

I have a bone to pick with advertising arrogance

 By [Dylan Balkind](#)

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I was too young to remember what advertising was like in South Africa in the dark ages (Apartheid). I can only assume the emerging markets were all but disregarded (why go against what was happening in other socio-economic areas of life?) and were considered a non-event when it came to buying power.

Crazy that us elitist whites chose this route when you think about it, considering they still had to live, eat, wash, clothe themselves and travel around - albeit under much duress. So the world issued sanctions, which in turn led to people learning about tolerance before imbibing a little sanity and finally getting politically correct. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to stop since - getting politically correct that is. And man, is it boring or what?

I saw a TVC recently about a product that is supposed to help strengthen your bones and joints so that you can shimmy shake with the best of them and never stop, year after year after year.

I was stumped at the storyline and wondered if the creative team and/or client had fallen and bumped their heads.

The brief

Let me tell you how the brief went (I wasn't there, but 'll have a shot at it anyway): create communication that attracts the black buying power to calcium supplements. They came up with a black lady and her elderly mom kickboxing. Mmm... Kickboxing.

Before I gave in to a blinding fury at the ridiculousness of this idea, I asked a few of my black friends how much time the matriarchs in their families allocated to kickboxing in a week. Much to the surprise of the company's marketing team and whatever agency they entrusted this script with, the answer was a deafening 'none'.

Now I am no doyenne of sport, but I am sure that even a little dipstick research would have come up with a handful of better ideas for a storyline that still worked to highlight the USP of the product for an audience they were hoping to bring into the net. This kind of arrogance in marketing and advertising has long overstayed its welcome in South Africa. People are not idiots and you are not doing your brand any favours by patronising one audience in front of another.

Relevant messaging

This example is simply the ridiculous positing of politically correct casting onto a script a white writer wrote. Market research should have taught them how to make calcium-enriching supplements appealing to black families with sport or

activities that are relevant to them. It's a shame when something has so blatantly been written for a black audience by a white creative team who did no more work than the bare minimum. If they were more committed to their craft, they would create relevant messaging that resonates with the target audience in the right spaces at the right time.

We are the only country who uses LSM profiling - because of the dexterous tapestry of our socio economic landscape - yet so few marketing exercises use this information for their gain.

My reaction to ads like this one is not a realisation I have reached because I am racist. This is fury at the creatives who worked on the script and who assume that the audience will buy whatever they are selling because they cast black artists.

Wake up. Think more.

Hashtag epic brand fail.

ABOUT DYLAN BALKIND

Even the person who can sell ice to Eskimos needs have a way of letting the world know . Words. They're wonderful warriors with the potential for worry. Use a writer who takes his passion seriously. Here's more about me and mine: <http://goo.gl/68Rsse> | Twitter [@DylanBalkind](https://twitter.com/DylanBalkind)

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