

## Thulisa Mvandaba's love for saying things that matter

Bold, curious, and unafraid to challenge convention, public relations account manager at Havas Thulisa Mvandaba is making her mark in South Africa's PR industry. As a Young Voice at the upcoming 2025 Prism Awards, she brings fresh energy and perspective to the judging process—ready to champion stories that matter and celebrate the next generation of communicators.

*In this exclusive interview series, we get to know the Young Voices better, uncover what they hope to take away from the experience, and hear how they believe young professionals can influence the future of the PR and communications industry.*



Thulisa Mvandaba is passionate about taking up space. Source: Supplied.

*“ This isn't just a seat at the table. It's a call to listen deeply, judge fairly, and lead with purpose. I stand in this role because someone believed in me. Now, I believe in others. ”*

### **Tell us about your path into PR / communications. What led you here?**

I'd say my path into PR and communications was part intention, part intuition, and entirely rooted in human connection.

I started in tourism, drawn to the idea of storytelling through experience. But I quickly realised I wasn't just interested in destinations; I was fascinated by how people feel in spaces, how brands speak, and how stories move. That led me to study Public Relations and Communications, where I found language, strategy and presence could be tools for impact.

From my first internship to leading accounts. I've always gravitated toward work that blends beauty, clarity, and purpose. Whether I'm positioning a luxury hotel, launching a youth initiative, or refining a client's feedback loop; I'm building bridges. Between brand and audience. Between vision and voice.

What led me here? A belief that communication isn't just about saying things well; it's about saying things that matter. And doing it with empathy, elegance, and edge.

### ▄ **Briefly tell us about your experience in the industry**

My experience in the PR industry has been shaped by both grit and grace. As a young Black woman working in Cape Town and now Johannesburg, I've had to carve space in rooms that weren't always built with me in mind; and then fill that space with presence, strategy, and undeniable value.

Cape Town taught me precision. It's a city of aesthetics and legacy, but also of coded gatekeeping. I learned to read the room, to speak with intention, and to make my work so sharp it couldn't be ignored. Johannesburg, on the other hand, demands energy. It's fast, bold, and full of possibility; but you have to move with clarity and conviction. Here, I've found more freedom to lead, to mentor, and to build platforms that reflect the communities I care about.



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Across both cities, I've worked on luxury brands, youth initiatives, and purpose-driven campaigns. I've had to balance beauty with impact, and strategy with soul. And while the industry can be tough; especially when you're expected to prove your worth twice before being heard once; I've learned to turn every challenge into a chance to lead louder.

### ▄ **What do you hope to bring to the judging process as a Young Voice?**

As a Young Voice, I hope to bring a thoughtful and honest perspective to the judging process. I know what it feels like to put your heart into something and hope it's seen; so, I'll be looking for work that's not just polished, but purposeful.

I'll be judging with empathy, with curiosity, and with a real respect for the effort behind each entry. My goal is to uplift stories that feel true, that reflect our world, and that show potential to grow.

### ▄ **In your own view, what do you think makes an award-winning campaign?**

It starts with clarity: a message that knows exactly what it's saying and who it's speaking to. Then comes creativity, not just for the sake of being clever, but to make the message unforgettable. But what truly sets it apart is impact.

A great campaign shifts something: perception, behaviour, conversation, culture.

It's not always the loudest or most polished campaign that wins, it's the one that feels true. The one that understands its audience, honours its context, and delivers with intention. In South Africa especially, where stories carry weight and history lives in every word, authenticity isn't optional, it's everything.

So for me, an award-winning campaign is one that's brave, beautifully crafted, and rooted in purpose. It doesn't just tick boxes.

### ▄ **Lastly, what do you hope to gain from this experience?**

From this experience, I hope to grow; not just professionally, but personally.

I want to sharpen my eye for storytelling that resonates, and learn from the bold, brilliant voices coming through this platform. Judging gives me a chance to reflect on what makes communication powerful, and to engage with ideas that challenge, inspire, and stretch my perspective.

I also hope to connect; with other young changemakers, with mentors, and with the kind of work that reminds me why I chose this path. It's a chance to be part of something bigger than myself, and to contribute to a space where young voices are not only heard but celebrated.

Most of all, I hope to leave this experience with a deeper sense of purpose; knowing I played a role in uplifting stories that deserve to be seen.

*The judging process is now officially underway, with this year's Prism's Awards set to take place on 18 October 2025.*

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