

Sustainability is at the heart of Nedbank's latest campaign

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Nedbank has taken its commitment to the environment, which includes having zero exposure to all activities related to fossil fuels by 2045, a step further through highlighting how it does that internally.



Tebogo Motsepe, Nedbank Corporate and Investment Bank's Head of Brand and Client Insights

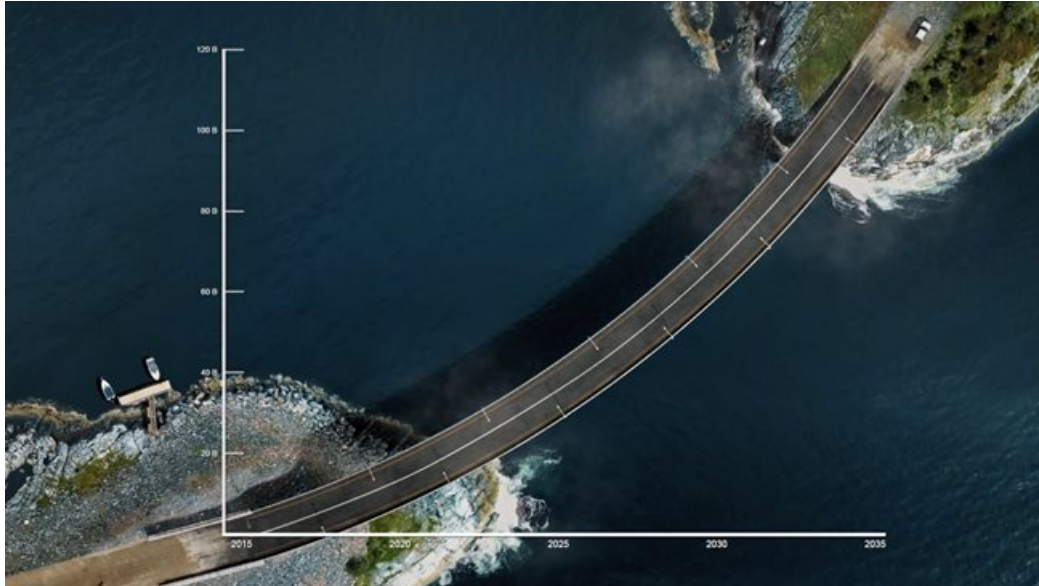
Nedbank's newest marketing campaign demonstrates how the banking institution walks the talk when it comes to sustainable finance. To understand what the objectives of the new campaign aim to achieve, Tebogo Motsepe, Nedbank Corporate and Investment Bank's head of brand and client insights and Michelle McKenna, integrated creative group head at Joe Public, provides more insight...

In March 2020, shortly after Covid-19 reached South Africa, Nedbank Corporate and Investment Bank felt it was important to demonstrate the importance the company placed on sustainability as a cornerstone of its brand.

Motsepe says that the pandemic was a reminder of how important it is to think and plan for the long-term and ensure that those plans are sustainable irrespective of the circumstances that may arise. Adding impetus to this brand positioning imperative, was the heightened, and steadily increasing, awareness around the environment and people and businesses needs to be more cognisant of the impact they have on the environment.

Motsepe adds that Nedbank CIB has always recognised this, but Covid-19 effectively raised the bar, and they wanted to show, through their brand positioning, that they were raising their game in response.

"Unfortunately, we also saw how Covid-19 created a situation in which many organisations were using the sustainability message to drive growth in market share; not necessarily because they fully embraced their sustainability responsibility. We didn't want to be lumped into this 'green-washing' category, and so we set about critically assessing our sustainability positioning," says Motsepe.



At the time, this was encompassed in their brand message, which was: 'Partner with the bank that puts sustainability at its heart.'

"We realised that, given our aim to be recognised as a bank that leads in terms of sustainable finance that makes a real, lasting difference, we repositioned our positioning, with a new brand message that asks the question: 'Do you want a bank that talks sustainability or walks sustainability?'" explains Motsepe. "It's a subtle shift, but one that, we believe, better sets out our sincere sustainability commitment and our desire to not only embrace sustainability but also drive its achievement."

Nedbank Corporate and Investment Bank, together with Joe Public, the agency that helped develop three commercials, to embed this brand positioning by highlighting the potential to achieve environmental sustainability by means of impactful sustainability.

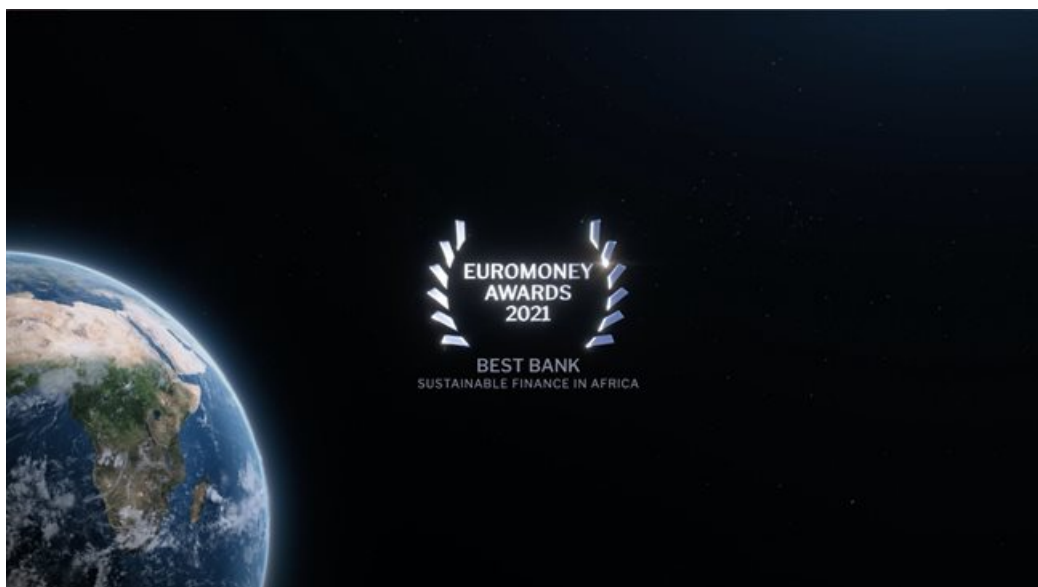
Michelle McKenna, integrated creative group head at Joe Public, adds, "The campaign TVCs use CIB's signature bird's eye view to illustrate what sustainable growth means in stunning detail, capturing growth graphs formed by landscapes, through time-lapse photography and animation. The campaign includes a number of films and digital elements, each demonstrating CIB's commitment to sustainable growth in a different sphere of operation."

Campaign rationale

When asked what's the motivation behind the campaign and what are the challenges CIB aims to tackle in the campaign, Motsepe responds, "We wanted to strongly position our sustainability message and demonstrate that rather than merely being aware of the importance of sustainability thinking, we are partnering with our clients to take action. In a way, I suppose you could say we see ourselves as a sustainability 'activist'; championing the cause of environmental, social, economic and business sustainability and calling on our clients and broader society to join us in this form of 'investment activism'."

Each commercial makes mention of awards as a measure of the extent to which CIB are able to do what they say they can for their clients.

"Most of the time, in banking the messaging is very high-level, not very tangible. It's tough to then say, okay, if you say you're great, show me that you're great. In this campaign, we speak about our expertise, and then we evidence it through the awards that we've won. So, we've ended up with a campaign message that is very topical and relevant for the time that we find ourselves in, not just for South Africa, but for the world," points out Motsepe.



CIB has been awarded several accolades, including Euromoney Awards 2021 for Best Bank Sustainable Finance in Africa; Best Investment Bank South Africa by Global Finance Awards 2021, and Banker 2021 Deal of the Year Africa for Infrastructure & Project Finance.

More sustainable thinking

"We live in a world that has, in many ways, become overly focused on short-term, and in many cases, short-sighted growth at all costs. However, this type of narrow-minded 'growth-at-all-costs' focus is ultimately self-defeating, because it is not grounded in sustainable thinking, nor does it typically deliver long-term positive outcomes. The good news is that there is a steadily growing awareness in society of the need for more sustainable thinking, but this growing focus creates the risk that sustainability becomes something of a 'throw-away' term, that everybody uses, but nobody truly embraces," says Motsepe, when asked about the key message of the new campaign.

“ As a bank that honestly has sustainability at its heart, Nedbank CIB is hoping to mitigate this risk and not only deliver real sustainable results for our clients, business and society as a whole, but inspire others to take the same authentic and sincere approach. ”

"We have targeted media channels to drive key messages where they are most relevant to our audience. But central to our message is our commitment to sustainable growth, grounded in expertise and underpinned by irrefutable proof. This comes at a time when many competitors are only dabbling in sustainability. In contrast, CIB puts sustainability at the core of everything it does. This campaign serves to demonstrate to our audience the value of sustainable growth far beyond a 'green' space," comments McKenna.

Key focus

According to Motsepe, "Sustainability is one of our key strategic pillars, and we are serious about being proactive in driving its achievement. That's why, in one of the commercials, we make a point of communicating our commitment to zero exposure to fossil fuel-related activities by 2045. We see this commitment as core to our strategic aspiration to be a responsible lender and, more importantly, a responsible corporate citizen.



Ultimately, sustainability is a key strategic foundation for us, which is why we aren't interested in just talking sustainable growth; we walk sustainable growth. Through this campaign, we are, publicly stating this commitment, so that all our stakeholders are not just aware of our sustainability commitment but can hold us to them."

The intended target audience for this campaign are commercial enterprises with an annual turnover of R700m and above. And within those enterprises, CIB seeks to engage meaningfully with executive leadership, particularly CEOs, CFOs, and COOs and are doing a significant amount of work with government departments and various state-owned enterprises. Beyond that, CIB hopes that their message about the importance of a more sustainability-centric mindset will resonate with a broad cross-section of people, businesses and communities.

Times of crisis

McKenna says, "Times of crisis are the ultimate test of sustainability. The pandemic has forced many businesses to close their doors and thrown entire industries and economies into disarray. While it is, of course, unfair to say that unsustainable practices are at the root of all this, it is true that a great many have been exposed in the process."

The massive task of recovery and rebuilding presents business leaders, policymakers, and others, with the opportunity to choose a new path and opt for sustainable solutions for lasting growth, albeit initially in the form of building resilience to weather the storms that we will continue to face. Thus, we believe the campaign is more relevant than ever. We intend to

attract forward-thinking clients who see the value of partnering with a bank that embraces sustainable growth to build towards a better future for our country, continent and ultimately, for the world we live in."

The importance of sustainability in South Africa

"This hunger for profit often comes at great cost to the environment, and to the wellbeing of people. Yet despite the unsustainability of the current system, and a rising awareness around these issues, those who hold the keys to change – namely major industry players, government and even other investment banks – are slow to adopt more sustainable practices," says Motsepe.

“ The truth is, in the long-term, sustainability of people and of the environment is inextricably linked to business profitability and financial sustainability ”

Business profitability suffers when the environment can no longer support production, yield the raw materials needed, or sustain energy requirements.

"And so, as the bank that puts sustainability at its heart, we have the opportunity to awaken the world of business to the truth about what sustainability really means and lead the way to a more sustainable economy, where, not only does the sustainability of people and the planet sustainability NOT come at the expense of profit, but where it can yield an even higher profit in the long term," concludes Motsepe.

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