

Import, export of TV commercials need care

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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While it makes sense to get the maximum amount of mileage out of local television commercials by going global, this can be very costly if the ads aren't accepted by foreign target markets.

A couple of decades ago the BMW "Mouse" commercial, featuring a cute little rodent doing a song and dance act on a BMW 318i steering wheel to demonstrate power steering, was created in South Africa and exported very successfully all over the world.

But, this doesn't mean, everything works that well.

Audi vs Ferrari

Take the latest import which shows the impressive Audi R8 muscle car driving through the Italian city of Maranello, much to the annoyance of the local population, who clearly don't enjoy this Teutonic intrusion into the heart of where Ferraris are made.

I've been talking to a lot of local car buffs these past few weeks and I have yet to find one who thinks this ad is any good. In fact, I have come to the conclusion that all it does is prove correct the assertion by local market researchers that 20% of all advertising in this country is not only a complete failure but also damages the brand.

Clearly, this is an import and either the European target market is very different to that here in South Africa or, that Audi Europe and its ad agency have completely lost the plot.

Shifting brand loyalty

Quite apart from marketing #101 being very specific about avoiding featuring your competitors in your ads, there is very little chance among Ferrari owners in South Africa - both past, present and future - that they would consider moving en masse towards the Audi R8, no matter how good it is.

Ferrari owners don't buy the brand because their cars go fast. They buy it out of highly emotional brand loyalty.

One wonders just what message Audi was trying to get across? To me it all just smacks of a lack of self-confidence.

The point, however, is that even if I am in the minority, which I doubt, why on earth produce a commercial that is going to

marginalise even a tiny part of a potential target market?

It irritates me to see these pointless, stilly, ill-conceived imported ads, because if you add up the damage they cause or the sheer cost of their communications inefficiency, one could get the local Audi ad agency to produce something with a lot more impact for a fraction of this wasted cost.

The R8 ad is also a typical example of how far too many ad agencies are still going into campaigns purely on the strength of what they believe is a "big idea." In this day and age of highly competitive marketing, that so-called "big idea" is in fact a very small part of the overall marketing effort.

For more:

- Bizcommunity.com forum: [Audi R8](#)
- Bizcommunity.com forum: [Mention of other brands in advertising material \(not comparative advertising\)](#)

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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