

Take the scam out of scam ads but leave the creativity

Looking back on the advertising industry in 2009, something that fascinated me was the debate on "[scam ads](#)" (what, in South Africa, is politely called "pro-active work." This was the year in which a number of international award organisers have started trying really hard to stamp out what they see as dishonest and devious.

 By [Chris Moerdyk](#) 14 Dec 2009

Collecting kudos

For anyone who has not been following the scam ad debate this year, it is all about advertising agencies either submitting ads for awards that have not been approved by their clients or, quite simply, producing ads without any brief for their client or maybe running them in some obscure medium with the object of collecting some awards kudos.

A key argument in the determination of scam ads seems to be the question of client approval.

Now, I believe that on one hand doing anything dishonest should be discouraged by cutting people's hands off or at the very least taking away their iPods or making them give up cappuccinos and lattes for at least a month.

Simple solution

On the one hand, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) of South Africa does not allow dishonest content in advertising and, frankly, awards organisers should, in the same way, not allow any entries that have been submitted under false or devious pretences. Quite simple.

But, on the other hand, what a pity that we can't see these creative works, most of which have been produced without being disadvantaged by things like client briefings or client approval. I mean, let's face it, there is nothing like a client to completely stuff up good creative thinking.

Some of the best, most entertaining and strategically relevant advertising I have seen over the almost five decades that I have been involved in the business, have been those that have never seen the light of day in the media and those that clients generally didn't have the balls to approve.

New category

So, what should happen in my opinion, is that Cannes, One Show, London International, Loeries, D&AD and so forth should open new categories which allow specifically for ads not approved by clients and ads that for any reason never managed to see the light of day in the media.

This, in my opinion, would provide wonderful case histories as to why clients rejected them and so forth. It would also show whether the client or the agency was right.

It would also give a true picture of creative ability.

After all, motor car manufacturers often display prototypes or way out and impractical design concepts at the major motor shows, knowing full well that the majority of these models won't see the light of day. The object being to show the world how bloody clever they are when they don't have to worry about expensive manufacturing processes and safety.

Everybody does it

Architects do the same thing and so do artists and moviemakers. Politicians do exactly the same when they roll out all sort of great promises before and after election and then, as soon as they are in power, they conveniently forget about

everything.

So why can't advertising get in on this act? Like the car-makers, I mean, not the politicians.

I believe the entire industry would benefit tremendously from seeing ads that clients haven't approved.

And if Cannes, D&AD, Loeries and the rest of them won't do it then, someone else should have an awards event specific for this kind of advertising.

I reckon it would be the most popular show of all.

For more:

- PRweb.com: [Lowe Worldwide's Matthew Bull issues directive on scam ads](#)
- CannesLions.com: [Statement from Cannes Lions on 'scam' entries](#)
- Bizcommunity.com: [ADC draws the line on scam ads](#)
- Bizcommunity.com: [D&AD joins One Show against scam ads](#)
- Bizcommunity.com: [One Club rules on scam ads](#)
- Bizcommunity.com: [Ogilvy, scam ads and SA's international reputation](#)

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