

Carl Willoughby comments on TBWA and Toasted Samish's Pendoring Umpetha win

By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Here, Carl Willoughby, executive creative director at TBWA \ Hunt Lascaris, this year's overall Pendoring Umpetha winner and second-ranked agency, translates the meaning behind their work on their winning campaign for Nissan South Africa, 'Shwii by Nissan', and why it's so important to celebrate advertising in the vernacular...



The integrated multimedia campaign won a Gold in the Integrated Communication category and a Gold and Craft Gold in Digital Communication for their use of social media and technology respectively, and the agency did particularly well in the Radio & Audio category this year for the client.

This year's Prestigious Umpetha Award is shared by TBWA and Toasted Samish, who worked together on the campaign, which hacked and disrupted the popular navigation app Waze to create their own set of isiZulu commands that are suited to local drivers.

Commenting on the win, Boniswa Pezisa, this year's Pendoring jury president, said, "Most distinctive of all the entries is this year's Prestigious Umpetha Award winner, which stands heads and shoulders above the rest of its competitors, as it pushed the boundaries by digging deeper into the depths of the rich melodic sounds and gestures of the language. Leveraging nuance and culture of everyday speak, blending it into a rich poetic tapestry of sound. The sound that can only emerge from Mzansi. Halala Umpetha!!!"



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■ ***The Pendoring are special because they promote, unify and celebrate the richness of South Africa's creative content in all its indigenous languages. Why is this important in the South African context and this industry?***

South Africa is a highly diverse country. More diverse than just English and Afrikaans which are the main languages used traditionally. This creates a sense of alienation from the broader potential talent pool. One which looks from the outside in.

Showcasing more diverse creative work opens up the industry and creates a bigger sense of relevancy and inclusivity. Having the right people understand and communicate to the intended audience because they grasp the nuances and insight of a culture and language is so important. Celebrating and embracing indigenous languages says so much more. It says we get you, we understand you and we can communicate with you in the right way. Too often creative is translated from English into other languages. The challenge is to conceptualise in the language and unfortunately that isn't the norm. In celebrating the richness of all our languages we create work that serves as role models to the industry and those entering the industry. It also says we're speaking with you and not at you.

■ ***Congrats on your Umpetha Award win! The campaign, which also won in Digital and Radio & Audio categories, hacked and disrupted the popular navigation app Waze, to create their own set of isiZulu commands that are suited to local drivers. Tell us about the thinking behind this and why you think it stood “head and shoulders above the rest” as said by this year’s jury president Boniswa Pezisa?***

I don't think it's the radio or just the production that separated this work from the others. Yes attention was paid to craft, the writing, production and performance. But the fact that tech normally only favours the main lingua franca of a country or region excludes so many people. The opportunity literally presented itself to us. To say we're not including you literally based on language almost says you're not good enough. And in South Africa that should certainly not be the case especially where Zulu is the most widely-spoken home language in the country.

■ ***Translate the meaning behind your work on the campaign.***

Shwii has 2 audio components, functional voice commands as well as the radio and audio used to communicate the idea. Both use language as a way to describe the dangers on the road where the commands highlight the dangers you need to be aware of; the radio and audio paints the landscape for where you'd need the feature. The use of language is key since it employs a form of Zulu onomatopoeia which is an important aspect of the overall campaign. There's an appreciation with the audience of how this is used to describe scenarios we can all relate to on our roads. And the way it describes the dangers are so rewarding. Azania on 702 described the campaign as “absolutely delicious” in how it is written. At TBWA we love this campaign as it uses language and tech in a clever way to literally speak to our intended audience. While language is not an obstacle on our roads it says that language shouldn't be an obstacle when developing great creative work.

■ ***Explain the brief and how you came up with the end result. Was it a clear winner from the start or were there creative twists and turns along the way?***

It was always a clear winner. We could see the bigger picture but just didn't have all the puzzle pieces in place. Nissan prides itself on being a tech company with a host of safety features called Nissan Intelligent Mobility (NIM) from Intelligent around view monitor which gives you a birds-eye-view of your vehicle while parking; to Intelligent forward collision intervention that helps avoid head on accidents. Shwii acts as an extension of these features by using audio and language to provide safety on the road. The idea was ambitious. We faced many obstacles such as cost and feasibility. In collaborating with Waze we would have needed to fork out \$75k to run this language preference for a limited period of time. Creating the hack meant the brand could own this idea at a fraction of the cost for an extended period of time.

■ ***You also ranked second in this years’ rankings. Congrats! Comment on what this means to you/the agency?***

It's massive. Pendoring really celebrates local culture and indigenous languages. This positions us as relevant in so many ways. From a tech point of view to simply understanding our audience. We also had a 100% hit rate. That's a brag but everything we entered together with Toasted Samish won gold and then of course the Umpetha award. This shows the value of the idea, that it's truly local and insightfully strong. It still needed a level of creativity to help elevate it. Ultimately, we pride ourselves in being locally relevant, globally competitive. This work helps showcase that.

■ ***What are you especially proud of?***

No mountain is too high to climb. That all obstacles presented opportunities. I love the fact that this is such a South African idea. I also think that the more authentic stories we tell the better we be at telling them. And the better those stories the

better the examples are that we put out there. Those examples become 'role models' for talent entering the industry.

■ ***Pendoring GM Eben Keun says this year's growth in entries and specific languages indicates true change beginning to take shape within our industry, and brands continuing to tell authentic stories in indigenous languages. Comment on the current state of the industry and the change you hope to see in this regard?***

We're seeing change in the industry. It's slow but there are things happening. VW ran a mainstream ad using only Zulu. There are pockets of change but sadly still not enough. I'm not meaning that everything should be in vernac, but I think we need to embrace better ways of talking to and resonating with our audience. Marketers and agencies can surely appreciate the value in being truly insightful and sadly when we develop work in indigenous languages things unfortunately still just get translated and yes, things get lost or are compromised through this process. Celebrating this work has a bigger positive knock-on effect. It creates a standard and makes things acceptable and ultimately has the power to change perception. It's powerful stuff in my opinion but we still have a long way to go.

■ ***Anything you'd like to add?***

The recognition at Pendorings has helped in giving Shwii more amplification. We're grateful for the acknowledgement as it helps validate our efforts and the belief in this idea. We'd like to say thanks to Eben, the judges and the broader team at the Pendorings.

The 2021 Pendoring Awards took place on 4 November.



2021 Pendoring e tjhunwa ke Hollard Awards winners and rankings announced

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