

Nando's building brands through creative collisions

 By [Angie White](#)

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The second session of the Loeries Masterclasses included one from Nando's on authentic brand-building, based on the notion that the best way to build a brand is not to try.



Embrace brand values at all levels - Deirdre King, GM Brand Experience at Nando's

Deirdre King opened the session with the instruction for companies to embrace brand values at all levels of the organisation in order to establish authenticity and believability. She describes Nando's as being well known as a cheeky, bold brand with a bold voice, committed to telling it like it is, and telling the truth.

King explained that the Nando's font was originally created by hand, and that the new visual identity was created the same way in order to share and showcase the passion of others. This is one way the company nurtures creative talent, while working at telling the story of our culture in meaningful ways.

"In our efforts to build others, we built a stronger brand," says King.

Nando's art – bringing Southern African art to the world

When Nando's updated their style and brand image, along with their restaurants, they wanted to use unique, beautiful and meaningful designs and items rather than a cut-and-paste look straight off the shelf. This led them to establish an art program to encourage the production, promotion and use of local art. The company established a three-year art program to nurture and educate local artists, and they have since become the largest collector of Southern African art in the world.

In support of local designers and to highlight their talent, the [Hot Young Designer](#) competition was born. This platform builds mutually beneficial partnerships between Nando's and the designers, as one promotes and supports the other.

Another way Nando's supports local talent is by playing Afro-Luso music in all their restaurants, through the company's own radio station, Heat Wave. It's through this station that the company is also able to nurture local talented musicians and provide a platform and program for them to be heard and recognised.

"Rather than working in silos, we create what we call creative collisions," King explains.

New designs, creative genius

Next on the agenda was the reveal of new crockery coming to Nando's restaurants. This won't be just any old crockery though, they are all designed and based on patterns discovered in and inspired by structures in Maputo, where Nando's sent designers to come up with ideas.

King says this is a testament to the brand's authenticity, and it comes effortlessly because it is based on the values that THEY value. She says that companies should base their brand values on who they are and what they stand for and use this to lead you to build a brand effortlessly.



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Her further instruction to companies is to seek to build your brand in a way that will benefit others outside your balance sheet in order to win others over.

She says: "The best way to build a brand is not to try, but to stick to the things that you do, and think about every single touchpoint. Design matters, creativity matters, and your employees matter."

Her closing remark: Nando's uses art, design and music - What makes your brand beat?



There is no rule book - Tracy-Lee Lynch, creative director of Nando's Design Program

Tracy-Lee Lynch spoke to Nando's guest editor Malibongwe Tyilo, about how Nando's is creating unique restaurants.

She says they decided they needed to build a showcase of southern African design because they felt there was no authentic representation available in the market.

"How do you get an authentic representation? Get all the creatives together to tell and share their stories," says Lynch.

When asked how Nando's overcomes infrastructure challenges in Southern Africa, Lynch answered that the company communicates a series of specific values to designers and then they chose what they want and they take it from there. There is no rule book, rather they allow spontaneous connections to form and then feed and grow them.

Portal to Africa

Portal to Africa is an online platform created by Nando's, available exclusively for use by interior designers commissioned to design for Nando's, providing access to local design which is shipped globally. Nando's facilitates all the logistics involved and charges a 5% levy to fund the various programs.

"You can't JUST sell and facilitate the process though, you have to mentor the designers too," King comments.

The Hot Young Designers competition sees budding designers submit patterns to be used in different instances and for a variety of items. All 10 finalists' patterns are on the portal and they can be bought online, Nandos does not own the copyright. Thanks to this initiative, Nando's has a library of patterns, and it is mutually beneficial because it allows designers to earn money from the initiative for every pattern sold.

Start where you are, with what you have - Thabisa Mjo, founder of Mash.T Design Studio

Thabisa Mjo, winner of the title of Hot Young Designer for 2019, spoke about design in the real world. She explains how she had to build a portfolio with no real money or contacts, and looked at what the low-hanging fruit she could work with.

"Start where you are, with what you have," is her advice to anyone wanting to get into the industry.

Mjo explained how she saw a trend on Bizcommunity with the launch of lifestyle events and decided to become an event styler. It just so happened that she landed her first job for an *Oprah* magazine launch.

Next, she entered the Hot Young Designer competition to get Nando's attention. She designed a pendant for lamps, looking at things in her world that could work. It turns out the Joburg skyline made for great inspiration as these designs were utilised in Nando's restaurants. The design that really put her on the map, though, was her Tutu 2.0 Pendant Light design – a combination of a classic ballet outfit and an African Xibelani skirt. The tutu design won the competition!



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Mjo says being an entrepreneur is the most rigorous process you can imagine, it requires a deep level of self-examination. Networking is an important part of the process, according to Mjo who says we need to network with people above us but we should remember that people on the same level are also invested in helping you prosper.

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