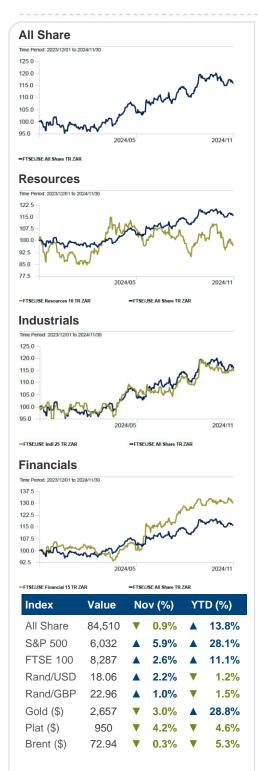




Perspectives | Monthly Market Review

December 2024

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Another poor month for South African asset classes

In November, the JSE experienced its second consecutive month of decline, with the All-Share Index dropping 1% and the Capped SWIX falling 0.9%. Mining stocks were among the hardest hit, as lower commodity prices—particularly for platinum group metals (PGMs) and gold—drove the Resources Index (Resi) down by a steep 6.7%. Conversely, the JSE real estate sector outperformed, gaining 1.1% in November and extending its robust recovery rally to 21.5% since the start of the year. Industrial and financial stocks, represented by the Indi-25 and Fini-15 indices, were flat for the month but have risen 12% and 17%, respectively, year-to-date. The rand weakened by 2.6% against the US dollar, although this depreciation was attributed more to dollar strength than inherent rand weakness.

Headline inflation in South Africa dropped significantly to 2.8% in October from 3.8% in September, marking the lowest rate since June 2020, when it was 2.2%. The decline was largely driven by falling fuel prices. In response, the South African Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee reduced the repo rate by 25 basis points to 7.75% during its November meeting. The SARB's forward guidance suggests further rate reductions, with rates expected to stabilise slightly above 7%. The Reserve Banks also revised its GDP growth forecast, projecting 2% growth by 2027, adding credibility to South Africa's reform agenda. However, they remain cautious about inflation risk.

Domestically focused stocks performed well in November, with retailers leading gains, buoyed by two recent interest rate cuts, withdrawals from the two-pot retirement system, and optimism surrounding the country's economic outlook following the establishment of a Government of National Unity (GNU). Retailer Mr Price, in its earnings release, noted early signs of an upward economic cycle in South Africa.

This optimism was supported by a decline in the unemployment rate, which fell to 32.1% in the third quarter of 2024 from 33.5% in the previous period. The expanded unemployment rate, which includes discouraged job seekers, also improved, decreasing to 41.9% from 42.6% in the prior quarter.

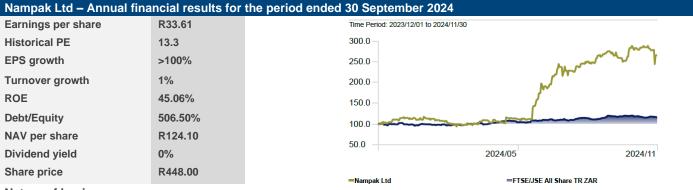
Adding to the positive sentiment was S&P's revision of South Africa's credit outlook to positive, reflecting their view that improved political stability and steps to reform will boost private investment and GDP growth. The agency cited the potential for stronger economic growth and government debt stabilization, contingent on the coalition government accelerating economic reforms and addressing infrastructure and fiscal challenges.

US election fuels risk on rally

As 2024 enters its final stretch, global markets experienced significant volatility in November, driven largely by Donald Trump's re-election as U.S. President. His victory led to a stark divergence between U.S. equities, which rallied strongly, and other global markets, particularly emerging markets, which saw declines.

Investor sentiment in the U.S. remained buoyant, fuelled by optimism around potential global rate cuts and improving U.S. economic growth prospects. However, President-elect Trump's announcement of plans to impose tariffs on Mexico and Canada, alongside increased tariffs on Chinese goods, underscored the challenges ahead. While the policy direction is broadly clear, the timing and extent of these changes remains unknown. Proposed tariffs may appear draconian but could also be negotiating tools. However, these protectionist policies are expected to impact global trade, particularly among major exporting nations. Despite this, U.S. equity markets surged, with investors embracing Trump's promises of tax cuts and deregulation. Beyond trade policies, there are other factors such as an end to the Ukraine-Russia war and the instability in the Middle East which could significantly impact the global economy in the short to medium term.

The U.S. dollar rallied for most of November, driven by expectations of higher inflation and higher interest rates under the new administration. The dollar strength weighed on commodity prices and the rand. While U.S. equities posted impressive gains, global markets displayed cautious optimism, navigating a complex backdrop of evolving economic and geopolitical dynamics. European equities, for instance, had a lacklustre performance, ending the month lower as tariff increases also create risk for the EU region. Europe, as a manufacturing and export hub, will need to rely on a strong European consumer to mitigate some of this headwind to GDP growth. With inflation and energy prices falling, rate cutting in Europe has begun and further reductions of 150bps in 2025 are expected.



Nature of business

Nampak Ltd. engages in the manufacture of packaging products. It operates through the following segments: Metals, Plastic, Paper, Operations, and Corporate. The Metals segment refers to the manufacture of beverage cans, food cans, aerosol cans and other metal packaging. The Plastic segment is involved in the manufacture of plastic bottles, crates, drums and tubes. The Paper segment is associated with the manufacture of corrugated boxes and folding cartons. The Corporate segment pertains to head office activities, procurement, treasury, property services and consolidation adjustments including goodwill. The company was founded in 1968 and is headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Latest results

Nampak presents a compelling turnaround opportunity, as evidenced by its recently reported results, which underscore significant progress in its recovery. The company recently executed a capital raise, effectively mitigating balance sheet risk. Complementing this initiative, management is actively divesting non-core assets and withdrawing from higher-risk jurisdictions across Africa. The publication of these results has provided greater clarity regarding the valuation underpinning our investment thesis. Nampak offers a distinctive addition to the portfolio, characterized as a self-driven recovery initiative led by a management team well-suited for the task, with a proven track record of successful turnarounds in publicly listed entities.

In its most recent annual results, Nampak reported a 1% year-on-year increase in revenue from continuing operations to R9.9 billion. However, due to the major restructuring efforts trading profit more than doubled, rising from R438 million to R1.04 billion year-on-year. The group achieved a net profit of R626 million for the year, marking a significant turnaround from the R2.2 billion loss recorded in the previous financial year.

Dividend

Nampak has not declared a dividend for the most recent financial periods. The company has been focused on its turnaround strategy, including reducing debt, optimizing its balance sheet, and exiting non-core markets. Historically, dividends were paid, but given the ongoing financial restructuring and operational priorities, dividend payments remain on hold for now.



Nature of business

Ulta Beauty, Inc. engages in the retail of beauty products. The company has one reportable segment, which includes retail stores, salon services, and e-commerce. Its products include makeup, skin care, tools and brushes, fragrance, and bath and body. Ulta was founded on January 9, 1990, and is headquartered in Bolingbrook, IL.

Latest results

Ulta is a high-quality business, with strong financial metrics and in a resilient long-term industry. Management have shown disciplined capital allocation through opportunistically reducing the share count through buybacks instead of dividends. Beauty is a resilient category as demonstrated over many years, and Ulta is brand agnostic, offering mass, prestige and own brand: effectively an end-to-end offering in every state in the US. Ulta continues to consistently buyback its own shares, adding to shareholder returns.

Ulta recently released a strong set of numbers in their third quarter earnings announcement and management have risen their short-term guidance for the year. Ulta expects annual profit per share to be between \$23.20 and \$23.75, up from its prior expectation of \$22.60 to \$23.50. While the slight increase is not very impressive, it does provide a sense of comfort that the business has reached a turning point. Quarterly net sales rose 1.7% to \$2.53 billion, helped by contribution from new stores, beating analysts' estimates of \$2.50 billion. During the third quarter ending Nov. 2, Ulta opened 28 new stores, remodeled 27 stores, and closed two stores. It operated 1,437 stores, at the end of quarter.

Dividend

Ulta Beauty does not currently pay dividends to its shareholders and has not issued any dividends since its last payment of \$1.00 per share in May 2012. The company's approach has focused on reinvesting earnings to support growth initiatives, including store expansions, e-commerce development, and operational enhancements. There are no indications that Ulta Beauty plans to reinstate dividend payments in the near future.

Snippets

Reminder: Last Day for SDA & FIA Trades – 27th December

As the year comes to a close, we encourage you to take advantage of your Single Discretionary Allowance (SDA) and Foreign Investment Allowance (FIA) before the holiday rush.

SDA & FIA – Last Day to Trade: Friday, 27th December

To ensure that your SDA and FIA trades are processed in time for the 31st December deadline, please take note of the following important details:

- Investment trades using BOP codes 511, 512, and 513 (SDA & FIA) must have a **value date of 27th December** to count for the 2024 SARB year-end. These will need to be submitted by **10am on 27th December**, as Investec is has earlier closure on this day.
- Trades for the 2025 SARB calendar year should have a value date of 2nd January or later.
- All trades and required documentation must be submitted to Investec promptly.

Should you have any questions or need assistance, feel free to reach out to your Wealth Manager or contact our Forex Team on forex@privateclient.co.za

FUND	BALANCE	RATE
CALL ACCOUNT	0.00 – 9 999.99	7.40
	10 000 – 24 999.99	7.40
	25 000 – 49 999.99	7.40
	50 000 - 99 999.99	7.40
	100 000 - 249 999.99	7.40
CALL MONEY FUND: Individuals	250 000 - 999 999.99	7.79
	1 000 000 – 9 999 999.99	7.79
	10 000 000 upwards	7.79
CALL MONEY FUND: Non-Individuals	250 000 - 999 999.99	7.49
	1 000 000 – 9 999 999.99	7.49
	10 000 000 upwards	7.49

Dividends Payable

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Dividends in LDT order					
Company	Decl	LDT	Рау	Amt	Curr
Burstone Group Ltd. (BURSTONE)	20-Nov	10-Dec	17-Dec	44.58	ZARc
Combined Motor Holdings Ltd. (CMH)	17-Oct	10-Dec	17-Dec	102	ZARc
Frontier Transport Holdings Ltd. (FRONTIERT)	25-Nov	10-Dec	17-Dec	25.9	ZARc
Investec Ltd. (INVLTD)	21-Nov	10-Dec	31-Dec	16.5	GBPp
Investec plc (INVPLC)	21-Nov	10-Dec	31-Dec	16.5	GBPp
Life Healthcare Group Holdings Ltd. (LIFEHC)	26-Nov	10-Dec	17-Dec	31	ZARc
Mr Price Group Ltd. (MRPRICE)	21-Nov	10-Dec	17-Dec	303.6	ZARc
Ninety-One plc (NINETY 1P)	20-Nov	10-Dec	31-Dec	5.4	GBPp
Nu-World Holdings Ltd. (NUWORLD)	24-Oct	10-Dec	17-Dec	135.7	ZARc
Ninety-One Ltd. (NINETY 1L)	20-Nov	10-Dec	31-Dec	123	ZARc
Octodec Investments Ltd. (OCTODEC)	25-Nov	10-Dec	17-Dec	65	ZARc
Sirius Real Estate Ltd. (SIRIUS)	18-Nov	10-Dec	23-Jan	3.06	EURc
Vukile Property Fund Ltd. (VUKILE)	26-Nov	10-Dec	17-Dec	55.18	ZARc
YeboYethu Ltd. (YEBOYETHU)	25-Nov	10-Dec	17-Dec	96	ZARc
NWK Holdings Ltd. (NWKH)	29-Nov	13-Dec	17-Dec	14	ZARc
Acsion Ltd. (ACSION)	29-Nov	17-Dec	23-Dec	18	ZARc
African Media Entertainment Ltd. (AME)	29-Nov	17-Dec	23-Dec	120	ZARc
British American Tobacco plc (BATS)	08-Feb	17-Dec	03-Feb	58.88	GBPp
Famous Brands Ltd. (FAMBRANDS)	23-Oct	17-Dec	23-Dec	150	ZARc
Hosken Consolidated Investments Ltd. (HCI)	28-Nov	17-Dec	23-Dec	50	ZARc
PBT Group Ltd. (PBT GROUP)	29-Nov	17-Dec	23-Dec	27	ZARc
Tsogo Sun Ltd. (TSOGO SUN)	27-Nov	17-Dec	23-Dec	30	ZARc
Zeder Investments Ltd. (ZEDER)	02-Dec	17-Dec	23-Dec	11	ZARc
Fairvest Ltd. (FTAPROPA)	29-Nov	20-Dec	30-Dec	70.52	ZARc
Fairvest Ltd. (FTBPROPB)	29-Nov	20-Dec	30-Dec	22.05	ZARc
Oceana Group Ltd. (OCEANA)	25-Nov	20-Dec	30-Dec	300	ZARc
Sygnia Ltd. (SYGNIA)	04-Dec	20-Dec	30-Dec	127	ZARc
Barloworld Ltd. (BARWORLD)	25-Nov	30-Dec	06-Jan	310	ZARc
Capital Appreciation Ltd. (CAPPREC)	03-Dec	30-Dec	06-Jan	4.5	ZARc
The Foschini Group Ltd. (TFG)	08-Nov	30-Dec	06-Jan	160	ZARc

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Directors: GAJ Alexander BCom Hons (FAPM) (Tax) CA (SA) LLM / AS Ratcliffe BCom (HDip Tax) Professional Accountant (SA) CFP Tel +27 21 671 1220, Fax +27 21 671 1149 46 Main Rd, Claremont, 7708 | PO Box 24033, Claremont, 7735 www.privateclient.co.za