

Wave goodbye to stale industry events with WiM Africa

 By Leigh Andrews

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All the information you need on the launch of Women in Marketing (WiM) Africa through their Loeries Masterclass today, as well as how this serves as an opportunity to showcase what 21st Century Africa looks like to the rest of the world, through the transformative creativity and innovation that comes from the continent, the African stories that can resonate with anyone and the world-class work being done here.

Whether you're attending Loeries Creative Week live (yay, Yolo!) or keeping track of the festivities from afar (ah, Fomo for you), one of the stand-out factors of the 40th annual Loeries Awards is that they include the launch of the African chapter of Women in Marketing.

Here Andrea Opoku, director of Women in Marketing global and my fellow advisor and ambassador for Women in Marketing Africa, shares what she's most looking forward to from attending her first Loeries event while also explaining the WiM origin story and what to expect as the Women in Marketing: Africa movement embraces the continent...



Andrea Opoku, founder of WiMAfrica and director of the Women in Marketing CIC.

■ Let's take a step back and start off with the context of launching the original UK version of Women in Marketing, as well as challenges and triumphs you've faced along the way.

The Women in Marketing (WiM) network was created in 2004, under the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). Ade Onilude who was a CIM volunteer at the time wanted to offer something different to the standard 'pale, stale and male' industry events that were being held at the time.

The aim was to offer a platform for women in the marketing and advertising fields, to feel empowered and be educated, inspired and connect with other women in the industry.

It started with an event on Work-Life Balance during International Women's Day (IWD) in March 2004, and this annual event has gone on to tackle topics such as ethical marketing, the creatives, branding and diversity in marketing, with the purpose of provoking discussion and inspiring women in the industry and the wider business community.



#FairnessFirst: Amplifying the female voice

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WiM has evolved significantly since 2004 – no longer a part of the CIM, in 2016 WiM became a Community Interest Company – and now serves a global network of over 16,000 industry professionals.

The decision to become a stand-alone organisation, independent of the CIM, was a leap of faith. We'd had 12 years of being backed by a very well established membership institution with all the benefits that came with that. But to expand globally, we needed to make the move.

Surprisingly, one of the biggest challenges we've faced since becoming independent is gaining the financial support from the industry in the UK.

“ The vast majority of our funding comes from outside the UK. This has been a real struggle, not just for WiM but also other organisations operating in the gender, diversity and inclusion space. I believe its due to a number of factors, not least the uncertainty around leaving the European Union and the impact it will have on UK businesses. ”

One of the biggest triumphs has been opening the annual WiM Awards to global entries. Over the years we've had so much interest internationally but we were never able to allow entries from outside the UK, until the 2017 awards. Since then, it's been amazing the response we've had, and I'm looking forward to seeing the high calibre of entries we'll get this year.

■ **Yes, you added a soft African element last year, when global entries were allowed into the Women in Marketing award competition – what was the response like?**

We had a great response with entries from Singapore, Sweden, the USA, Brazil as well as South Africa. The entries were limited from South Africa, but this year, particularly with the launch of WiM Africa, we're expecting a considerable increase in entries from the continent.



Bizcommunity's Leigh Andrews, only South African shortlisted for WiM awards

Bizcommunity.com 24 Oct 2017



Part of my reason for wanting to set up WiM Africa is that it offers a great opportunity to showcase to the rest of the world what 21st century Africa looks like. We want to show the transformative creativity and innovation that comes from the continent, the African stories that can resonate with anyone and the world-class work being done here.

We do this through the WiM Awards, which recognise the crème de la crème of brand and agency marketers around the world. I'm really hoping to encourage more submissions from the continent and particularly from women of colour.

■ **Making things a bit more granular, explain your personal involvement with Women in Marketing – what appealed to you and made it such a passion?**

I knew Onilude before WiM as we were both part of the CIM London region. She was just one of those people you were drawn to, so when she decided to set up Women in Marketing, I jumped at the chance to be part of it.

It was quite early in my career at the time, and it was great to be part of a growing network of senior female marketers. I found it of great inspiration, professionally and personally.

You could say that I've grown up with WiM and seen the challenges faced by women and how they've overcome them, particularly those who've taken time out to have a family and have tried to step back onto the ladder and make their way up... This has fed into how I've faced and overcome certain challenges in my life.



Onilude and Opoku at the 2018 Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity.

My 18 years in the industry, my work in recent years across Africa and my role as a director at Women in Marketing has done a great deal to bring together my passions – branding, entrepreneurship, the empowerment of women and young people and to make a real difference in the development of the continent.

■ ***Sounds like it's been invaluable to your career. How will WiM Africa differ from and ultimately enhance the original WiM movement?***

For WiM Global and WiM Africa, our aims are the same – to offer a platform for women in the marketing and advertising fields to be recognised and celebrated for their work. Also for women of all levels of seniority to feel empowered, educated, inspired and connect with other women in the industry.

Launching global 'hubs', of which WiM Africa is the first, allows us to continue this work on the ground and through programmes very specific to the people and markets in which it operates.

■ ***Explain the importance of launching Women in Marketing Africa as part of Loeries Creative Week, and how the two complement each other.***

Launching WiM Africa in South Africa as part of the Loeries seemed like the perfect opportunity to me. The Loeries Creative Week is a great platform for WiM Africa, as both organisations serve the same markets and have the same purpose, in that we want to recognise and celebrate the very best in the marketing and advertising industries.

The difference is that WiM has a particular focus on women and in the WiM Awards we recognise the impact being made across the whole sector, not only the creative work being delivered.



#Loeries2017: Open Chair starts a movement amongst women in advertising

Jessica Tennant 10 Aug 2017



Also, with the very first Open Chair event taking place last year – the first women-focused event to take place at the Loeries – and the amazing response it had, opened up the opportunity for more activity and events on gender equality and the impact women have on the industry.

■ ***Further strengthening that bond, you have Suhana and Nunu who are part of Open Chair as two of your Masterclass panellists. Elaborate on what went into choosing your Loeries Masterclass topic of 'Female***

representation in the media and who controls the narrative', to be unpacked from the brand, media owner and agency perspective.

The marketing, advertising and communications industries play such a huge role in what society consumes on TV, in newspapers and magazine, billboard ads, on radio and in the adverts we see. Not only that, but also as the music and TV programming we consume.

The images we see and words we hear about people all play a significant part in the views society forms of those people. This ultimately affects society's treatment of those people, and stereotypical representations more often than not impact negatively on those people.



#FairnessFirst: Unboxing diversity in advertising

Leigh Andrews 23 Jul 2018



My aim in choosing this topic was really for the industry to recognise the power it holds and start conversations about how we can go about changing stereotypical representations.

As well as opening up conversation, as to what can be done to change the narrative; the event will also share best practice and some great creative work from outside of Africa to inspire.

We've been able to secure some amazing people to speak at the event from the Unstereotype Alliance and Accountability International who are really leading the way in the work they do with industry organisations to remove stereotypical representations.



#FairnessFirst: All you need to know to #unstereotype advertising

Leigh Andrews 11 Jun 2018



Exciting! What can we expect from the WiM Africa hub going forward?

There are a number of initiatives we plan to roll out over the next few years in order to fulfil WiM Africa's mission:

“ To address the gender imbalances in the marketing, advertising and communication fields at all levels of seniority and showfuture generations of young women coming through the ranks what is possible. In doing so, we safeguard the long-term profitability of the sector. ”



#Loeries2017: What the hell happened to women in leadership? Facebook's Nunu Ntshingila

Jessica Tennant 10 Aug 2017



These include regional events; training and mentoring through our membership; enabling research and a diversity charter. These and more will be touched upon at the event.

However, WiM Africa is here to serve the community and we really want to hear what women across all levels of seniority. We want them to share what their experience of being a woman in the industry has been. What do they need to help them move forward? What do they want from the network?

Only by providing real value to women in the industry on the continent will WiM Africa succeed, so we're here to help you.

We're so ready for that help! I'll be moderating the WiM Africa panel discussion today, on 'female representation in the media, who controls the narrative'. Visit the [Women in Marketing: Africa website](#) for more information, and follow the larger Women in Marketing [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) profiles for a taste of what they're about. Also visit our Loeries special section, which will feature the latest updates and live coverage of the 40th annual Loerie Awards, taking place in Durban from 16 to 19 August 2018.

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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