

MARKET INTELLIGENCE SERIES

# THE AFRICA MARKET ENTRY PLAYBOOK



*What the data says. What the ground knows.  
What that means for your business.*

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Africa Market Entry Intelligence | Preparation > Assumption

# Africa Is Not Emerging. It Has Already Arrived.

The fundamentals that drive every major market are already here. The gap is awareness — and most of your competitors still haven't noticed.

**\$3.4T**

African GDP by 2030

*African Development Bank*

**500M**

Middle class consumers  
by 2030

*McKinsey & Company*

**1.3B**

People. Single market  
under AfCFTA

*African Union / WTO*

**54**

Distinct markets.  
Not one.

*UNCTAD*

THE HARD TRUTH

# They Studied the Opportunity.

# They Did Not Study the Market.

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*That difference costs millions. Every time.*

*72% of European SMEs cite "insufficient market knowledge" as the primary barrier to Africa entry. — EU-Africa Business Forum 2024*

### 01

#### Treating Africa as One Market

54 countries. 8 trading blocs. 2,000+ languages. Consumer behaviour in Lagos and Accra are not the same. Strategy built for "Africa" is strategy built for nowhere.

*UNCTAD Investment Monitor 2024*

### 02

#### Copying Your Western Operating Model

Western cost structures in informal economies don't survive. P&G, GSK, Bayer all left — not because the market was small, but because their model was rigid.

*Bloomberg / WEF Business Exodus Report 2024*

### 03

#### Trusting the Report Over the Ground

Market reports show you where the opportunity is. They don't tell you how to move inside it. Distribution, procurement culture, and trust architecture live in the terrain — not the data.

*McKinsey Africa Consumer Insights*

### 04

#### Ignoring Informal Distribution Networks

In Nigeria, over 80% of FMCG sales move through informal trade. Arriving with a formal retail-first strategy means missing the majority of the market from day one.

*IFC / World Bank Nigeria Retail Report*

### 05

#### Entering Without Relationship Capital

Africa runs on relationships. Who vouches for you, who opens doors, which partnerships you hold — these determine speed to market and cost of doing business more than any product feature.

*African Development Bank Private Sector Report*

**01**

### **Validate Before You Spend**

On-ground validation before committing capital. Test distribution assumptions and relationship access first. Every euro spent before validation is expensive guesswork.

**02**

### **Map Distribution Before Product**

Who moves goods in your target market? Wholesalers, distributors, trade agents, informal networks? Your distribution strategy is your market entry strategy.

**03**

### **Build Intelligence, Not Just Reports**

Primary intelligence — interviews, site visits, competitor mapping, relationship audits. Pair it with secondary data and you have a real picture, not a projection.

**04**

### **Invest in Local Relationship Capital**

Identify who opens doors in your sector. Not everyone who says they have access, does. Validated local partnerships are worth more than any introductory market report.

**05**

### **Enter Narrow. Scale with Evidence.**

Choose one city. One segment. One route to market. Master it. Then replicate. MTN started in Lagos. Not all of Nigeria. Safaricom started in Nairobi. Not all of Kenya.

# Market Report vs Market Intelligence

*One tells you where the opportunity is. The other tells you how to capture it.*

## MARKET REPORT

Market size estimates

Sector growth forecasts

Regulatory overview

Competitor landscape

Infrastructure summary

Consumer demographics

VS

## MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Validated demand in specific cities

Actual buyer behaviour and purchasing cycles

Who enforces what, and how decisions get made

Which relationships competitors hold and how to compete

Real distribution routes and last-mile reality

Cultural decision-making and trust architecture

# 5 Steps. In Order. No Shortcuts.

**01**

RESEARCH

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Secondary data + competitor landscape. Understand the market at scale before narrowing focus.

**02**

VALIDATE

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Primary intelligence. On-ground validation of assumptions. Distribution, pricing, demand, culture.

**03**

CONNECT

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Build relationship capital before pitching. Who opens doors? Who holds distribution? Who decides?

**04**

ENTER

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Narrow entry. One city, one segment, one route to market. Controlled spend. Measurable outcomes.

**05**

SCALE

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Replicate what works with evidence. Expand geography only after proving the model.

# MTN NIGERIA

*The Market Said Africa Was Too Risky.  
MTN Called It Their Biggest Opportunity.*

- Entered Nigeria 2001 — during political transition, against prevailing wisdom
- 500,000 subscribers in year one. Built for Nigerian terrain, not Western infrastructure
- 77 million Nigerian subscribers by 2024 — one-third of MTN Group's global revenue
- 300 million group subscribers across Africa — built by adapting the model to each market

Source: MTN Nigeria Annual Report 2024 · [mtn.ng/about/our-story](https://mtn.ng/about/our-story)

## The Lesson

### They Built for the Terrain

Not against it. Infrastructure gaps were a feature, not a bug. They solved for mobile-first in a market that never had landlines.

### They Understood the Culture

Distribution, payments, and trust architecture were adapted to how Nigeria actually works — not how a Western HQ assumed it worked.

### They Entered Narrow, Scaled Smart

Lagos first. Then the country. Then the continent. Every decision backed by what worked on the ground before it scaled upward.

**P&G left. GSK left.  
Bayer left. Unilever cut.**

**Every headline called it a warning.  
I call it a vacancy.**

Nigeria still has 220+ million people. They didn't leave.  
The companies did — because of model failure, not market failure.

 **Shelf Space**

Consumer goods categories sitting underserved.  
Categories where brand loyalty hasn't yet been rebuilt.

 **Distribution Gaps**

Established routes to market suddenly available. Local distributors looking for new principals to partner with.

 **Relationship Vacuums**

Government relationships, procurement officers, and distribution networks that previously served global players — now available.

READY TO ENTER?

# Preparation Beats Assumption. Every Time.

If you are planning to enter an African market — or trying to understand why your current approach isn't landing — let's talk.

DM me "AFRICA"

*Africa Market Entry Intelligence | Validated contacts · Cultural intelligence · Strategic partnerships*

## What You Get

- Validated on-ground intelligence
- Market-specific entry strategy
- Trusted local contact networks
- Cultural & procurement insights
- Competitor mapping & positioning
- Risk-adjusted entry roadmap