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Conference White Paper **NEDBANK IMC 2024**



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INTRODUCTION

Dear Marketer,

This year's Nedbank IMC discussions set a powerful foundation for us all to challenge the familiar and explore the new. In a world where consumers demand real connections, authenticity has never been more important.

As AI reshapes the marketing industry, marketers must remain agile and proactive. This year's conference emphasized the importance of embracing artificial intelligence, particularly generative AI (Gen AI). Brands must access meaningful insights, understand consumer sentiment, and make data-driven decisions that improve customer engagement and strengthen authenticity. Today, brands must go beyond transactional relationships to create genuine, human-centered interactions.

In delivering on our role as the global leader in Media, Social, and Consumer intelligence, we see billions of conversations take place online every day across more platforms than most teams can keep track of; hence, 51% of decision-makers plan to put more resources toward AI-driven [social listening this year](#) and in the future.

We are on hand to discuss how your brand can achieve new levels of insight and hope to hear from you!

Yours in marketing!

Katherine

Introduction by
 **Meltwater**



KATHERINE MCINNES
Head of Marketing Africa

1. AI AMPLIFIED – The future is closer than it appears with marketing being the most impacted function of AI and Gen AI. It is important for marketers to grasp future trends as the rate of complexity increases.

2. AUTHENTICITY – Calling on brands to be real and transparent is not new. What is new is how many brand experts mentioned authenticity as a driver of business growth and retaining customer loyalty.

3. HUMANIZED GROWTH – Marketing leaders must drive more humanized growth so brands can create value for all stakeholders in the business.

4. CONTINUE TO DREAM – Fueling development in ourselves as marketers hinges on belief in the dream. Marketers should not be afraid of risk but should step into it.

5. SOCIAL IMPACT – Marketing's role in crafting a future where brands drive social impact through great storytelling.



There is no doubt that artificial intelligence, particularly generative AI, is shaping our world and will redefine how we live, work and connect in the near future. Faith Popcorn predicts that humans will be 50% cyborg, but despite this, many speakers urged us to make sure we keep our humanity. This applies to brands too, which need to become more humanised to connect authentically with their customers and consumers and create lasting impact to solve societal challenges.

With increasing complexity requiring marketing leadership to expand their skills, marketers are being challenged to redefine their marketing strategy to include authenticity as a driver of business growth, as well as offer inspirational leadership within the organisation to align the values of the brand with all stakeholders.



DONOVAN GOLIATH

AI AMPLIFIED – Marketing is most impacted by AI and Gen AI

From cyborg nation to AI augmented reality, Global Futurist, **Faith Popcorn**, is preparing us for radical societal shifts. She detailed how the immersive and digital future will change culture in the coming decade, impacting how we live, how we connect and how we will learn. Popcorn, who defined the “cocooning” trend in the late-1980s, addressed delegates on the topic, *Challenge yourself to meet the Future Forces*, explaining that artificial intelligence and immersive digital realms have changed the future irrevocably.

Popcorn emphasised that it was important to understand what is coming our way in order for businesses to prepare for approaching challenges and market shifts. This “applied futurism” can accurately present different scenarios to apply to particular business challenges, strategy and present plans forward.





AI AMPLIFIED – Marketing is most impacted by AI and Gen AI (continued)

The three constructs of how we will live, connect and learn, with Popcorn's staggering statistics, include:

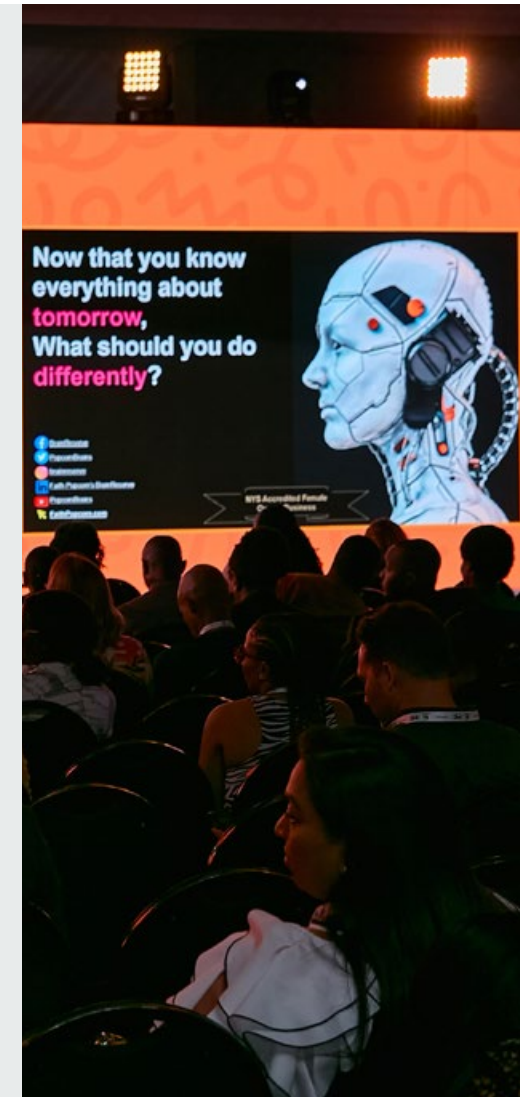
1. LIVE – Cyborg Nation: Augmented intelligence will track our every mood and move. Tiny sensors will monitor our biodata, and bots will redefine and eliminate our jobs. Popcorn said we need to pay attention to the fact that 77% of our population will be 50% cyborg in the future with the melding of man, woman and machine. And by 2027, enterprise spend on generative AI worldwide will be \$152.1 billion. The impact of this will be the automation of tasks like kitchen staffing, with predictions that 86% of those jobs will be automated by 2030. In addition, 61% of millennials want their own GPT digital twin; while the majority of patients believe AI already eliminates medical mistakes.





AI AMPLIFIED – Marketing is most impacted by AI and Gen AI (continued)

- 2. CONNECT – The Tech that Binds Us:** We are desperately seeking community and calm. Popcorn believes in singularity – the mash up of humans and technology to revolutionise social connections and end loneliness. “The rate of anxiety and depression among adults is up 33%. Robot companions will reduce loneliness for seniors by 80%, as 83% of people believe that technology brings us closer together.” She referred to the Nowhere metaverse which connects friends and family using personalised avatars; and AI chatbot Replika, which has reduced suicides by being an online friend to those in need.
- 3. LEARN – From Artificial to Augmented Intelligence:** In the new world of AI, AR, VR, humans will receive limitless knowledge into their brains. “Think about it,” said Popcorn. “The spoken word in any language will be uploaded directly into your brain. Gradually we will be able to communicate with each other without using words. In case you think this is too weird, Elon Musk and Amazon are already experimenting with this and will allow you to order online by just thinking about it.” By 2030, the AI personalised learning market will reach \$48.7 billion, and 80% of employers are integrating AI tools to ensure staff keep pace with evolving demands. People will save 30% of their time just using AI, Popcorn added.





AI AMPLIFIED – Marketing is most impacted by AI and Gen AI (continued)

As we stand at the beginning of the advance of AI, marketers are urged not to forget that our audience are human beings who crave personal connection, including with brands.

Glenn Gillis, Founder and CEO of Sea Monster, discussed how different applications of gamification can enhance the connection with consumers and facilitate higher engagement when used correctly. He gave examples of local and international brands whose use of these tools has brought them success over competitors. This success is due to user centrality, which has yielded high financial and engagement success.

In fact, consumers are seeking personal connections and fighting the “warzone on our eyeballs” to find a space free from forced communication. **Mbali Bhengu**, an Entrepreneur and Lecturer at Red & Yellow Creative School of Business, shared that “attention is currency” and talked about the “marketing fatigue” that consumers may be experiencing. Thus, people are spending more time now in virtual worlds where they can relax and spend time together for hours on end, away from the noise.



AI AMPLIFIED – Marketing is most impacted by AI and Gen AI (continued)

“Next year, there will be 3.6 million people actively gaming. People are spending more time gaming, than watching TV..., than on social media,” said Gillis. He revealed that 50% of 50-year-old men and older, are already frequent gamers, 25% are daily gamers, and 35 to 55-year-old women spend more money on games than any other segment.

Gillis made a call for marketers to return to being customer-centric and consider the benefits of gamification. “Take games seriously and come up with your game plan because someone is going to do it if you don’t.”



MBALI BHENGU

AI AMPLIFIED – Marketing is most impacted by AI and Gen AI (continued)

Saffron Baggallay, Founder of Personal Mastery Lab, emphasised the value of having people at the core of marketing today. She delivered insights into the value of consumer data, specifically human behaviour and dynamics, for marketers. “You can have a beautiful strategy for AI, you can have a fabulous tech strategy, but behind your tech strategy, there are always humans.” She demonstrated “mass personalisation and mass customisation” by using audience members to show how consumer behavioural insight can allow for accurate, personalised engagement.

The broad spectrum of opportunities that AI brings to enhance marketing and create societal change, was presented by **Musa Kalenga**, Group CEO of Brave Group, in his view of the future. Kalenga reviewed a fair amount of historical figures and events in relation to technological advancements and how these have ultimately benefited marketers in the past.



AI AMPLIFIED – Marketing is most impacted by AI and Gen AI (continued)

Kalenga considered the history of media tool development: the importance and relevance of the media, such as the printing press to mass communication and its relevance applied to the local liberation pathway of South Africa. He explained how the media channels infiltrated every sector, from politics to commerce and marketing communication, and walked us through memorable advertisements with the audience, illustrating how print, television, radio and billboards have been cornerstones of successful marketing ideas.

Coming to the range of AI for marketers, Kalenga emphasised how it can facilitate the generation of “new concepts from scratch” and deliver more effective marketing, with AI allowing for more time to understand customers, creativity and build meaningful relationships. In demonstrating his AI engine Forge, Kalenga shared that AI and human collaboration were crucial to the future of marketing and that technology powered by AI will increase the pace of creative delivery, for example.



MUSA KALENGA

AI AMPLIFIED – Marketing is most impacted by AI and Gen AI (continued)

Dr Justin Cohen, Author and CEO, welcomed delegates to the future and spoke about, *How to open up to your full potential*. “We are undergoing the greatest acceleration of change in the history of humankind. Nothing short of a revolution in the way that we live and work.”

It is his opinion that the opportunity of new technology replaces humans who don't use the new technology. According to the World Economic Forum, AI will replace around 85 million jobs in the next five years, but it will also create 92 million jobs. “AI will be used to boost innovation and growth and create a culture of agility and continual learning to create a personal brand that sets you above a machine. You will find that AI actually stands for ‘augmented intelligence’,” Cohen reiterated, asking how we are using our augmented intelligence?

His parting point was that AI, like ChatGPT, needs everyone to partner with it and bring in the human element to activate it.



DR JUSTIN COHEN

AI AMPLIFIED – Marketing is most impacted by AI and Gen AI (continued)

In turn, **Nicky Verd**, Digital Futurist and Author of *Disrupt Yourself, Or Be Disrupted*, dealt with the gap between marketers and technology. That gap lies in those who ignore technology as part of IT, or who look at technology as a threat, afraid it will take their jobs, or view it just as a tool. We need to regard technology as levelling the playing field and use it to our advantage, she said.

Marko Stavrou, CEO, Stavro Consulting, who is also known as 'The Gen Z Guy', made the need for technological savviness as obligatory as he demonstrated how Gen Z consumers embed themselves in technology and how marketers need to leverage it to engage this cohort.

And, in a fun futuristic segment, **Maseda Ratshikuni**, Executive Marketing and Communications, Nedbank Africa regions, interviewed his future self in the year 2029. He discussed the advantages of AI on the African continent and 'Future' Ratshikuni reported that AI had transformed marketing by enhancing consumer behaviour research; and with internet connectivity surging, AI had empowered businesses to target with precision and had reduced costs. 'Current' Ratshikuni remarked that it was "proper Sci-Fi".



NICKY VERD

AI AMPLIFIED – Marketing is most impacted by AI and Gen AI (continued)

'Future' Ratshikuni was then "revealed" as a deep fake AI, which raised issues of privacy and MarTech costs, calling on more African marketers to invest in enhancing technology benefits. Many marketers feel that AI could be a threat to the industry, or it could become overly dependent on AI, leading to a lack of innovation and creativity. But 'Future' Ratshikuni said that when used correctly and ethically, AI has the potential to enhance marketing with valuable insights and could automate repetitive tasks. Nedbank, for example, has already used AI to develop campaigns. Ratshikuni's parting words were: "AI in marketing is like a Starship cruiser – it doesn't drive itself, but it needs a brilliant Captain to navigate it!"

« AUTHORS' TAKEAWAY »

Embrace AI across all functions to understand how it will shape the coming decade and future for our brands and consumers, as well as society.



MASEDA RATSHIKUNI

AUTHENTICITY – Authenticity is a driver of business growth

“Influencers no longer influence.” This was the statement that **Scott Thwaites**, Founder of EDC squared, opened with. Speaking about, *Refining influence – The power of everyday content*, he emphasised that influence today is not about shouting the loudest or having the most followers or polished messaging. Instead, influence is about being real, relatable and being human, as his four years at Tik Tok showed him. He pointed out that the rules of influence have fundamentally changed at a foundational level due to the shift to authenticity, and that traditional tools and strategies no longer work.



SCOTT THWAITES

AUTHENTICITY – Authenticity is a driver of business growth (continued)

At the heart of this shift is authenticity or genuineness. Authenticity is about feeling real, unfiltered, true to the creator's voice, not overly polished or engineered to be perfect. The more genuine the content feels, the more trustworthy and relatable it is. And the more relatable, the more authentic. "Content that speaks of shared experiences, values, and emotions, therefore relatable, delivers a deeper meaningful engagement," said Thwaites. Then there is transparency. Consumers are more discerning than ever and know when they are being sold to and they don't trust it. Transparency is about being open and honest. Authenticity is also about being consistent in showing up. And consistency builds trust and reinforces authenticity, Thwaites added.

"Authenticity isn't just a buzzword to throw around. It is a bottom-line business driver... 88% of consumers say that authenticity is a key factor when deciding which brands to support, because ultimately, authenticity builds trust," said Thwaites. "And 81% of consumers say that trust in a brand is a key factor in their purchase decisions. A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is – it is what the consumers tell each other it is. The conversations that happen within your brand's community, is what shapes trust and influence."



AUTHENTICITY – Authenticity is a driver of business growth (continued)

In the social era, trust and influence were shaped around who you followed, and power was concentrated in individuals. The bigger the follower count, the bigger the influence, Thwaites explained. Fast forward to today, genuine connections are no longer formed around people, they are formed around content. This shift is big as it is no longer about the voices we chose to follow. It is about the content we consume and engage with, and what consumers pay attention to – content that feels relevant and authentic. This is where real influence now lies – in the power of the content itself, and the everyday creators who are shaping conversations within their communities.

“To truly harness this community-driven influence and deliver relatability, brands need to make a crucial shift. They need to let go of brand-led messaging. When you embrace consumer-led narratives, you deliver genuine, heartfelt connection,” said Thwaites.



AUTHENTICITY – Authenticity is a driver of business growth (continued)

To make AI work for your marketing, you need to challenge yourself to challenge AI, because it is still creative ideas that matter in great brand messaging, said **Mike Sharman**, Founder and CEO, Retroviral, because the reality is, that many marketing budgets are small. “I have often told my clients they don’t have the budget to be boring.” Therefore, the industry needs to be truly creative as 68% of consumers are more likely to share content if it elicits an emotional response, so marketers and creatives need to think about brand messaging differently.

“What I love about AI is the fact that we finally have something that we can interpret, in our agency minds, what we really want to articulate to our customers in marketing, in brand departments, and to CMOs. The problem between agencies and brands is that we don’t always speak the same language.”



AUTHENTICITY – Authenticity is a driver of business growth (continued)

Thwaites said this means that brands and marketers, instead of leading the conversation, need to let everyday creators talk about your brand in a way that resonates with them and their like-minded audience. This is not about controlling the narrative, it is about empowering those outside of the boardroom to craft it in a way that is authentic to them, raw, unpolished content, not hero content. When brands embrace this approach, they place themselves on the pulse of culture and they become part of the conversation and what matters most to their audience.

Brands can turn content struggles into an opportunity to connect with consumers in a meaningful way, and in fact, the most successful brands are those that do not act like brands. “People relate to people and if your brand feels like people, they’ll relate to you, too. It is also about making a positive social impact along the way,” Thwaites added.

« AUTHORS’ TAKEAWAY »»

Authenticity in marketing messaging drives business growth at the bottom line and creates consumer trust.



HUMANISED GROWTH – Marketing leaders must drive more humanised growth

Marketers and business leaders need to reevaluate what the purpose of business is. This was the plea from **Frank van den Driest**, Founder of the Institute for Real Growth. He spoke on how marketers can drive more humanised growth, talking about the role of business, not just marketers, in driving impact and growth. In addressing the question he posed, “What is our role as business leaders,” he felt we had lost sight of the fact that while business was there to make a profit, it was also supposed to do no harm and create value for everyone.

Van den Driest said most businesses instead focused on the short term, scale and cutting costs to boost next quarter profit. That became flawed business strategy and brands lost value, finding out that they focused too much on the bottom-line. The shift to humanised growth, with growth being defined as value for all stakeholders, began not so long ago.



FRANK VAN DEN DRIEST



HUMANISED GROWTH – Marketing leaders must drive more humanised growth (continued)

But with customers being more informed and stakeholders becoming more powerful and demanding, CEOs and leadership teams are in conflict with their stakeholders. Van den Driest outlined the roadmap used by successful marketers in driving more humanised growth:

1. Ground Yourself in Your DNA: Companies need to know their DNA – their values, culture, behaviour drivers, roots, what you stand for and what you stand up for. “Marketers are the best window to the world – we are all about understanding the unaddressed needs of consumers and coming up with solutions. What the board needs us to do is to create one version of the stakeholder truth... and then create a vision.” Marketers need to do that with customers, employees, NGOs, regulators, all stakeholders. For example, Gucci created a shadow Board of Gen Z to better understand younger consumers.



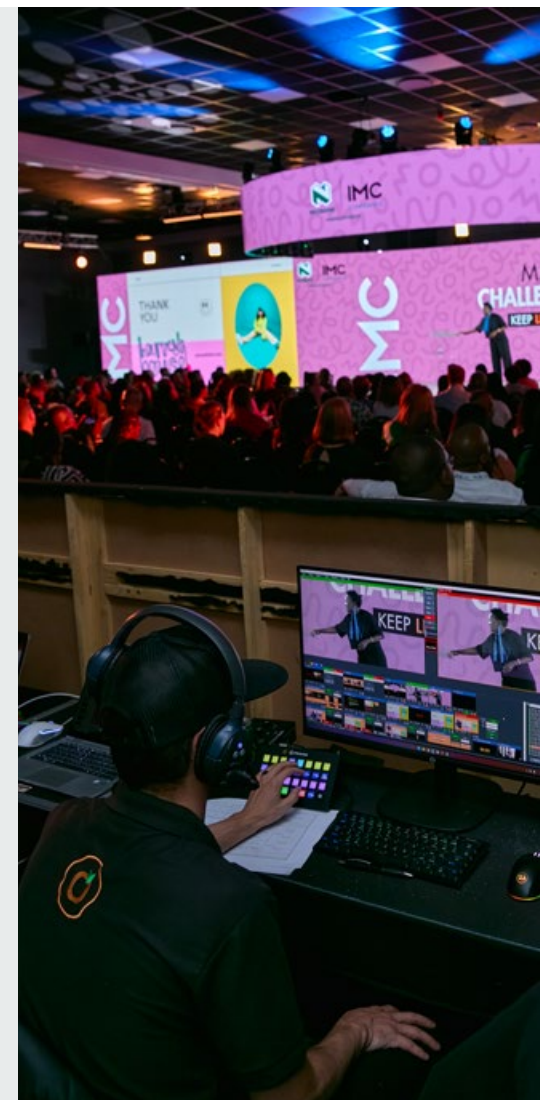
HUMANISED GROWTH – Marketing leaders must drive more humanised growth (continued)

2. Reimagine the Future Backwards: We need to create long-term vision, said Van den Driest. By way of example, General Motors have a utopian vision of the emerging future and want zero crashes, zero emissions, zero congestion, in their “Zero Vision” – simple, memorable, compelling. Once we have articulated a vision for the future, we need to look at the role we want to play in that vision, and marketers must adopt that aspirational role for the company.

3. Corporate Purpose: There are four drivers of corporate purpose – what the world needs; what people at the company are passionate about; what the company is uniquely good at; how the company can create economic value. “It’s all about using that purpose to truly guide your vision... people need to connect at an emotional level.”

4. Transformative Change: Organise Systemic Interdependence – organising and understanding that to drive value for all stakeholders, it is about systemic change, recognising that we need each other, and collaborating internally, across functions and departments to bring down those silos.

5. Unleash Role Modelling: This is about marketing leadership needing new skills and behaviours – things like building talent and driving systemic change, said Van den Driest.



HUMANISED GROWTH – Marketing leaders must drive more humanised growth (continued)

To assist leaders with managing constant change, **Dr Alistair Mokoena**, former Country Manager, Google South Africa, wrote a book called, *Servings of Self-Mastery*. “We don’t fight the conditions, we fight within the conditions. Self-mastery is a reminder to all of us that the locus of control sits within us. It reminds us of our agency. We are masters of our own destiny.

“So, if I look at this concept of modern marketing, strategy requires of us not just to be philosophers, creating meaning out of difficult concepts for people and simplifying those, but also requires us to be masters of business models.”

Mokoena advised marketers that they need to understand that they are the face of the organisation, the custodian of the consumer, and are supposed to identify future revenue streams and lead the charge when it comes to innovation, while being the captain of the team that talks about value creation.

Marketing is one link in the chain, but marketers need to understand all the other links in the chain – all aspects of the business, Mokoena emphasised.



HUMANISED GROWTH – Marketing leaders must drive more humanised growth (continued)

Gillian Rightford, MD, AdTherapy, hosted a panel discussion with three marketing experts who shared insights about leading in the marketing space. Rightford acknowledged that “Leadership can be hard in this industry, it’s competitive, it’s dynamic, it’s ever-changing.”

Firstly, the panelists were asked about their past and current challenges as marketing leaders. **Ivan Moroke**, CEO, Kantar South Africa, advised on the consistently complex dynamics of being a marketer: “On a daily basis, you have got to do things that are counterintuitive to what your general humanity says you should do, which is tough.” Next up, **Carl Willoughby**, Chief Creative Officer of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and Creative Circle chair, said, “One of the big things for me is trusting my gut, learning to accept that it is a voice I can deal with and actually listen to... you need confidence in that.”

Khensani Nobanda, Nedbank Group Executive: Group Marketing and Corporate Affairs, added, “Trusting my voice, ensured that I was brave in decisions or campaigns that I wasn’t 100% sure of... and the second thing is knowing when to let go of an idea and knowing when to let go of people.”



GILLIAN RIGHTFORD

HUMANISED GROWTH – Marketing leaders must drive more humanised growth (continued)

Rightford asked Willoughby about what keeps him focused and inspired. Willoughby replied, “That meaning keeps me going, the ability to find a solution that creates impact and then sell that, not in that order, that helps, keeps me inspired.”

Nobanda was asked about her learnings from leadership development programmes such as her recent Harvard experience, and she said that “What we need to do as South Africans is lean into our amazingness.”

Based on his breadth of continental travel and exposure, Moroke shared that “The biggest issue with leadership is never to assume that just because people share a similar strife or struggle, that they are a homogeneous group... Push for what connects people but at the same time do not stop learning and listening to people as individuals.”



KHENSANI NOBANDA, CARL WILLOUGHBY, IVAN MOROKE

HUMANISED GROWTH – Marketing leaders must drive more humanised growth (continued)

Rightford concluded the discussion by asking, “What would be your advice be to your younger self?” Nobanda would share confidence with her younger self, “You’re going to be fine, man...it’s going to work out.” Willoughby said, “The ability to break a problem down and find a solution is what will keep you going no matter what skill.” And Moroke felt that, “You can never know the full picture about anything... Everything is connected.”

Rightford was pulled into this last question, and added, “I would tell me to back myself... I think it is a constant evolution. I think we have got to keep learning. It is about self-mastery but it is also about self-kindness, looking after yourself so that you can guide and lead others in a way that grows them as well as grows you.

« AUTHORS’ TAKEAWAY »

Marketers need to become future focused and drive collaboration within the business to become inspirational leaders.



CONTINUE TO DREAM - Marketers should not be afraid of risk

"U-Vuyo is such a big, big dreamer," indeed. **Miles Kubheka**, Founder of Wakanda Food Accelerator, opened the conference by sharing his entrepreneurial journey and marketing tools that he has successfully used. Kubheka believes that "great stories can inspire" and shared how inspiration led him to move from a successful job to the uncertain terrain of starting a brand, Vuyo's, selling boerewors rolls.

"As long as I can remember, my mother said to me, 'don't be an 'also ran' in life'. If 5,000 people set out to run a marathon, 4,999 of them are there to serve to legitimise the winner. They are there so that there is a number one. Go out, change the world, stand for something, be somebody."

The desire to achieve a dream can drive simplicity into profitability, amplified through consistency and maintaining the dream - "innovation is not an instinct, but something you do every single day."



CONTINUE TO DREAM - Marketers should not be afraid of risk (continued)

The dream will fuel the pursuit, but the pursuer must maintain the dream. He described the value of participating in the customer experience and consistently showed how his journey was accompanied by challenges that needed to be handled. "You have got to be comfortable that things don't always go according to plan."

The risk in the entrepreneurial journey resonates with marketers, who understand that while marketing can have anticipated risk, they take the leap anyway when the dream is ambitious and compelling enough. Marketers often believe in dreams that only they see that others hesitate and even fear to consider. "People are afraid to do monumental things because of fear. People don't do stuff that is amazing because of fear, and sometimes it's not even their own fear; it's fear of people who love them, which makes it even more weighty."



CONTINUE TO DREAM - Marketers should not be afraid of risk (continued)

This was also apparent to **Matthew Bull**, Founder of SoloUnion, as he encouraged marketers to take risks with their brands and embrace “scary” things. Bull did a deep dive into “creating a creating culture”, using ABINBEV (SAB) and Kraft Heinz into two of the world’s most innovative companies. “I believe in the power of creativity to transform the fortunes of companies, of brands and of people. I believe it is the fuel, the magic that ignites the growth of those companies, brands, and people. But of course, creativity is a scary thing as it demands that you explore the un-explored, that you execute the un-executable.”

There are multinational companies that embrace creativity and transform their businesses to even greater growth. Companies that created a culture where people were comfortable with risk, where people accepted that failure was an essential part of success. So very few companies commit totally because they are scared, said Bull.



MATTHEW BULL

CONTINUE TO DREAM - Marketers should not be afraid of risk (continued)

Bull listed three key criteria pointing to success for global brands and creative marketers:

- 1. Leadership:** You must have leadership that believes in creativity as it liberates everyone else in the company to believe in the power of ideas. It also inspires hope and the key ingredient for success in creativity – resilience.
- 2. Principles:** The most important thing in life is to hold onto your principles, no matter what life throws at you. Positive conflict is essential when it comes to creativity and creating. The truth about creativity is that it thrives in chaos. That is why conversations are so important. You must surround that chaos with order. At ABL and Kraft Heinz, we institutionalise creativity and create programmes to foster creative excellence, Bull said.
- 3. Results:** Creativity is a results-driven business. This is about making brands famous, products loved, creating shareholder support, and building customer loyalty. Bull has learnt that marketers don't trust their intuition enough and end up in "maybe" land.

Quick choices and a willingness to take chances and grab them also characterised Kubheka's choice to sell Vuyo's and even to patent the word *Wakanda*. He showed how, through taking risks, he yielded big rewards. His stories showed financial success through optimising changes in the landscape and understanding the consumer's interests.

CONTINUE TO DREAM - Marketers should not be afraid of risk (continued)

As a regular visitor to South Africa, **Frank van den Driest** described South Africa's leaders as inspirational, calling them open minded, tolerant and respectful of their teams and what they bring to the brand. Van den Driest listed the top attributes of top performing leaders, including marketers, drawing on inspirational South African leaders from brands such as Discovery, Nando's, Nedbank and Chicken Licken. He emphasised that top performing companies have courageous leadership with an optimistic and future focused approach, that demonstrate authenticity.

Bull called South Africa's talent remarkable. "What isn't remarkable is our ambition. This country produces the greatest marketing in the world. I want you to take inspiration from the resilience that we have as a nation, as a people. Take that resilience and take it into creativity and build up our creative reputation. The same goes for agencies. Make them understand that you want your brand to be revered around the world. Be ambitious and be inspired by the good things that have happened in our country over the last few years.



CONTINUE TO DREAM - Marketers should not be afraid of risk (continued)

Adaptability and teamwork are paramount for marketers as the market, consumers and technology adapt. **Mike Wright**, a Student at **Red & Yellow** in the Advanced Diploma in Marketing and Advertising (ADMAC), appreciated these skills and their necessity in any work. Among five useful tips that he shared, Wright said, "As technological changes increase and deadlines accelerate, we keep forcing our ideas and rushing the creative process that makes us special. One of the few advantages that we have over AI, is we can connect random dots in the real world, uncovering unexpected insights and turning them into meaningful and impactful work, but the only way to do this is to slow down."



MIKE WRIGHT

CONTINUE TO DREAM - Marketers should not be afraid of risk (continued)

In addressing marketers, **Doug Place**, Chief Strategy Officer of Nando's and MASA Chair, produced five tips that could help them stand out, or according to **Mbali Bhengu**, as Gen Z's might say, to be "giving dominate":

- 1. Be Lazy:** Necessity is not the mother of invention; laziness is. AI is artificial intelligence, and what AI is really good at, is data and analytics. Be lazy and use the AI to generate great, reliable, rich data insights, said Place.
- 2. Be Useful:** Your brand will stand out more if you can ask yourself what the customers really need that we can give them. Focus on the product - and the promotion is that much easier."
- 3. Be Brave:** "Here's the truth: everything that you have ever appreciated in your whole life has been on the other side of fear", said Place. But, for marketers, the opposite of bravery isn't cowardice, it's safety. "No one ever got fired for being safe, but no one ever got promoted either because they didn't stand out."



CONTINUE TO DREAM - Marketers should not be afraid of risk (continued)

4. Be Together: Diversity is not just a moral imperative; diversity is a source of competitive advantage. As marketers, we cannot face the forces that beat upon our profession alone.

5. Be Yourself: You must believe that your uniqueness was made for a reason, and we cannot wait for you to discover what that reason is and bring it to the entire marketing party.

Inspiration to fight against all odds, came from **Steve Babaeko**, CEO and Chief Creative Officer, X3M Ideas, bringing greetings from Lagos, Nigeria. His advice was to win against all the odds, to bet on yourself; look fear straight in the eyes; be bullish about your ideas; let the naysayers have their say; embrace failure as a learning opportunity; develop a thick skin; see stubbornness is a virtue; and put in the work for success. "As marketers, as individuals, as Africans, if we stand our ground, if we keep pushing, success is just waiting at the next stop."

« AUTHORS' TAKEAWAY »

Marketers need to take risks and continue to dream, and not let fear stop them from creating great brands.



STEVE BABAECO

SOCIAL IMPACT - Great storytelling drives social impact

In sharing his journey to success in South Africa, **Miles Kubheka** magnified how marketers and businesspeople cannot be internally focused and succeed alone. “You can’t be the one with the juicy burger, and everyone’s lips are dry.”

Kubheka illustrated how great storytelling can drive social impact. He illustrated its capacity through his shared stories of how marketing can reshape the lives of the unemployed and bring pride to disadvantaged neighbourhoods in townships. People assist in driving the dream, and their understanding is central to marketing’s role, he said.

The interconnectivity between humans, the dream and even the community was shown by Kubheka to create prospects to enhance the South African landscape. Marketing is about people in the business and outside of it, for which the business operates, and different presenters strengthened these sentiments that Kubheka illustrated.



SOCIAL IMPACT - Great storytelling drives social impact (continued)

Kubheka shared how he has invested in the township space and uplifted the community through solar power and employment. His analysis of the unmanaged, one-direction charity's prospective toxicity showed the value of empowering people and looking closely at what is happening on the ground. He magnified the disadvantage placed on the underprivileged by pricing tools; and he questioned the "poverty tax" that poor people face every day in retailers nationwide, illustrating how his Gcwalisa retail concept challenges this by buying bulk and offering products at more affordable prices, even in smaller quantities.

Marketers have the capacity to impact business choices, and this can be done with the cognisance of all South Africans. As **Mbali Bhengu** said, marketers can represent consumers in the boardroom.



SOCIAL IMPACT - Great storytelling drives social impact (continued)

Making your brand more human makes a more positive social impact which is good for society, added **Scott Thwaites**. And marketers help brands drive positive social impact by creating opportunities for individuals as well as enabling brands to market in a more morally, socially responsible way. Marketers not only foster strong connections that way, but also help build a better world. That way, marketers empower their brands as a force for good, delivering authentic content that not only resonates with the audience, but also contributes to making a meaningful difference in the world. This is the power of everyday content, he said.

But how do you market to an anxious world? This was the concerning question posed by **Dr Alistair Mokoena**. “Welcome to the world of complexity, but also a state of anxiety,” he said, quoting from the 2024 State of the World Mental Health global report. Sharing a list of societal fails and inequities, including our own negative socio-economic stats, he added: “Ten percent of the population in our own country go hungry every day, yet 10 million tons of food goes to waste. Why we don’t use creative ideas and technology to solve some of these critical problems?”



SOCIAL IMPACT - Great storytelling drives social impact (continued)

“Marketing is the most impacted function by AI and Gen AI. Modern marketing brings together strategy, creative, data, technology, innovation and customer experience. More complex than we originally trained to do, recounted Mokoena.

“We speak about diversity, equity and inclusion, but the custodian of customer insights is all of us as marketers. How do you keep up with a fragmenting media landscape, the power of the mobile phone? We say technology is the tide that lifts all boats. All we must do is ensure that every African has access to the internet. There are 1.3 billion people on the continent, but only 500 million Africans have internet connectivity. What about the 800 million?” Mokoena asked.

The good news is that by 2030 another 500 million Africans will be on the internet, he said.

By 2050, our population on the African continent will go up to about 2.5 billion. At that point, 30% of the world’s youth population will be in Africa. Are we ready for that responsibility, that outcome, Mokoena asked.



SOCIAL IMPACT - Great storytelling drives social impact (continued)

Ana Carrapichano, CEO of Mediology, and **Professor Adebayo Fayoyin**, an expert, adviser and consultant in strategic communication, advocacy and social change, called marketers to challenge themselves with communities through social and behavioural change and communication. Fayoyin began by recognising how “everything is connected” and reminded marketers of the words of Yvonne Chaka Chaka that “change starts with you.” Marketers must challenge themselves regarding behavioural change because it is “embedded in all we do as marketers.”

Social Behavioural Change and Communication (SBCC) was discussed to assist marketers in seeing how they have the capacity to change society. Prof Fayoyin connected marketers’ social importance toward social impact, as Miles Kubheka showed at the beginning of the conference. Carrapichano challenged marketers to “really push socio-behavioural change” in communication. She recognised the need for the private sector to facilitate the behavioural change marketers have been driving.



**ANA CARRAPICHANO AND
PROF ADEBAYO FAYOYIN**

SOCIAL IMPACT - Great storytelling drives social impact (continued)

The challenges and restrictions faced by the girl child were presented, and Carrapichano applied the originally South African and internationally relevant “She Decides” campaign as an example of how advocacy for women’s rights is regaining momentum in the communication space. Fayoyin shared that, “...we know it (poverty) has the face of the woman” and that “If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.”

Prof Fayoyin discussed the importance of humanity in marketing by pressing into world issues that marketers can positively influence at this time and introduced the “Socio-ecological Model for Change”, describing how people are at the centre of all we do. He reminded marketers of their responsibility to understand the behavioural patterns related to such areas to facilitate and drive change. Carrapichano addressed the challenges faced by men and “outdated masculinity norms.” She, too, recognised the importance of mental health awareness, more specifically for men, and encouraged their pursuit of it. She declared that, “by encouraging healthy male role models, we can build better communities.”



SOCIAL IMPACT - Great storytelling drives social impact (continued)

The Brothers for Life campaign was shared as an example of work in which she participated and as an example of how marketing can change social norms and a “decade of behavioural change success.” Carrapichano emphasised that the issue of behavioural change went beyond campaigns and even to the impact on cultural behaviours.

Carrapicho and Prof Fayoyin both called on marketers to take the conversations to key tables and create better work and a better tomorrow.

Puno Selesho, Poet, Performer and Communications Specialist, shared a poetic call to marketers and their “possibly” forgotten responsibility as she said, “So marketers, Africa is putting her trust in your hands. Represent her well.”

« AUTHORS' TAKEAWAY »

Marketing can influence communities and the society it operates in, and marketers need to recognise their pivoting role in the social landscape.



The 2024 Nedbank IMC Conference set out to give marketers key insights about how to keep learning and keep leading. The presenters and panelists concentrated on the value of human-centricity and how the developing marketing tools, powered and supported by AI, have opened a new chapter to the marketing journey. Industry leaders and academics shared the value of storytelling; how central a customer needs to be; and the impact that marketers can have in the boardroom, via media and in society.

The insights delivered illustrate how marketers need to maintain a consistent vigilance and review of their strategies and their contexts. Marketers need to understand that they too are a valuable, unique part of a broader, evolving world, calling them to remain in step with the times.

Both within the business and with consumers in the markets, the importance of the human role needs to be recognised for its value and how marketing can impact the communities that it operates in. Marketers have an increasing number of tools at their disposal which need to be filtered through to find the most relevant ones for creative use. It was recommended that marketers review and enhance the value held for consumers and for self. As poet Puno Selesho puts it, "If we keep trying to break our bones to fit into the world's mold we will always lose."

Thank - You.

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