

Sisters are doing it for themselves - and others - at Okuhle Media

 By Leigh Andrews 15 Dec 2014

At the end of November, Okuhle Media was [recognised](#) as the Western Cape's most deserving entrepreneurs in the established business category of the Western Cape Premiers Recognition Awards. CEO Paula Brown explains the future of TV and sound future-proofing strategies...



The Okuhle Media team

Okuhle Media - pronounced Oh-koo-shlé - the women-owned and -managed, multi-faceted TV production and media company, is going places. It offers strategic and holistic content creation, content marketing and production services to broadcasters, brands and corporates, aiming to delight and inspire clients and audiences alike by conceptualising and producing original and world-class branded and self-funded content while also offering an in-house marketing and multi-media offering.

That's quite a mouthful, so I chatted to CEO Paula Brown to find out more about how it fits into the local landscape and 2014's highs for the company...

■ Talk us through 2014 at Okuhle Media, and what it's taken to get to this point.

Brown: Let's go back to 2007 when we secured the production of *Hectic Nine-9*. It's been our biggest production to date, and at the time, the biggest production ever commissioned by the SABC to the Western Cape. With that, we went from a team of 12 people to 27, almost overnight. As an entrepreneur, I was unqualified at the time to deal with this growth and harness all the opportunities that went with it, but we got through it. Things went fine until 2010, when the recession really set in. It was 2011 when we first appointed a financial director and formed a board including non-executive directors. This change has been remarkably uncomfortable and challenging, but clearly necessary in order to ensure our sustainability and future-proof the business.

Much of this process was supported and driven through our involvement in the Grindstone Accelerator Programme launch by KnifeCapital in 2012. We were identified as one of ten companies, selected from 100 candidates, most likely to accelerate our growth in three years, and thus attract the attention of investors. The programme in essence takes companies and entrepreneurs along the journey of transforming them from the 'doers' to the 'thinkers and strategists' and prepares them for future investment, covering every stage of a best-practice due diligence process. It was a truly incredible journey, and one that I wish I had the privilege of being on much earlier in Okuhle's lifespan.

All of the co-founders of this business have been through some challenging times as a result of this transformation. Our resilience was recently rewarded with the prestige and honour of being nominated as winners in the most established business category at the Premier's Entrepreneurs Recognition Awards event, hosted at the CTICC.

“ Congrats to Vuyokazi Matu & Paula Brown of [@OKUHLE_MEDIA](#) on winning [@WesternCapeGov](#) Premier's Entrepreneurship Award pic.twitter.com/EiF7qGHXwU- Lionesses of Africa ([@LionessesA](#)) November 26, 2014 ”

Another milestone was the launch of our very own High Definition (HD) production studio, [Magnatude Studios and Post](#) represents the first fixed, HD studio in Cape Town and the province. The opportunity to take this bold step came on the back of our broadcaster last year confirming a three-year commission of our flagship production, *Hectic Nine-9*, which now going into its eighth year on air.

■ ***That's impressive for one of SA's biggest daily live magazine shows for young people. Tell us more about your 2014 award wins.***

Brown: Earlier this year, we won a SAFTA for our first lifestyle reality TV cooking series with foodie and home-grown coc Sarah Graham titled *Bitten*. The property was on-sold by our UK based global distributors, DCD Rights, to over 40 countries in Europe and the Middle East, including for 2015, Food Network USA. This represents our first exposure in the US - a tremendous coup.

The last few months have also been exciting with a pitching competition win at [Discop](#), the African Version of the MIP continental markets, for one of our TV shows and finally, my colleague, co-founder and Chief Creative Officer at Okuhle, Louise McClelland, attended the *iEmmies* in New York, along with a South African delegation supported by the DTI. This is a huge acknowledgement of how far we've come in the past 11 years. We've moved from a small family business with big ambition to one that has earned the respect of numerous international industry leaders and organisations. One thing that hasn't changed is our big ambition and our appetite to bite off more than we think we can chew!

■ ***How does the state of the local advertising and TV industry compare internationally?***

Brown: The local television industry is limited to the [SAFTA Awards](#), however what excites me about this question is also addressed in my response to future trends below - that the ad industry and content creation, both long and short form, are slowly but surely merging. I firmly believe that 10 years from now, the ad awards will be dominated by strategy and content as opposed to the creativity surrounding 30-second commercials. The age of interruption-based advertising and the 30" TV is dead. It's about entertaining viewers and creating content experiences that customers and consumers value, using all the bells and whistles that new technologies and social media provide, to generate brand loyalty and build connected brand communities.

▣ **Sounds like consumers are set to be better entertained. What's next for Okuhle Media?**

Brown: There is so much happening in the year ahead. Much of it is top secret and under wraps for now, but I will say that much of our content and approach to content will be in line with international trends in terms of the changes in the ways audiences are consuming, engaging and sharing content.

▣ **Lastly, what trends do you see as the biggest to come in 2015?**

Brown: Two things. Firstly, greater awareness and action by South Africa's corporate world and big brands to get on board the international trend of branded entertainment.

Secondly, the realisation that technology and all things digital will only continue to reshape the way we live, work, play, connect and shop. It's not going away. Agencies still focusing on traditional solutions must either adapt or die. If they're adhering to a client requests for traditional, they need to guide and lead them in the right direction. It's the only way companies and agencies are going to future-proof themselves for the next millennium. So, instead of selling to these people join the likes of Johnny Walker, Lux, Chanel, American Express and many more, and start producing short-form branded entertainment that communicates brand intrinsics and illustrates brand differentials in a way that consumers will understand and value. Brands will start buying into the 'sales by association' trend. Association to values, principles or the essence of brand, which their audiences subscribe to. If you don't know what I am talking about, watch Johnnie Walkers' Gentleman's wager below. Disclaimer - we have no commercial relationship with any of these brands whatsoever!

Wise advice for anyone involved in the local advertising industry, particularly if moving images are involved. For further information, contact Paula Brown on 083 268 6008 or follow the [Okuhle Media](#) Twitter account.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of inclusion, belonging, and of course, gourmet and drinks! Now follow her travel adventures on YouTube @MidlifeMeander.
View my profile and articles...

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