

40 years of TBWA\Hunt Lascaris - The right side of history

 By [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

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TBWA\Hunt Lascaris sees its 40th celebration as a transition into maturity.

The agency has seen it all, the end of apartheid South Africa, the 2008 financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic.



The agency turns 40 years old. Source: Supplied.

Luca Gallarelli, group CEO of TBWA South Africa comments: “For an agency like Hunt Lascaris to still be operating after such immense change is remarkable.”

“This is an agency that has gone to make iconic work and has put SA advertising on the global map and most importantly there has been generations of talent that has gone through the agency and populated the industry in SA and beyond. It’s an exceptional achievement for an agency to still be at the top of its game 40 years later.”

Standing for something

The agency, which was founded in 1983 by trailblazers John Hunt and Reg Lascaris, is one of the most awarded agencies in Africa. TBWA acquired a small stake in the business in 1985 and continued to grow its interest over the years.

Gallarelli says the agency has always wanted to be on the right side of history, and this is one of its biggest achievements over the decades.

“In the late 80s, Hunt Lascaris was responsible for producing the peace campaign in SA. This was a campaign that was produced in partnership with the government as the country was transitioning from the SA that was into the SA that would be. The agency really understood the role it could play in helping manage a peaceful transition to the democratic republic that we are today,” he says.



The agency worked on South Africa's peace campaign.

“On the back of the peace campaign, the ANC contracted Hunt Lascaris to be its advertising agency for the first-ever democratic election in 1994, so Nelson Mandela was a client of the agency back in the early 90s.”

Creatively the agency has had a lot of success.

“It’s the first South African agency to win five Gold Cannes Lions for *the Zimbabwean trillion-dollar* campaign and the first SA agency to ever win a Glass Lion at Cannes, which is an award that is handed out for work that has a meaningful impact on female upliftment and diversity through advertising. These are significant achievements for the agency.”

Recognition

Last year it was named the agency of the year at the [Adfocus awards](#).

“ To have our group perform so well across so many different categories, whether it be group of the year, large agency of the year, Africa impact award and a few other awards, it was a signifier that the hard work we put in to create an agency that has an impact both on the lives of the people that are in our agency as well as our clients and that the decisions we make on how we organise ourselves and conduct ourselves, how we choose to work together and engage our clients are working. ”

TBWA\Hunt Lascaris has just over 23 agencies that it works with across Africa, and it believes it is their responsibility to create good relations with other agencies on the continent.

Some of its clients include MTN, Spar and City Lodge.

Gallarelli says many of the company's best campaigns have been born out of collaborations with other agencies.

“Most recently we have been successful in picking up business for Absa bank. This is another vote of confidence in our ability to bring our network to life. It’s our desire now to continue to grow our portfolio of African clients because we believe we are the agency for it,” he says.

A new agency environment

Although many young agencies are popping up, TBWA\Hunt Lascaris does not see this as a threat to its future.

“We are ultimately supporters of the industry; we want a healthy, vibrant and thriving industry in SA. We want to be a part of that community and we want to continue playing the role that we have in terms of creating a pipeline of talent into the industry,” he says.

Gallarelli says big agencies have an educative role in the industry that allows for talent to go out and pursue their dreams.

“An individual's desire is to put themselves in an environment where they can learn and grow, and I think the environment we want to create is that. We have always been a school of advertising as many big agencies claim to be, so if we can strike that balance we will always be an agency that is full to the brim with amazing talent.”

He adds that the industry has come under pressure over the years because of the complexity of the modern agency environment.



Because of technology, some creatives are able to remotely work for international agencies while keeping their lives in SA while earning a stronger foreign currency.

“Now we are no longer just competing with employers in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban but with employers in New Zealand, Ireland, the UK and the US and that has brought a huge amount of pressure,” he says.

“The other challenge is in continuing our journey of transformation. Our industry has done a tremendous amount to transform but its journey is not done and we continue in our pursuit of being fully representative of SA.”

On 30 March, the agency will be hosting a birthday party with all the talent that has worked at TBWA\Hunt Lascaris over the years.

“This is an agency that has no intention of slowing down,” says Gallarelli.



TBWA\Hunt Lascaris celebrates 40 years of bold creativity, innovation and best-of-the best talent

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ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

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