

V&A Waterfront's Tinyiko Mageza sees opportunity everywhere

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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Soweto-born Tinyiko Mageza has spent the last 14 years feeding her passion for insights-led and purpose-driven marketing across industries including FMCG, financial services and property development. Currently, Mageza is the executive manager of marketing for the V&A Waterfront, one of South Africa's most dynamic neighbourhoods and popular tourist attractions.



Tinyiko Mageza

While a world-class shopping mall sits within the boundaries of the V&A Waterfront, the area's offerings extend far beyond the centre. The harbour, urban park, food and craft markets, and bevy of tourism operators make up just some of the amenities that attract 24 million visitors per year to the area.

Its multiple districts are home to a diverse array of businesses - from large corporates to local traders and talented buskers. To add to this, the [Makers Landing development](#) set for launch at the end of this year will serve as an incubator for the local food industry, championing small business development and facilitating skills sharing to drive innovation in the country's food ecosystem.



Artist's impression of Makers Landing

The V&A Waterfront's purpose is to create an authentic, inclusive waterfront neighbourhood that inspires and sparks discovery, growth and joy - an ideal working environment for Mageza then, who relishes the opportunity to solve problems through commercially- and socially-impactful marketing solutions and to create platforms for people and businesses to connect.

In this interview, Mageza talks us through her serendipitous career journey, the women who have shaped her professional and personal growth, and how the V&A aims to drive meaningful impact while adapting to the pandemic.

📌 ***Tell us a bit about yourself and your career background.***

When I reflect on my career journey, I feel a deep sense of gratitude. What might have, at the time seemed like decisions made because of circumstances beyond my control, in hindsight I realise now that each decision was unconsciously made as the universe conspired to guide me closer and closer to work that aligns to my personal values and purpose.

It was in high school that I chose marketing as the profession that I would inevitably pursue. It seemed like a nice balance between creativity and commercial. I was always an artistic child and had my personal financial circumstances been different, I probably would have pursued a more artistically inclined vocation. Be that as it may, marketing is where I focused my attention and I liked the fact that I could play with ideas, words and pictures to influence people and behaviour and potentially bring joy (or at the least escapism).

I am grateful that my first career stint was at a company that is arguably one of the greatest on-the-job universities of marketing, the South African Breweries Ltd. where I was placed in the consumer insights and research department as a trainee. Yet another seemingly fortuitous situation that has stood me in good stead throughout my career as I learnt about foundation of consumer-led insights-driven marketing from an early stage in my career development.

Fourteen years down the line, my time at SAB remains the most impactful and significant milestone in my career. As a 'baby' brand manager I was thrown into the deep-end and given the opportunity to launch new brands, reposition old ones, own and manage big budget national campaigns and really sink into what it means to be build a brand.



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📌 ***As executive manager: marketing at one of SA's biggest attractions, what does a day in your work life look like?***

The misconception people have is that my role is primarily about Marketing the V&A Waterfront mall. What people don't know is that the V&A Waterfront is a neighbourhood at the edge of the city of Cape Town. While it is privately-owned, it is managed and run like a public space. It is a place of work for 23,000 people - from office workers to dock workers. It is a

place of opportunity for entrepreneurs big and small to pursue their dreams and have access to millions of people from across the world.

In a marginalised city like Cape Town, it is intended to be a safe inclusive space that fosters creativity (through the art in public spaces and buskers programme). It is a neighbourhood that looks for ways to responsibly and sustainably do business with a shared values lens. It contributes nearly 2% of the Western Cape's GDP, an indication that it truly is a neighbourhood that has economic impact while honouring local culture.

“ It is not only the buildings but the spaces between the buildings that carry the hopes and dreams of everyone who lives, works, shops or simply chills here. That's my role, to market a neighbourhood and look for opportunities and stories of how it is a platform of opportunity. I personally see opportunity everywhere. ”



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22 Apr 2020



■ How has the marketing strategy for the V&A Waterfront had to change due to the Covid-19 pandemic?

I believe in the power of purpose and purpose-led marketing. The V&A's purpose is the creation of an authentic, inclusive waterfront neighbourhood that inspires and sparks discovery, growth and joy. This statement has given us the ability to try and weather the storm but also the permission to stay true to who we are without the need for gimmicks or knee-jerk reactions.

Our marketing strategy remains relatively unchanged although we have had to tweak and adapt to ensure that there is meaningful impact created by our interventions. For example, pre-pandemic, one of our objectives was to focus on local love. At this stage, we have elevated this objective to focus on championing local, especially local small businesses.

The dramatic spread of Covid-19 has disrupted lives, livelihoods, communities and businesses worldwide. Though its impact will be widespread, it has been felt most keenly by those who are already vulnerable. Small business has borne the brunt of the economic fallout from Covid-19, and the V&A Waterfront has put several measures in place to ensure that our SMMEs will receive the support they need to survive this crisis.

To date we have provided rental relief to all SMMEs. We have launched a webpage dedicated to providing updated information on available financial tools, learning opportunities and events to aid small business. A SMMEs helpdesk has also been established, where every tenant or supplier can get dedicated assistance with Covid-19 relief funding applications and advice on tax, human resources or basic business support tools.

In addition, our focus was always about delivering a world-class experience. This also remains unchanged, however, our focus has been on looking for new ways for the people of Cape Town, South Africa and the world to rediscover the joy of the V&A while keeping safe. So, our safety protocols have been heightened, we are leveraging placemaking in order to allow people to enjoy the outdoors while still physically distancing.

We have a [click and collect service](#), and a virtual reality and WhatsApp helper that allows visitors and workers to navigate the V&A (e.g. finding out about store trading times) without actually having to speak to anyone.

■ Despite the pandemic, the V&A recently announced that its pushing ahead with its Makers Landing development. Why does the company see this project as being particularly important?

The conceptualisation, planning and funding for Makers Landing was approved long before the Covid-19 pandemic. Our commitment to the project is a sign of our confidence in the future. We know that the pandemic will pass, visitors will return to our city, and we will all embrace the activities we previously enjoyed.

This will be a place where people can meet, eat, drink, shop and work, as well as a platform where foodpreneurs can innovate, learn and grow their businesses within a local food community. Our table will extend to anyone who has a food story to tell or who simply delights in the South African food journey.

“ We want to celebrate our diverse food heritage and culture, and we want to showcase good food created by real people with real stories to tell. ”



V&A's R63m food emporium and incubator space set to launch in December

30 Jul 2020



What are your feelings towards Women's Day/Month this year? Is this something we should be recognising and celebrating?

There is no straightforward answer to this question as it is a nuance. In many ways, a focus on women's issues is required, given how we remain an economically and socially marginalised group.

Are there any female figures who have had a particularly positive influence on your life?

I am blessed to have been, at an early point in my career, surrounded by and worked with talented, passionate, highly strategic female marketing powerhouses like Mosidi Seretto, Andrea Quaye, Nontokoza Madonsela, Pride Maunatlala, Heidi Brauer, Anne Stephens and the now late Lauren Stevens that remains a career highlight. They taught me that brand marketing is a labour of love. It is the method and the madness. It is a balance of science and intuition. It is brave and bold yet humble and uncertain.

As my career journey pushed me out of FMCG into insurance, banking and now destination, property tourism marketing, those learnings have kept me anchored and honest. I am now in the fortunate position where I can take on roles that enable me to lean into my strengths, to be creative, to create, to rebuild and more importantly to be purpose-led.

My best friends Grace (who just happens to be my mother) and my two older sisters remain my soul-anchors. They embody integrity, resilience and compassion. If I reflect on our life journey as a unit of four, we faced so much adversity. Life was tough but it is through the combined strength of these three women that we rose above it all and have lived to tell the tale.



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Lauren Hartzenberg 12 Aug 2020



How does the V&A Waterfront support and empower women in the workplace?

We foster a business culture that centres around diversity and representation. This is evidenced within our employment policies and is reflective in our hiring practices as well as our tenant mix. Sixty-two percent of our investment from a training and development perspective is women focused.

We have a commitment to partner with non-profit organisations like The Justice Desk and Imbokodo Programme to support their efforts and initiatives while leaning on them to bring knowledge, learning and insights for our staff members. For example, offering self-defence workshops or offering targeted learning interventions for both men and women in the organisations. These specifically focused on identifying perpetrators of GBV and how to ensure that we are neither victims, complicit or (for the men) perpetrators themselves.

What is your hope for future generations of women in your field?

“ Always speak truth to power. ”

■ **What have been your most important lessons learned on your career journey?**

I've learnt to lean into my authenticity and the things that made me unique.

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