

Big brands make big boo-boos. Why?

 By [Rolf Akermann](#)

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The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is hard at work of late. There seems to be a continuous flow of advertisements that receive complaints from the public and need to be pulled.

Obviously, there will be divided opinion as to the validity of pulling the advertisements, but still the question goes begging, why?

South Africa has one of the most diverse populations in the world with multiple cultures, languages, ethnic groups, religion, political views, etc. However, marketers and advertisers have been dealing in this environment for decades with a large amount of success. So, why are so many advertisements pulled in this day and age?

Let's follow the process of getting an ad out there:

1. Client briefs the agency.
2. The agency writes a strategy and interpretation of the brief and hopefully gets this signed off by client, but in my experience this no longer happens often.
3. The creative develop different directions and present it to their creative director who then guides them to an execution.
4. The creative solution is then passed through the client service department and hopefully they get a chance to comment.
5. Client service takes the presentation to the client for approval.
6. Client and agency will make numerous changes before the ad is finally signed off by client and is produced for placement.

Where are the red flags?

So, many people who hopefully have experience and knowledge of the South African market and in particular, their brand's target market, have viewed and evaluated the executions. How is it that red flags don't pop up when commercials include insulting a particular culture, religion, sexual preferences, the elderly, children, etc?

One could possibly accept it if it is a tiny brand that is executed by some junior creatives in a little corner shop, but not when it is a huge corporation with a large agency. Marketers and agencies love pushing the boundaries to get their communications noticed and spoken about. A good example of this is Nando's, but how many Nando's commercials have been pulled? Their entire creative platform is to create controversy, but very seldom do they offend.

There are always two sides to a coin. You will find those who are totally amused or impressed with the communication and

those who could be very offended. Then, of course, there's the PR angle that any publicity is good.

The bottom line is: A powerful brand is a substantial asset to any company or corporation. This, in my opinion, should be protected at all costs so that no negative perceptions of the brand are created out there.

ABOUT ROLF AKERMANN

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