

MTN

#DEFBARS

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ENTRY CATEGORIES:

Launch of a new service or product
Consumer public relations
Technology

#DEFBARS...

To launch MTN's voice-free emergency service response line (*130*3272*29#) for the hearing-impaired, while raising awareness for deaf-inclusivity, we worked with TBWA/Hunt Lascaris, and ad agency, Fort, to create and promote #DEFBARS - a hip-hop inspired music video, performed in South African Sign Language.

Written by hearing award-winning rapper, LazarusMan, a deaf school-teacher and a sign language interpreter, who taught LazarusMan to sign all the lyrics, #DEFBARS is a song for deaf citizens, with a message only they could hear and 'feel'.

Feeling it meant learning it. And learning it meant sharing it - with anyone who may need it.

A man wearing a grey cap and a yellow hoodie is shown from the chest up. He is looking towards the camera with a neutral expression. His hands are raised in front of him, making a specific hand gesture with his fingers. The background is dark and out of focus.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Hearing disabilities and difficulties are amongst the largest prevailing disabilities in South Africa. Yet many people facing this challenge feel unacknowledged and excluded – due to lack of bespoke content and services specifically for them.

Unwaveringly committed to keeping all South Africans connected and driving a truly inclusive digital society, MTN SA wanted to do more to address this oversight.

Enter #DEFBARS - an integrated campaign aimed at increasing awareness for the cause and encouraging the learning of SA Sign Language amongst hearing communities across the country. All the while, promoting MTN SA USSD emergency service string.

THE RESEARCH

HEARING DISABILITIES

Public domain research shows that SA has more than 4 million hearing-impaired or speech-impaired citizens. Of these, around 500 000 to 600 000 adults and children use South African Sign Language (SASL) as their first language.

SASL, although recently recognised as a home language in the education system, is not officially taught at all learning institutions.

And, although schools for the deaf are now finally teaching sign language, research shows that the majority of hearing- or speech-impaired South Africans still feel isolated and unheard due to lack of inclusive content and services.

MUSIC AS A WAY OF CONNECTING

New research from Harvard University shows that music doesn't just connect us, it can in fact be considered a 'universal language' due to its unique codes, notes and patterns

When considering music genres to tap into to bring our concept to life, hip hop and rap emerged as the natural choices, because artists of this genre are generally known for using their hands in music videos.

WHO TO PARTNER WITH?

We needed to find the best project team to make the campaign vision a reality while ensuring the legitimacy of the project.

So, we researched:

- Interpreters and sign language instructors who would be key for content packaging
- Schools to partner with to help supervise the project, ensuring credibility
- Local artists to create not only a music track but a full experience
- Media and influencers within the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities to help shape and tell our story

THE PLANNING

KEY OBJECTIVE:

Spread awareness of MTN's emergency USSD and message: 'Save *130*3272*29# on your phone to access MTN's emergency service response' - while at the same time encouraging the learning of SASL among hearing South Africans.

But how do we creatively launch the offering so it stands out, is educational, and most importantly, is remembered?

THE PLAN:

- ✓ Partner with SA artist, LazarusMan, to write, feature and star in the #DEFBARS track and music video
- ✓ Teach LazarusMan how to sign using SASL
- ✓ Enlist Vincent's School for the Deaf to supervise the music video production to ensure all the signs were visible and understood – authenticity and credibility was going to be key

AUDIENCE:

Deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired South Africans + anyone who can't speak on the phone for any reason

Once we had the track we needed to get people to hear, see and 'feel' the message....

So we planned to:

- ✓ Issue our media release to reach as many people as possible
- ✓ Create talkability and intrigue by 'dropping' #DEFBARS as a music video, without lyrics, on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and IGTV
- ✓ Rework an updated version of the music video, with lyrics, to reveal the 'message' behind the signs and ensure it was understood by all
- ✓ Approach media, influencers and stakeholders to open up conversations around inclusivity for deaf and hard-of-hearing South African citizens
- ✓ Host series of 'listening sessions'/events for children, media, influencers, and members of the deaf community to experience #DEFBARS and 'feel' the message. This was planned in partnership with Hey Papa Legend, who would ensure, through a specific production technique, that our audiences would be able to experience the vibrations of the beat in the absence of hearing it

SMART OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Reach 5 million South Africans through social and digital impressions
- ✓ Land R2mil AVE earned coverage in national media titles
- ✓ Get track and video featured on tier-1 music radio or TV stations. Targeting - 5FM, SABC Morning Live and Metro FM
- ✓ Encourage positive media and stakeholder sentiment

THE EXECUTION

PHASE 1

- Issued a national launch release on the track –and MTN’s emergency USSD string
- Release and music video were shared with relevant music, lifestyle, arts and entertainment media and bloggers, as well as ITC media
- Motivated for and secured interviews with relevant tier-1 media
- Dropped the track and music video on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, IGTV and YouTube with and without lyrics
- Hosted a listening session at schools for the deaf - for children and members of the deaf community - where the music video was screened and speakers were placed face down, so the children could ‘feel’ the beat while learning MTN’s emergency number
- Stakeholder and influencer engagement to rally support from the deaf community – no payment
- Organic social content on MTN channels

LEARNINGS

While the track was well-received, there was an influx of positive criticism from within the deaf community and the project team felt compelled to move on to develop a second phase of #DEFBARS - a remix of the track, with Glen: The Rapper, an up-and-coming rapper from within the deaf community, who put his own spin on its presentation.

The remixed track highlights the subtle differences between a hearing person’s interpretation of SASL and how a hard-of-hearing person would interpret the hand gestures.

Taking on the community’s feedback after launch of the LazarusMan track, we decided to work with Glen to create a track that was more authentic to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community in SA.

While a lot was learnt a lot about the differences in sign-language presentation and interpretation from individual to individual, our aim remained the same - to connect all South Africans, and enable them to understand each other so as to communicate efficiently and effectively.

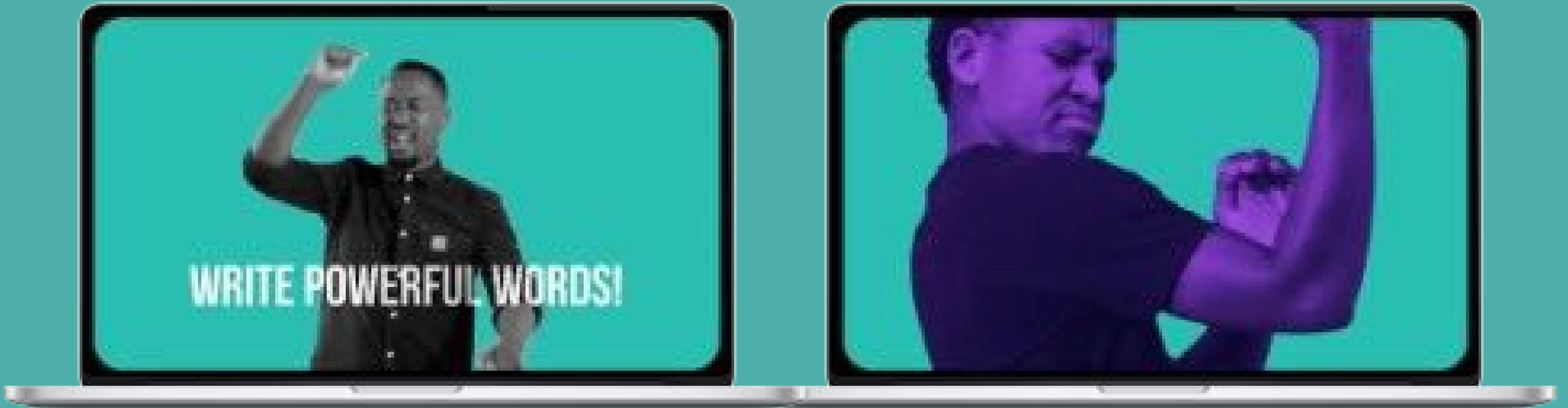
PHASE 2

- Remix of the track with Glen: The Rapper – a deaf rapper, and re-release via earned, owned and managed channels
- Second media release promoting the remixed track + USSD number
- Media interview motivations profiling Glen: The Rapper
- Hosted a listening session at Kitchener’s in Braamfontein for media and stakeholders, where both the LazarusMan and Glen: The Rapper videos were screened
- Organic social content on MTN channels

THE TRACKS

DEFBARS ft. LazarusMan (with lyrics)

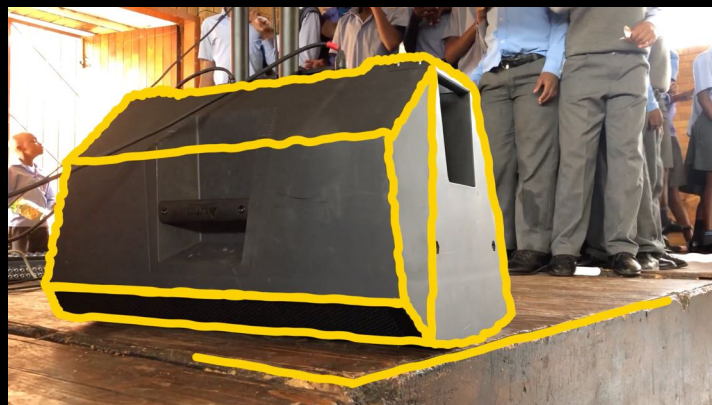
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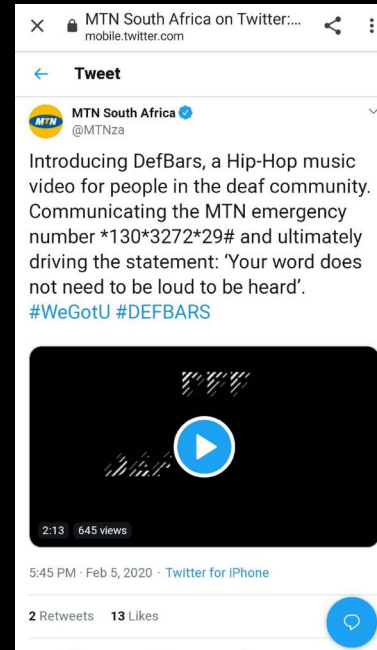
DEFBARS ft. Glen: The Rapper

[CLICK HERE](#) TO PLAY

LISTENING PARTY



ORGANIC CONTENT



MTV

Track landed on **MTV** as a result of PR

3m

SOCIAL MEDIA
impressions

61m

The **VIDEOS** reached millions of South Africans - organically

R5.6m

AVE - **EARNED MEDIA** coverage

THE RESULTS

41 pieces of achieved media coverage, **key message use in all pieces** and organic reach of **61m individuals**, meant we landed MTN's emergency USSD string while igniting a conversation around inclusivity.

Key national tier-1 TV, radio, newspapers and digital media ran with the story. A major win was having MTV feature the track!

Engagements with leaders in the deaf community, including Deaf SA and Mrs Deaf SA, and various interpreters from the WITS and the UJ, led to the remix of the original music video to entrench credibility and authenticity of SASL – making the hard-of-hearing community feel 'heard'.

The campaign secured 9 'Finalist' titles and won a Craft Certificate for writing at the **Loeries**.

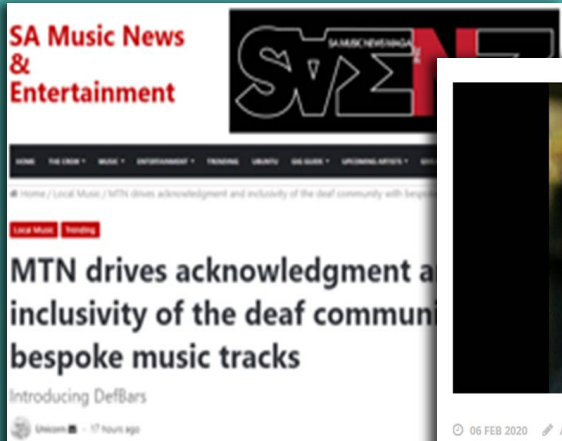
ALL OBJECTIVES MET AND EXCEEDED!

CASE STUDY

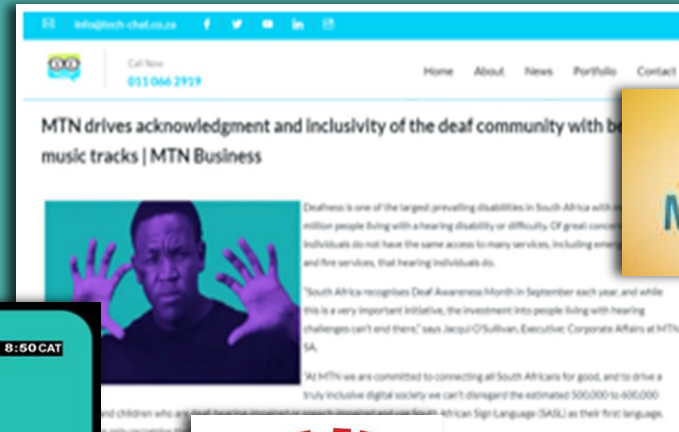


[CLICK HERE](#) TO PLAY

EARNED COVERAGE



MTN drives inclusivity of deaf community through music

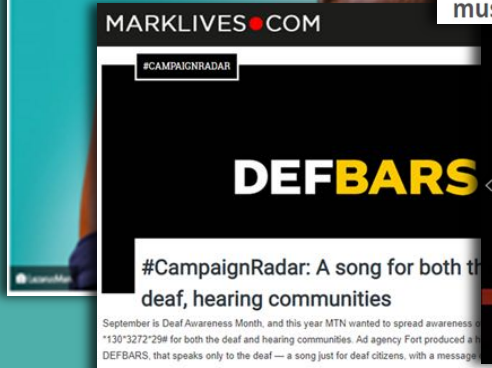


TBWA and Fort create a piece for MTN for Deaf Awareness Month

To mark Deaf Awareness Month, MTN enlisted TBWA and Fort to work on a special piece aimed at highlighting the *130*3272*29# emergency number. TBWA and Fort then produced a special track with Lazarusman, which is only in sign language and has a beat that was produced specifically for deaf people. To add to the visual aesthetics, TBWA and Fort also commissioned well-known photographer Lee Roy Jason, who photographed the photo stills that was attached to the campaign as a whole. The video is part of MTN's effort at spreading awareness around Deaf Awareness Month as well as their emergency number, *130*3272*29#, aimed at assisting both people of hearing and the deaf community. The song came with a beat that was produced specifically for deaf people, using production techniques that allow the deaf community to feel the beat in the absence of hearing it.



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THANK YOU

#DEFBARS

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