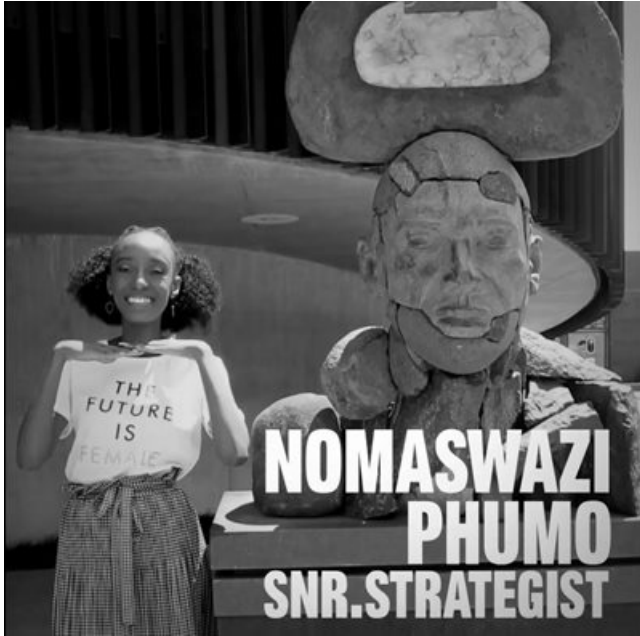


# SA's advertising industry needs to 'woke' up

Issued by [M&C Saatchi Abel](#)

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What does it mean to be 'woke'? For us, being woke is an agenda to be strong out loud, to be deliberate. It's an innate strength we have always possessed, the only difference now is that there are platforms to express it.



This is according to Nomaswazi Phumo, Strategist at M&C Saatchi Abel, who adds that, in recent years, there has been a shift in how we talk, live and even have fun. "To be conscious is no longer exclusive, it has become important to be in-the-know, to hold an informed opinion and to not be afraid of expressing it. It is a very exciting time to be alive and in advertising. There is authentic, robust and deliberate work which is starting to take shape and it is beautiful to watch and be part of."

Many brands are starting to play in the woke space, authentically challenging the narrative and speaking to audiences in a language that resonates with them. Nando's is one example of a brand that is well aligned with this. "If you look at their recent work you start seeing a very clear pattern. There is the *#RightMyName* campaign, which drew attention to the issue of spellcheck telling millions of people – and even Nando's – that their names are not a mistake. This was followed by the *More*

*South African Flavour* advert which highlighted how brands need to stray away from just one narrative, there's more than one flavour to South Africa. Most recently their *#YouPeople* ad simply highlighted how we are all differently the same – a simple, relevant message with subtle cues of unity playing beautifully into who we are as South Africans. At the heart of all these campaigns is the consumer."

"By putting consumers first, we were able to develop beautifully simple ideas that made a difference and have a real impact in a complex world by addressing societal issues, shifting perceptions, and being facilitators of change overall. Consumers love brands that are accountable, care and are part of the conversation and the solution," explains Phumo.

She believes that M&C Saatchi Abel is 'woke' due to it prioritising and orientating around the consumer insight, which then leads to a brutally simple solution. "We spend time with consumers through cultural immersions, hosting informal focus groups, conducting online surveys, tracking online conversations and tapping into our M&C Saatchi Intelligence Group Research Portal for great global case studies. This brings a certain level of heart and depth to our work."

"The recent work we have been doing on Takealot.com is a great example of this. It stems from beautiful, truly South African audience insights and it authentically delivers a strong message in a soft tone. These are not insights you find on Google, these are insights you find on the ground. Being woke is not being aggressive, it's a voice, a strong voice that is honest and clear."

She shares that in order for more advertisers to drive being woke, it is vital that the right people occupy the right spaces within agencies. "Briefs shouldn't go to the available team, but rather the right team." Authenticity is an actual thing and South African audiences are very sensitive to this. Narratives will only change if people are being given opportunities to tell their own stories and change their own narratives."

She adds: "In agencies, we pretty much live in review rooms and this needs to stop. We need to be in the spaces where

our consumers are – stalking them online, walking the streets with them, basically immersing ourselves in their world because that's where the culture is."

"Wokeness is the only way forward as an industry. It's not a gender thing, nor is it a race thing. Rather, it is an agenda we should all be rallying behind. It speaks to critical social issues and injustices which affect us all. Looking at our current political and economic challenges as a country we need to realign. Brands are under immense pressure and consumers are living paycheck to paycheck. This is why we don't have a choice. This is the time to be woke and fearless, to solve business problems, alleviate consumer tensions and drive change," concludes Phumo.

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