

Woolworths offers a taste of its design passion

 By Leigh Andrews

1 Mar 2015

Did you know Woolworths has been a supporter of Design Indaba over the past 20 years? Now Kate Fordyce, Head Agency: Woolworths Marketing, tells us exclusively how Woolworths has taken creativity to a whole new level.

There's just so much to take in at Design Indaba, you leave with your head a swirl of brand messaging and clever new concepts. This year, it's the Woolworths design passion that's still ringing in my head days later. The reason? They made sure you literally got a taste from their #tastechange combination tasting table, set up just outside the main auditorium of the CTICC for the duration of the annual three-day conference.



A section of the Woolworths #tastedesign table

You could mix and match your choice of white, 70% dark and milk chocolate with otherwise unseemly tastes, ultimately 'designing' your own combination - and of course taking photos of the results and sharing your favourites on Instagram. I wasn't too keen on the mix of dill cucumber and onion with traditionally sweet chocolate, but the 'bacon and milk chocolate' mix I eventually settled on was surprisingly more-ish.

That's the essence of truly successful design - doing something that's not been done before, or taking something that has been done before and doing it in a new way. With my design-mindedness and chocolate cravings refreshed, I asked Fordyce to tell us more about Woolworths' design strategy...

Tell us more about Woolworths' presence at Design Indaba 2015.



Fordyce: Woolworths has supported Design Indaba since the very beginning, back in 1995. We have long supported the creative industry and we draw a lot of inspiration from Design Indaba.

Kate Fordyce

Through our relationship with Design Indaba, we have been introduced to exceptional global talent - some of whom we've gone on to collaborate with for many years. The celebrated Italian designer Massimo Vignelli, for instance, worked on our brand refresh a few years ago.

We've also been able to follow global trends affecting the creative industries and draw inspiration from speakers and delegates alike.

■ ***Has Woolworths' creation of a leading creative agency in-house been kept a secret?***

Fordyce: I'm not sure it's a secret as it's pretty well known that we look for the best in everything we do. We have hand-picked some of the best talent in the industry - across all creative disciplines.

While we haven't pitched for traditional agency awards, we drive creativity very hard and operate on the principle of 'divine dissatisfaction'. Our measures are a demanding combination of customer engagement and commercial effectiveness, and our belief in the potent role of creativity is also evidenced in our recent support of the inaugural Loeries award for Effective Creativity.

■ ***OK then - why the move towards in-house design?***

Fordyce: Innovation is embedded in our DNA at Woolworths. Good design is so central to the Woolworths brand; whether it's fashion design, store design, packaging substrate and food innovation or marketing. Our in-house design capability allows our creatives to collaborate with their colleagues across the business, from point of creative inception to ultimate implementation. Our in-house agency has had a very successful three years. I'm pleased with the creative output across all channels and it's really rewarding to see our team grow and challenge themselves on each project. You unquestionably have a clearer sense of the colour and texture of a brand, being in-house. It's certainly working for Woolworths.

■ ***Let us in on a few more of the benefits of having an in-house agency...***

Fordyce: Since moving the agency in-house, there's been a bigger focus on converging media channels - ensuring our creative and design has a full 360° execution. Our customers demand more intelligent, engaging and consistent communication. This convergence, and the requisite integration, is easier to manage in-house, to ensure customers have a more consistent brand experience. Our customers can seamlessly navigate between our Facebook page and other social media platforms, buy online through the website or engage with the latest sustainability issue in the media.

■ ***What does the in-house design team focus on? How do their briefs differ from external agencies?***

Fordyce: Our agency has all the traditional capabilities of an external agency. But because we are embedded within the organisation, our creative teams have a far closer relationship with the brand, the product, the technology and the strategic intent. We're able to work more efficiently and be more agile - especially as speed to market within the retail environment is so key. Our model also fosters collaboration across our creative disciplines and 360 connection channels - graphic design, art direction, store design and visual merchandising. It is a recipe for a richer experience for our creatives.

■ ***Why does design matter so much to Woolworths?***

Fordyce: Design and innovation are integral to what we do - and what our customers have grown to expect from our brand. We are a significant global retailer and we share a stage with the best in the world. It is a commercial - and customer - imperative that our delivery is consistently world-class. Recent acknowledgement of the calibre of our design delivery include international awards for our flagship Waterstone store and recent JTOne pop-up store.

■ ***Why does Woolworths believe South African creatives rank among the world's best?***

Fordyce: There is little doubt our South African creative talent is world-class, and in many instances world-leading - evidenced by the number of South African expats in creative leadership roles around the world, and by our own international achievements.

■ ***How does your design work compare to that of the rest of the continent?***

Fordyce: The continent is a kaleidoscope of design distinctiveness and South Africa, a melting pot of cultural influence. I think what distinguishes our aesthetic is its exciting fusion of influences, reflected in a rich spectrum of expression and interpretation.

■ ***Do you feel we're doing enough to boost creativity locally, or merely following tried and tested models that have worked before?***

Fordyce: Supporting local talent is very important to us. In packaging design in particular, we consistently challenge ourselves to use local designers, local stylists, local photographers and source local product. We recently celebrated Cape Town as the World Design Capital by collaborating with Am I Collective to produce a limited edition range of merchandise

packaging, showcasing local artists. We love local and will continue to find ways to collaborate with, amplify and support the work of local design talent, wherever we can.

■ ***What does it take to be truly innovative when it comes to design?***

Fordyce: A keen understanding of parameter, a sense of adventure, a disregard for convention, an appetite for risk, a curious mind, a freedom of spirit, a tight brief!

■ ***Lastly, any advice to 'newbies' looking to cracking the marketing or design market locally?***

Fordyce: Be passionate, be yourself, be resilient, be persistent, be as focused as you can, find a point of difference, find a mentor.

For more:

www.designindaba.com

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.

■ #Loeries2020: Behavioural economics as creativity, but not as we know it... - 24 Nov 2020

■ #D2020: Ignite your inner activist - representation through illustration - 27 Feb 2020

■ #D2020: How Sho Madjozi brought traditional Tsonga *xibelani* into 2020 - 27 Feb 2020

■ #D2020: Silver jubilee shines with Department of Audacious Projects launch - 26 Feb 2020

■ #BehindtheSelfie with... Qingqile 'WingWing' Mdlulwa, CCO at The Whole Idea - 26 Feb 2020

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>