

Busting stereotypes of SA women in the workplace

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

29 Oct 2018

With rising awareness that inequality needs to be tackled head-on, we're seeing more mindfulness of issues of inclusion and equality in local marketing campaigns and movements like the 7% Tribe, Take This Thread and 'Women Acknowledged'.



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This year kicked off with a gender equality bang, thanks to the global snowball of the #MeToo movement. With the popularity of #LeanIn, that movement's moved off our screens into the boardroom.

Marketing departments have noted and ad campaigns have followed suit, going beyond the typical product push towards putting budget and creativity on purpose-driven or sustainable marketing.



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Leigh Andrews 12 Mar 2018



Brands are standing with causes and aligning with issues that have a global impact, in an attempt to find solutions to society's top problems. As a result, diversity, inclusion and equality are finally getting a seat at the table.

From workplace to woke-place

For example, there's been the launch of the 7% Tribe movement, headed up by Tammy Menton, head of marketing and events at Steyn City, and co-founded with Janez Vermeiren and Yusuf Stevens of Cheeky Media.

It's aimed at advancing the female workforce, by equipping them with the skills and networks they need to get ahead.



7% Tribe launches to advance the female workforce

Jessica Tennant 31 Aug 2018



Looking to the local marketing and advertising industry specifically, there's definite growing awareness of a need to address the inequality.

More specifically, there's been a strong push towards addressing the gender pay gap.



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In helping women become more financially independent, Havas has launched Take This Thread, a bold movement that's taken three years of the agency staff's own time, in partnership with People Opposing Women Abuse or Powa.

Take this thread: Doeks for dignity and defiance

It's intended to help break patterns of abuse by providing the victims of domestic abuse living in Powa safe houses with skills that encourage them to become self-sufficient and financially independent.



Havas launches Take This Thread, a bold movement to help break the patterns of abuse

Havas Johannesburg 17 Oct 2018



They're given custom-designed Take This Thread fabric, sewing kits and training to make *doeks* or headwraps – long a symbol of dignity and defiance in women's issues – with the end results sold for each seamstress's profit.



Image supplied.

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Fiona O'Connor, joint executive creative director at Havas Southern Africa, explains:

“ We didn't just want to create a charity fund and try to throw money at the problem. It was so much more important to us to teach useful skills like sewing and selling merchandise, getting them started on establishing their own independence while building confidence and helping to heal. We hope participants use this campaign, along with the help offered at Powa, to start out on their own while keeping a connection to Take This Thread, making their own lives better and passing this thread on to others who need it. ”

Then there's the 'Women acknowledged' campaign, launched at the end of Women's Month by financial services company PPS with Promise.

Flipping the script on working women stereotypes

The timing of the launch was as important as the campaign. Instead of starting on 1 August and running for four weeks, the campaign aims to extend women empowerment into the rest of the year as it's an everyday challenge, not just something to tackle in a themed month.

“Irrespective of their qualification, female professionals are not treated as equals to their male counterparts because they are seen as women before being seen as professionals,” explains Ayanda Seboni, group executive of brand, marketing and communications at PPS.

And so, the campaign aims to open dialogue about the stereotypes that women face in the workplace, challenging age-old bias across industries.

For example:

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A GP

Dr Sofumelo Phetla, General Practitioner

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THE KIDS ARE HER JOB

BECAUSE SHE'S
A PAEDIATRICIAN

Dr Bhavisha Nagar, Paediatric Cardiologist

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TO YOUR HEALTH

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SHE TALKS A LOT

BECAUSE SHE'S
A PROFESSOR

Prof Aletta Prinsloo, Professor: Physics

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I'm sure we'll see more of this stereotype-busting messaging as brands brave up and fight the good fight for true inclusion and equality.

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ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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