

South Africa's *Ugly Betty* remake: A local inspired series powered by local talent and local brands

By [Kirsten Hassan](#), issued by [MediaHeads 360](#)

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Known Associates Entertainment (KAE), in partnership with SABC 1 and video on demand platform Viu, launched the newest and hottest dramedy to hit South Africa, *uBettina Wethu*.

On 5 April 2021, the journey of South Africa's very own *uBettina Wethu*, an adaptation of the Colombian *Betty Soy La Fey* (*Ugly Betty*), is a celebration of local talent and local stories. It has also been an opportunity for some of South Africa's most loved local brands to align themselves in a visually creative way with this ground-breaking TV series.

The project has been four years in the making, starting production February 2021, Known Associates Entertainment are the team behind this local take on the international hit *Ugly Betty* and have been working tirelessly to make sure there is a distinctly South African edge, with the local version aptly named *uBettina Wethu*. Producer Tshepiso Chikapa Phiri says: "It's a wonderful, universal story that has been told in more territories worldwide than any other franchise and we are so happy to be bringing it to life in South Africa."

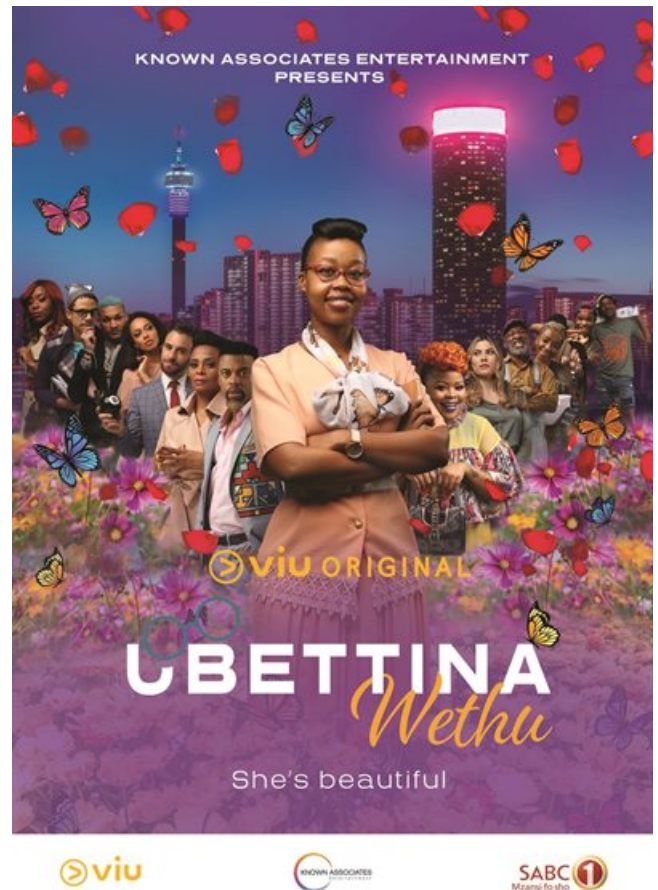
Shows like this create unique opportunities for brands that want to experiment with content, marketing and creativity. It also requires an element of insight and understanding, trust in the production team and a healthy dose of bravery! Stepping outside traditional advertising spaces exposes brands to audiences in new ways and gives them the ability to capture their customers attention, using compelling storylines that showcase their brand values. The benefit is that the messaging delivered within the content is specifically created and showcased in a way that isn't overly promotional.

uBettina Wethu is universally known and incorporates major story arcs and plot lines that are easily understood. Producers Know Associates Entertainment took the decision to follow a storyline integration and product placement approach similar to the popular American period drama *Mad Men*, as the series features dozens of real-life brands with products skillfully placed and unobtrusively integrated in the 'world of story'.

Specialist media agency, Mediaheads360 joined as partner to KAE and was tasked with finding the right brand fit for the series. They successfully brought on board a portfolio of popular and most-loved South African skincare, bath care and hair care brands.

Using a combination of passive, active and storyline integration, brands like Clere, Satiskin, Turbovite, LipIce, Young Solutions, Playboy, Playgirl and Gold Series will engage with their customers by associating with characters within the world of *uBettina Wethu* that share similar brand values and bridge the gap between awareness and ongoing affinity.

"We've most definitely seen a rise in demand among astute brands and marketers for integrated content marketing



opportunities aligned with locally produced flagship shows such as the *uBettina Wethu* series. After all, there's a whole window of opportunity and creativity awaiting. Why look through the window at the view when one can open the window and live the view, just the same as we live brands every day?" - Justin Keats, sales director, MediaHeads 360.

Finding a new, fresh face to play the part of uBettina was key to the series and was an important show of support to the local film industry. The search for the face of the lead actress proved an opportune leveraging partnership opportunity for trusted and respected hair fashion brand, Sta-Sof-Fro, which sponsored the search for *uBettina Wethu*.



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Using a virtual casting portal over WhatsApp, aspiring actors from across the country were able to submit their audition videos to be considered for the role of uBettina, her boss Dingaana or the female support lead Linda. An opt-in option was included as a lead generator and gave participating entrants the chance to win Sta-Sof-Fro hampers. The WhatsApp user journey also included a push to the uBettina Wethu website, where actors could download audition scripts and the journey also drove traffic the Sta-Sof-Fro website to find the answers to the hamper give-away competition questions.

Breaking new ground is an essential process when pushing boundaries and creating dynamic opportunities. When two or more like-minded partners see the value in new spaces great things happen. In the South African TV series market, great things are happening on *uBettina Wethu*. The storyline and brand synergies are creating a series of firsts. The South African offering is the first African lead actress in the Betty role. The brand partnership is a unique integration opportunity and a first in the local market. Lastly, and most importantly, local audiences will be viewing a local inspired series powered by local talent and local brands.

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