

Is consumer backlash affecting ad creativity?

By  Sid Peimer

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With marketers under pressure due to issues such as load shedding, they must also contend with the myriad sensitivities of the consumer.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Being “woke” has now become mandatory. We’ve seen the impact on the BMW brand who were somewhat asleep with their understanding of the role of ancestors, or H&M who used the word ‘monkey’ to describe a child. It’s not necessarily a racial thing – some people are not affected by cultural nuances, but others deeply so. The ancient scriptures for both Muslims and Jews do not encourage dogs as household pets.

Perspective

Some see these scriptures as currently relevant and to be obeyed, but many, even those who identify deeply with their religion, see the dog as a beloved member of the household with many social and health benefits. So, even with dogs in ads, one perspective does not fit all – even for the same demographic.



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However, some can really push buttons, like Nivea’s “white is purity” ad in the USA. Race is definitely the major woke issue we deal with in South Africa, but there are a host of inflammatory issues, such as sexism, ageism, mental health stigmatism etc.

Insensitivities

There are also messages that counteract our already poor savings culture in the country – such as Santam’s TV ad showing what you should do when you get a windfall – spend it on stuff. And some of you may remember the tiff between FNB and DSTV, when the former told you how much money you could save without a satellite.

If it weren't for social media, we probably wouldn't be affected by these insensitivities. But we are, and it severely impacts brand custodians – both at the client and the ad agency. It's not only the distress on the offended party, but the process of damage control by the 'offender' that can be distracting, if not emotionally draining.

ABOUT SID PEIMER

A seasoned and insightful executive with multisector experience in roles as diverse as senior management, strategic planning and copywriting. I am a qualified pharmacist with an MBA from UCT. I am also an accomplished keynote speaker and presenter.

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