

Spoofy octopus, the diversity jungle and being true to yourself

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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Going viral in the middle of a pandemic, tackling the diversity issue in the ad industry and raising the question whether honesty has gone with the wind, were the three topics in the matinee session of Nedbank Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) 2021 virtual conference.

The conference's movie theme was echoed in all the presentations.

First off, Mike Sharman, founder of Retroviral , said he came up with the idea of a spoof of the Oscar-winning NetFlix documentary, *My Octopus Teacher* for his client, Creepy Krauly, during the hours he spent on his bike trying to to break the monotony of lockdown.

"There we were in the midst of a pandemic, but there was glimmer of hope, albeit a Caucasian Western Cape glimmer of hope," he said.

“ After 80 minutes watching Craig Foster learning from an octopus, I thought what would be more magical than a spoof of *My Octopus Teacher*? ”

“ ”



[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Mike Sharman (@mikesharman)

The idea worked. The video went viral, and reached more than one million views within a matter of hours.

“Many brands had pandemic paralysis last year, so it was a case of bouncing ideas, and timing the opportunity,” Sharman said.

He then went on to explain what he terms “virality and the science thereof”. Firstly this requires remarkable content. Then, rather than targeting the superstars of social media, Sharman said they targeted nano influencers, and tracked every single interaction.

Once your content is picked up by [mainstream media](#), the reach grows hugely. “The world has become so obsessed with influencers, but journalists and media are the ultimate influencers,” he said.

Then there is the dark social media, such as WhatsApp. “You know it’s worked, when your mother forwards you your own content and she doesn’t know it’s yours,” he said.

The spoof has hit more than five million views. It’s also not about vanity metrics, but better business. The results speak for themselves with a 20% in sales for Kreepy Krauly.

Making diversity in marketing the star of the show

Monalisa Zwambila, CEO and founder of The Riverbed Agency, used the 1991 movie, [Jungle Fever](#) as the backdrop to discuss diversity in the marketing space.

Thirty years after the movie came out there’s still lots to do, she said, listing the ongoing existing disparities between men and women, gender pay gaps, and between straight and gay.

“It’s not all doom and gloom 30 years later. I get excited when see women, especially women of colour, succeed,” Zwambila said, citing Kamala Harris, US vice president, and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, director general of the World Trade Organisation.

“ [#MonalisaZwambila](#), founder & CEO of [@riverbedagency](#), one of too few [#Blackowned](#) [#AdAgencies](#) reminds us [#Diversity](#) is key to growth with a resonant reminder from [.@ava](#)

Here's to the sequel where diversity becomes a part of the story #MarketingTheMovie @IMC2021 #NedbankIMC2011 pic.twitter.com/Cosb3gX7ly— Josephine (@jozib_sa) July 29, 2021 ”

“However, we should be angry that our industry ecosystem is still not diverse. Thirty percent of purchase decisions made by women. When we are talking about ‘deeply felt and held’, it is to completely understand how diversity influences creativity,” she said.

A recent [study](#) by McKinsey makes a case for diversity in business, and how diversity is a compelling business proposition for brands and businesses.

“When we drill down diversity in advertising industry – there’s still a lot to be done,” Zwambila said, pointing out that of the R7bn in industry revenue 60-70% goes to the big internationals, while the rest is split between locals.

“Black-owned agencies account for 5% of market share of R350m-R500m spread across the independent agencies,” she said.

She appealed to the audience, saying: “You are the change that we seek. We want the best creatives to work for black agencies, and business must commit to give us a share of their marketing.”

“ *#MonalisaZwambila - CEO and Founder of the @riverbedagency tackles ‘Jungle Fever. Making diversity in marketing the star of the show*

In closing she said, “... diversity should be the hero in the story that we want to tell.”#NedbankIMC2021 #MarketingTheMovie pic.twitter.com/kGZMzVkwrd— Thapelo Mokono (@JustThapy) July 29, 2021 ”

Has honesty gone with the wind?

Sylvester Chauke, chief architect: DNA Brand Architects, took a hard-hitting look at the lack of honesty in the advertising industry.

“ *So true: @sylvesterchauke telling us any environment that makes you leave your true self in the car is not going to get the best, especially from people who feel marginalised in the industry. Truth, honesty & freedom are the only way to get great work. @IMCConf #NedbankIMC2021 pic.twitter.com/HvfiWJeclo— Gillian Rightford (@grightford) July 29, 2021* ”

“We are really good at taking the ordinary and making it extraordinary. We are so good at it we believe it to be true. We believe we are honest, transparent, share goals. Yet, we all work in spaces where we fail to be honest,” he said.

This failure is largely driven by fear. “I understand the real fear of long-term client relationship becoming extinct. In the board room, we all walk on egg shells, and there is not enough honesty.

“ *A proverb! 💎💎 https://t.co/7fua3zKGV8— Sylvester Chauke (@sylvesterchauke) July 29, 2021* ”

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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