

Avatar acquires Espresso DBN, renamed to Avatar DBN

Avatar Agency Group has announced its acquisition of Espresso DBN. The independent Durban-based ad agency has sold 51% equity to M&N Brands, the holding company that owns Avatar. The deal will result in Espresso being renamed Avatar DBN.

“ The Avatar Agency Group is painting the Durban Advertising industry yellow by acquiring 51% of Durban's leading independent agency, Espresso DBN. The agency will now be known as Avatar DBN [#AvatarAgencyGroup](#) pic.twitter.com/CGTZmrdeJR— Avatar Agency Group (@Avatar_ZA) [August 7, 2020](#) ”

The move affirms the Avatar's position as the country's largest fully black-owned agency group and serves the firm's entrepreneurial plans to continue growing its African presence and integrated skills offering through partnerships.

Avatar DBN will complement the group's growing base of specialised practices, including Avatar JHB, an integrated agency; Avatar Cape Town which specialises in retail, Avatar Media, the group's media buying arm; Avatar PR; and Resilience at Avatar, a dedicated consultancy unit and B2B specialist. So not only expanding its geographic footprint but also its below-the-line and shopper marketing capabilities to address the growing demand for insights-led FMCG and retail marketing.

The launch of a fully resourced Durban office will now give Avatar a base of over 100 employees across different agencies in three major hubs including Cape Town and Johannesburg.



Veli Ngubane, COO at Avatar, Zibusiso Mkhwanazi, group CEO of M&N Brands, Antony Ellis, MD of Avatar DBN, and Natalie French, ECD at Avatar DBN

Antony Ellis, who co-founded Espresso with Natalie French in 2001 will remain at the helm as MD. French will remain Avatar DBN's ECD, working closely with Veli Ngubane, Avatar's CCO, and they will be joined by Avatar BUD Ayanda Dlamini in the new operation.

“While we see the continued pressure of Covid-19 on media and advertising spend in general, research indicates an upsurge in food brand investment. Espresso’s FMGC expertise, combined with Avatar’s digital pedigree and broad market insight will bring something truly unique for our clients, comments Zibusiso Mkhwanazi, group CEO of M&N Brands, adding that the acquisition was also a step to pivot as a business during these difficult times.

The KZN landscape is overtraded with shops of all sizes, disciplines and capabilities, adds Ellis. “We believe there’s a need for change, improvement and a higher level of creative performance from Durban agencies, and it’s our intention to spearhead that change by challenging ourselves to adopt new process, new skills and new thinking.”

“We will be expanding our strategic scope to deliver work that’s more insightful, more meaningful and more relevant. With the move to Avatar, we’re also fully embracing digital as a critical channel to meet our clients’ consumers in the palm of their hands, with smart, original creative work that delivers impactful ROI,” concludes Ellis.

Avatar DBN’s client list currently includes Snowflake, Iwisa No.1, Nyala, BB Bakeries, Blue Ribbon, Toys R Us, Babies R Us, Nivea, Eucerin, Labello, Lil-Lets, Mondy, Universal and Paramount Pictures Africa.

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