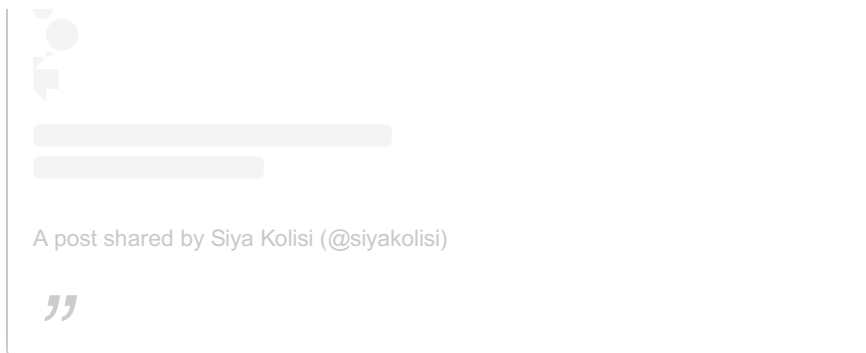
“ Should Kolisi pivot into a political career, BAV insights say he would win the elections ”

Siya Kolisi: A stronger brand than politicians

Using BAV’s brand match functionality, Siya Kolisi and the Springboks have an 88% personality match, sharing the values of intellect, playfulness, and innovation and being bold and spirited.

Brand Kolisi has grown immensely over the last year, seeing him, like the Boks skyrocket and claim prestigious brand quality titles over the 1,061 brands measured.





In the 2023/24 study, Siya Kolisi's Brand Asset Value sits at 97.7% and he is now:

- #1 most Quality Brand
- #1 Leadership Brand (Beating all Politicians)
- #1 most Down to Earth Brand
- #1 Kindest Brand
- #1 Friendliest Brand
- 2nd Toughest Brand
- 6th most Charming Brand
- 35th most Intellectual Brand
- 36TH most Energetic Brand

When Kolisi's brand equity scores were plotted against the EFF's Julius Malema and President Cyril Ramaphosa, Kolisi was an outright winner. Should Kolisi pivot into a political career, BAV insights say he would win the elections, with South Africans citing his "leadership", "visionary", "dynamic", "progressive", "innovative", "reliable", "friendly" and "down to earth" brand qualities. By contrast, our current politicians were cited as "fatigued" and, surprise, surprise, "arrogant".

The 2023/24 study shows our politicians claiming some prestige themselves, taking up the Top 5 positions for being the most Unapproachable Brands in South Africa.

More than a game

When the international rugby community calls "Saffa" fans arrogant, they need to remember that while they have electricity, post, and public transport in their countries, the Springboks are all we have left. And that's why we will defend them in scrums, stands and online forums.

ABOUT DONO WHITE

Dono White is the strategic planning director at VMLY&R and WPP BAV South Africa champion.
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