

The Future is Female: Reframing the future, recognising women's impact on society and the economy



By [Khensani Nobanda](#)

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Discourse on gender equality can sometimes overlook our historical contribution, more so across the global South. Achieving true equality for women will require sincere appraisal -and indeed, acknowledgement - of the role women continue to play in creating an inclusive and equitable future for everyone



Image supplied. Representation of women in marketing and advertising has sometimes lagged a bit behind in reflecting our lived experiences says Khensani Nobanda, Nedbank group executive for marketing and corporate affairs

Despite the gains made, discussions centred on women's development, gender equality and empowerment remain as urgent as ever before.

The phrase *The Future is Female*, ubiquitous as it is, has re-ignited discussions on women-centric leadership, suggesting that the future would be best led by women.

However, this narrative of a future being female risks overlooking the crucial role that women have played across the various spheres of economic and social progress.

In regions where people were historically under-represented or ignored, such as Africa, Asia and the rest of the Global South, imperialist and patriarchal histories further side-lined our contribution to society.

Reduced role of women

In these narratives, it was all too easy to reduce the role of women to being primarily responsible for child-rearing, caregiving in the home, glossing over the role played by women as leaders in commerce and politics.

If I reflect personally, it is my grandmother's indomitable spirit as an entrepreneur that stands out.

It was her resilience, innovative mindset and determination that shaped my understanding of what it means to be a woman.

Hers is but one story, yet it resonates deeply with so many people whose paths I cross: there are countless examples of women who have built the families and communities from which we come through sheer business acumen, grit, and determination – and this, in spite of the traditional moulds sometimes foisted upon us.



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Women in marketing and advertising lagged

Despite our rich legacy, unfortunately representation of women in marketing and advertising has sometimes lagged a bit behind in reflecting our lived experiences.

While things are indeed changing at pace, as marketing executives we ought to continue challenging stereotypes that aim to confine young women and girl-children to the gendered confines of the past.

Finally, diverse gender identities, and our profound entrepreneurial spirit and professional ambitions have a place in the public discourse and popular imagination!

Despite the progress made, more can be done to ensure that we continue give expression to womanhood in its complex and rich diversity.

A substantial revenue gap for brands

Studies, such as the 2023 *CreativeX* report on gender representation and the Kantar *What Women Want?* study, illustrate the ongoing struggles brands face in richly, and sometimes accurately, reflecting women's roles.

These studies point to a substantial revenue gap for brands which fail to authentically engage with women audiences, and this emphasises the need for innovative engagement strategies that ensure that we are giving women what they want.

At Nedbank, our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lies at the heart of our values and informs our strategic objective of advancing women's empowerment.

We have dedicated great effort to integrating the UN SDGs on gender into every facet of our operations and are seeing the rewards of adopting this approach.

These efforts range from enhancing board representation to supporting women-owned businesses in our supply chain.

Our collaboration with the Financial Alliance for Women underscores the business imperative of focusing on women as savers, borrowers, loyal customers, and key consumers.



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True gender equality a collective commitment

Achieving true gender equality extends beyond Nedbank, requiring a collective commitment across all sectors of society.

We envision a future where women's role is fully acknowledged - not just for their economic impact but as engaged consumers, decision-makers and leaders.

This vision is key not only to the success of our business but is essential for societal advancement.

Looking ahead, I encourage each of us to think about and take action to strengthen the role and impact of women in our economy and society.

By embracing the task of building a future that recognises and leverages women's contributions in all sectors, we commit to fostering an environment that transcends gender. This approach champions collective advancement, where the achievements of every individual, regardless of gender, contribute to our shared success and prosperity.

ABOUT KHENSANI NOBANDA

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