


The power of consumer insights (combined with woke strategy and creative)

By [Thomas Sepheka](#)

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Never has it been so evident to acknowledge and value the power of consumer insights in 2017. The world is in a constant state of flux, continuous evolution and so too are we as consumers in how we do things, what we stand for and how we share experiences. Therefore, marketing is a shot in the dark without great insights and I would like to believe that any seasoned marketer knows this.



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Even without doing a deep dive qualitative study, these brands could have easily avoided the public embarrassment they suffered by simply concept testing before launch without spending a lot of money through the variety of methodologies available. While the competitive brands landscape has given consumers more choice in quality and competitive prices, this does not mean they are immune to negative reaction from the very same consumers and this has the potential to harm their brand value/equity and ultimately their bottom line. A great example of the latter is the recent Spur incident where the reaction from their loyal customer base brought the 50-year-old business to its knees, through a boycott.

The common thread between all these controversial ads is the two isms that are currently a hot topic and plaguing not only South Africa but the world – racism and sexism.



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Ignorance, arrogance or lack of market awareness?

While it's safe to assume this was not the intended take out from these campaigns, they certainly have been received as such by consumers or the public in those markets and naturally struck a nerve.

Before consumers we are all people. As people we all want to be recognised for who we are and treated with respect, sensitivity and valued just like anyone would want.

For these concepts not to have been sense checked through concept testing for resonance is not only baffling but raises questions of the marketers who were part of the decision-making process to allow such callous campaigns to be released. This leaves one to think there's either a degree of ignorance, arrogance or lack of market awareness and sensitivity to all that's been happening.

For the marketing teams involved as the brand custodians, a small qualitative study could've been done for feedback. Any business in its right mind not only wants to attract and convert customers/consumers but ultimately to retain and turn them into their own evangelists.

Humanity, the cornerstone of brand architecture

In this digital age, one thing for sure is that consumers have great influence over one another and with social media penetration; the rate of information exchange is as quick as the blink of an eye. Therefore, it is inexcusable for any brand to ever be caught with its own foot in its mouth such as the Dove case or any other similar insensitive campaigns.

The world is constantly changing and businesses must stay attuned by staying on the pulse of the ever-evolving consumer landscape through the power of insights. No business or brand should be seen as ignorant, arrogant, out of touch or insensitive and racist unless it's deliberate which goes against basic business principles. With that said, brands have a critically powerful role to play in societies as they have the ability to help unite people or divide them. That power if used wisely, will speak volumes to their bottom lines. Humanity must be the cornerstone of brand architecture for if the brand story doesn't genuinely contribute to the wellbeing of society it will be seen as against it.

ABOUT THOMAS SEPHEKA

Thomas Sepheka is a husband, father to two boys, a research specialist and founder of Insight Story brand consultancy. He's also the drummer for a Cape Town band The Urban Legends.

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