

Nivea's marketing manager, Mpume Ngwenya

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Mpume Ngwenya, marketing manager at Nivea, tells us about her career journey to marketing and about their latest 'Skinfluencer' campaign.



Mpume Ngwenya

The competition aimed to empower 10 young women during these difficult times and help them become top influencers through coaching from the likes of Kefilwe Mabote, Kay Yarms and Thandolwethu Tsekiso.

"For over 100 years, Nivea has been a household brand that people have come to know and trust and Skinfluencer is a natural progression for Nivea to make the difference in [these women's] lives through a digital platform," said Ngwenya. Here, she goes on to tell us that this was undoubtedly one of the most meaningful and successful campaigns she has worked on to date, and why she believes you need to be absolutely obsessed with the brands you work for...

■ ***Growing up, what did you want to be?***

Growing up, I wanted to be a fashion designer. I used to love making clothes for my dolls and window shopping. I remember just going to town to try on clothes, thinking of ways to convince my mother to buy me clothes. I loved shopping to the point where I was so happy to even go shopping for other people. Nothing much has changed there.

■ ***Tell us about your career: what you studied and why, and how you ended up where you are today?***

I have had an interesting journey to get to where I am now. I am a Wits graduate, with a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Finance, Accounting and Marketing. The accounting and finance were really to make my parents proud, but my heart was always in marketing, hence I took it as a third major.

I always had a good balance between academics and creativity and I guess I still had that old-school thinking and decided accounting was it, because I wanted to have money.

After completing my degree, I got into the Unilever Graduate Programme. I was really excited, and this is where my passion for marketing began. I worked on some amazing brands with the best marketers South Africa has to offer.

After Unilever, I joined one of my favourite brands, Nando's, where I was in the brand and strategy team.

Whilst at Nando's, I decided to go back to school where I completed a Management in Advance Programme at Wits Business School. I graduated top of my class.

I then moved into Foodservice (McCain) where I got experience in B2B marketing.

Currently I am the Nivea marketing manager. Last year I completed my MBA with Wits Business School. These opportunities have given me great retail experience, and marketing and brand expertise. I think that experience combined with my education really solidified marketing as my career of choice.

■ ***How did you become the success that you are today?***

I'm not sure if I would call myself a success, but I do think I am where I am firstly because I've always wanted to make my parents proud. They really worked hard to afford me the life I got. Secondly, being a first born I've always wanted to set a good example for my younger siblings and those around me. This and my love for travel and the good things in life really keeps me going.

■ ***What do you enjoy most about marketing and working in the FMCG/personal care space specifically?***

I have always been so fascinated by beauty products. What I love most about being in FMCG is the fact that FMCG thrives on innovation. I like to work in an industry where new ideas and different ways of thinking can make a huge difference.

■ ***If you were mentoring a future you, what career advice would you give to aspiring young marketing and branding professionals?***

- For me, one of the biggest things that I wish I had done early in my career is being clear of where I wanted to end up. Identifying your passion earlier on is key. Your biggest dreams from when you are a kid remain with you forever. It also makes getting there so much more fun and closing gaps and knowing your next step so much easier.
- Whatever brand you choose to work for, make sure you truly love it. I can't imagine selling something you don't believe in or use. All the brands that I've worked on I have absolutely been obsessed with, and that way work didn't really feel like work.
- Document it. Write it down, have visual boards, say it out loud (whatever works for you). It's more than just a "document" that gathers dust or gets stored to be reviewed twice a year. It's probably one of the most important documents ever. What is fun about it is that you get to write your story backwards and edit it as you go.
- Another thing I've learnt is to ask, I make courageous demands when it comes to my development and growth. Ask and chances are you will get what you ask for, and the worst that could happen is a 'no'. What's nice about 'no's' is that they plant seeds that bloom when you least expect it.
- Lastly, leadership is beyond a position or job title. You need to harness your leadership skills and practice being a leader from the get-go.

■ ***How has the pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns affected your work and NIVEA specifically?***

Wow! I still can't believe we went through that. So much got unveiled during that time, and we really got a chance to test our resilience.

From a work perspective, the quickest thing that changed was working from home. Something I absolutely enjoy; I miss the faces at the office, but I definitely much prefer working in the comfort of my own home (business on top and fun at the bottom). Beiersdorf, Nivea's parent company really came to the forefront of their values and showed us that they really cared. I have never been so proud and happy about working for a company like I do now. The company really went all out for its employees.

From a brand perspective, we were fortunate to have a good year. In tough times consumers really seek quality brands that they trust, and Nivea is just that.



■ Can you share with our readers about your recent Skinfluencer campaign and the rationale behind it?

The idea for this campaign was conceptualised in the early days of Covid, when the country went into total shutdown. Consumers were scared and lacking hope. The soul of the idea was to offer the Nivea audience intrinsic education on how to become an influencer - an aspiration for so many young women in South Africa. At Nivea, we put care and trust into everything we do and we proved this with Nivea Skinfluencer, a digital-led initiative that searched for ten would-be influencers to empower and educate for a full year.

Launched during lockdown, this inclusive, celebratory campaign generated mass awareness through TV, digital and radio, before high profile influencers Kefilwe Mabote, Thandolwethu Tsekiso and Kay Yarms – as well as radio host Khutso Theledi – took to social to encourage registration for a free, highly innovative, state-of-the-art digital Masterclass. Here, it was all about access. Data was zero-rated, anyone could register, and across Mzansi, fans did...in record numbers. Thousands joined the live-stream to watch our influencers engage for over two hours. It was empowering, insightful and informative.

This masterclass was especially beneficial to those who wanted to enter the competition, and as a result, an astounding 2,700 women submitted 1-minute videos, showcasing their influencer skills.

Fifty finalists were then chosen and reviewed by an expert panel, before a Top 20 was selected. From here, the public voted, and after two weeks, 10 Nivea Skinfluencers were announced.

The prize package – a yearlong experience – includes educational sessions, exposure opportunities and the high-tech tools needed to become a professional influencer. Nivea Skinfluencer was a bold response to an undeniable need in very trying times. We embraced the digital space, paying respect to local influencers, and the thousands who aspire to be like them, and in so doing we showed we truly care.

This is undoubtedly one of the most meaningful and successful campaigns I have worked on.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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