

Questioning the concept of beauty

Challenging society's conventional notions of beauty, M-Net launched its new series, *Ugly Betty*, with an unusual and slightly irreverent ad campaign by Ogilvy Johannesburg. *Ugly Betty* features a slightly plump plain-Jane from Queens who joins a fashion publishing company and is launched into the merciless world of haute couture.



Ogilvy Johannesburg copywriter, Catherine Conradie, says when M-Net asked the agency to devise a plan for the launch of *Ugly Betty* in July 2007, it decided to use mediums and events that traditionally define the concept of beauty and turn them on their heads. “Every time we interact with the viewers, we pose the question ‘Is ugly the new beautiful?’ and encourage people to tune into the new show,” she says.

Fashion shoot

The campaign included a four-page fashion shoot spread featuring fat, frumpy models in equally unstylish attire, a mock magazine cover (gatefold) with *Elle* magazine, using an *Ugly Betty* look-alike with tongue in cheek strap-lines such as “Dental braces: winter's hottest new accessory” and “Fashion special: frumpy comes to the fore.”

There's also a cheeky bus advertisement that says “*Ugly Betty*, Tuesdays, 7:30pm. To see what she looks like, check out the back end of this bus.” A “Dress Betty” Internet game has been devised for various entertainment websites. Once hairstyles, accessories and various items of clothing have been dropped and dragged onto *Ugly Betty*, an ugliness gauge just how ugly she is.

The Ogilvy Johannesburg creative team on *Ugly Betty*'s case included art director Mike Groenewald and copywriter Catherine Conradie.

80% more viewership

M-Net marketing GM, Koo Govender, says the first episode was watched by about 432 000 viewers in Pay TV, about 80% more viewership than *Smallville* had. “The campaign worked very well from a through-the-line perspective. Because we planned long in advance, we had several opportunities to gear the viewers up to what was coming. In support of this, M-Net began promoting the programme on air well in advance, which also contributed to its overall success,” she says.

Ugly Betty stars America Ferreira as Betty Suarez and is based on the “Yo Soy Betty La Fea,” a Colombian telenovela that became an international phenomenon. Betty is employed by publishing mogul, Bradford Meade, when he hands over the reigns of his company, Mode, to his son, Daniel. Betty is selected as Daniel's assistant because she's the only woman in New York that he won't sleep with. Although Daniel is reluctant to accept her at first, the two become a formidable team against those who want to see them fall.

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