

# Ciko Thomas on taking pride in our African identity

By  Karabo Ledwaba

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Marketers in South Africa are being urged to tap into the country's vibrant culture to elevate their brands to global prominence. This call to action was emphasised by Ciko Thomas, Nedbank's group managing executive for retail and business at the Nedbank IMC Conference held last Friday.



Source: [www.unsplash.com](https://www.unsplash.com)

"Marketers in South Africa need to make sure they take advantage of its rich culture to put their brands on the map."

## Authentic spirit

"I have been to places like Paris in France, and there is a certain sense of French-ness every time you walk past a café; it's Parisian. You go to Tokyo, and there is a sense of Japanese-ness.

"These are places that are fiercely protective of their identity. You go to Lagos, Abuja, or Kano, and you feel a sense of Nigeria-ness. You will feel the spirit of Nigeria. They successfully commercialised the providence of the places they come from and took great brands to the world," notes Thomas.

He said brands and products like Ferrari, Prada, Parmesan cheese, Chianti, and gelato are noticeably Italian.

“ *When you are in France and have a croissant, you feel a sense of joie de vivre. They carry French brands like Veuve and Louis Vuitton with pride.* ”

Adds Thomas: "We forget the greatness that lies in the magic of this place we call SA. If I look at someone like Laduma Ngoxkolo, he understands storytelling to create an exportable brand story across the world. He is someone who has tapped into the double helix structure of what makes SA and Africa great and is taking it to the world."

## Taking it worldwide

He also praised brand ambassadors like Natasha Sideris, founder of Tashas, and Trevor Noah for successfully taking their brands worldwide.

South Africa has created a new music genre that has spread like wildfire to the rest of the world. Amapiano has become an integral part of South African music culture, and its authenticity is deeply rooted in the country's music history and its ability to capture the essence of contemporary South African urban life.

It continues to evolve and shape the music landscape in the country, making it an authentic and significant genre in South

African music history.

“ *Amapiano has taken all over the world. There are people who are becoming global sensations because they tap into the zeitgeist* ”

"My sense is that as marketers, we must not forget the responsibility and the role that we can play to create vanguard African brands, that fiercely protect our identity and African-ness, that are able to tap into this wonderful intersection between what we are about as South Africans. This is a rich asset base of brands that we are custodians of and we must understand the pot of gold that lies at the head of that intersection," Thomas says.

Thomas also revealed Nedbank's commitment to being custodians of financial wellness. "Financial wellness that is not about self-enrichment or self-empowerment. But that is of the good of others and is the spirit of ubuntu, which is the providence of our African identity and that is what we have decided to own and export to the rest of Africa and the rest of the world," he concluded.



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## ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

Karabo Ledwaba is a Marketing and Media Editor at Bizcommunity and award-winning journalist. Before joining the publication she worked at Sowetan as a content producer and reporter. She was also responsible for the leadership page at SIVag, Sowetan's lifestyle magazine. Contact her at [karabo@bizcommunity.com](mailto:karabo@bizcommunity.com)

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