

South Africa needs brands to lead the charge in new spaces, particularly in digital

By  Juanita Pienaar

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The Nando's Afro-tising campaign by M&C Saatchi Abel recently won the Loeries Grand Prix for Film - TV & Cinema Commercials.



The M&C Saatchi Abel team at the Loeries. Image credit: Julian Carelsen/2019 Loerie Awards.

We speak to Neo Mashigo, who is M&C Saatchi Abel Group chief creative officer, about the idea behind the campaign and the current creative landscape in SA.

■ Congratulations! Why do you think this campaign was deserving of such a win? Tell us more about the thinking behind the idea for the campaign.

I think the campaign actually challenged the industry and consumers on what and how we view ourselves and how we communicate. And it speaks to us as South Africans being clear on who we are especially in communication. So what makes an African? Is it a particular type of voice and or type of colours used? And are we happy with us being all vanilla and looking all the same?

It's raised a lot of questions around communication as brands and how we speak to consumers. So in a Nando's type of way, it was fresh and it also challenged people. I think that was what made the judges stand and look because it was also judged by the people that made some of the work that we highlighted in our ad. And it is bold for a brand to challenge society and go: "Is this good enough? Is this what we've become?"

■ **Comment on the current creative landscape in South Africa and how this compares globally?**

I think South African creatives have the ideas. I think where we are lacking now as our economy is getting pressured. Brands are being cautious with money and their spend. And also being quite very cautious with their communication. People tend to go to the tried-and-tested, whereas in times like these this is where we need to be more creative and more innovative and make sure we are the brands that are on top of mind and that is how we would come out of the rut. South Africa needs brands to lead the charge in new spaces, particularly in digital because that is where the opportunity will come for all of us in the world.



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In the last year, we lost a couple of brilliant creative minds to the rest of the world. It is a good thing and also not such a good thing. It is great that we can have our own people running brands around the world that gives them the necessary skillset and hopefully they can bring it back to the country. And also create opportunities for new people to come in and lead agencies and bring in a new way of doing things. Because the positions will give younger people and hopefully fresh people the opportunity. That is what my observation is around that space.

Globally, we do punch above our weight in terms of our ideas and what we can do. That's why the world is continuously seeking and asking for more people from our shores to go and lead their agencies. Our biggest challenge lies around our economy and what we can do with what we have.

I suppose our job as creatives is to come up with the creative solutions under whatever circumstance we are in and this is what we will continue to strive to do. More so, the industry is looking like it's getting into a better space in terms of getting more black people into the industry and getting more women into the industry. And getting a diversity of thought around our creative departments. So I think we are heading in the right direction.

■ **What was your main takeout from Loeries 2019?**

I think that every year at Loeries we see some groundbreaking work and we see a couple of shifts and categories that start to take over but, I think, what stood out for me is the lack of great work coming from the financial sector; banks and

insurance companies.

For the last three years, we've been seeing that category driving new kind of work in the content space, in digital space and I was personally hoping that if the banks are driving this innovation within the advertising industry and how we speak to consumers, we'd see more. I was quite hopeful but this year, I must say that there was a lot missing from that end. I think overall in the categories that we are known for, the work is looking good like in radio – every year it is amazing – it still surprises most of us that we keep on coming up with new ways and fresh ways of doing amazing work in radio.

But, I think, what scares me is digital. I feel like we are being left behind by the world. I think as agencies and with our clients is; we shouldn't be waiting for the consumer to be digital. Everybody is digital on their phones and on mobile – that way you can talk to everyone. We should be leading the charge in terms of ideas. We shouldn't be waiting for the time where we feel that now is the time that everyone is using smartphones. We should already be making work that is digitally-led. In terms of being more innovative, I think that space is lacking.

■ **What's next?**

I think when you do well, the only thing you can do is to maintain and push the boundaries and get into greater spaces. How we look at it at M&C Saatchi Abel is that it's not about the awards, it's actually about doing work that is amazing for the brands that we work with. What's next for us is continuing to try and deliver solutions for our clients that will get consumers engaged and get product moving from shelves. And that is how we get to the awards. We don't look for the awards, we just do the work and if the work answers the brief and people react and then it gets recognised. So we'll continue in that space.

For more on M&C Saatchi Abel, visit its website by clicking [here](#) and click [here](#) for more coverage of Loeries 2019 in our special section.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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