

# Trillion Dollar campaign not scam, says Cannes

By Herman Manson: @marklives

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Cannes has ruled that the [Trillion Dollar campaign](#) for *The Zimbabwean*, created by TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris, is not in breach of its rules against scam ads. Philip Thomas, Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival CEO, responded to (usually anonymous) allegations levelled from within the South African advertising industry that the work could potentially qualify as scam.

## Commitment to crack down



Cannes joined a public commitment by various international award shows to crack down on [scam ads](#) last year. It has had rules excluding scam ads in place for the past five years.

Scam ads are advertising conceptualised to win awards. Usually they are created without a specific brief from client and then see a limited run, often in cheap and obscure media, to fulfil tear sheet requirements. Often the agency carries the bulk of the production or media costs itself.

The Trillion Dollar campaign must be one of the most awarded campaigns in the history of Cannes Lions - taking nine awards, including a Grand Prix and five Gold Lions. It used worthless Zimbabwean currency to create a billboard, murals, posters and flyers for *The Zimbabwean* newspaper. They were made up of trillions and trillions and trillions worth of Zim dollar notes which (claims the agency) worked out cheaper than using paper for the campaign.

## “The medium was the money”

"In today's world where ambient is proliferating and no real media channel is used, the rules of eligibility of paid media are complex and changing all the time," Thomas told Bizcommunity.com.

"Key here is that as the medium was the money and the client paid for that medium. Accordingly it is our view that our rules have not been breached."

Thomas highlighted the key issues informing the Cannes Lions decision:



- Cannes Lions was advised in writing by the client that it commissioned TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris to develop the Campaign.
- TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris then came back with a strategy that mainly employed Ambient Media.
- It is clear that the medium is the money itself - and the money was paid for by the client, something that has been confirmed in writing to Cannes Lions by the client. For the avoidance of doubt: the money was sourced, collected, administered and paid for by the client, and Cannes Lions has this in writing from the client.
- On observing the ambient campaign, a Zimbabwean media owner donated one billboard to the client. The electricity to light this billboard was paid for by the client, and Cannes Lions has an invoice to this effect.
- The “soft” costs (time) were shared between *The Zimbabwean* staff and staff from Hunt\Lascaris, as confirmed to Cannes Lions by both the client and the agency.

## Launch of Grand Prix for Good



This year, Cannes Lions also announced the launch of the Grand Prix for Good. Thomas explains that the category was established as Cannes Lions had many worthy campaign winners ineligible to win a Grand Prix in their sections because those campaigns were created for charities and public services.

“Trillion Dollar, because it was not a charity campaign, was eligible and indeed did win a Grand Prix,” said Thomas.

## ABOUT HERMAN MANSON: @MARKLIVES

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