

Bidvest Bank - Shubh Yatra



By [Colin Ramparsadh](#)

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Over the last while, I have been subjected to the most irritating ad known to radio, currently being flighted on Lotus FM - the one from Bidvest Bank advertising its foreign currency services to the Indian community in the annoying Peter Sellers-type Indian accent. This is a perfect example of a great initiative talking to a specific audience gone horribly wrong.

This type of stereotyping of a community is past its sell-by date and is no longer remotely funny.

Missed the mark

It's a clear-cut illustration of a creative team that has missed the mark. It seems the team was ill-informed on the brief or the strategic planner just did not think this through. In fact, I'm sure the client and the creative team must have approved this ad on a Friday during lunch.

One would have thought that Bidvest would want to make an impression and inroads into a community which regularly travels abroad, especially to India. Sadly, an opportunity missed. I would rather go to [Steve and his Beep Bank](#) to buy my foreign currency than to go to a bank that has chosen to talk to me in such a disrespectful manner.

The Indian community is probably among the simplest to market to. If one listens to Lotus FM, watches Eastern Mosaic on TV or any of the Indian channels on DSTV, the advertising is largely based on targeting a grouping of people of, say, LSM 8-10 rather than black, white or Indian. The ads that appear on SABC TV or e.tv are the same used to target the Indian sector of the market.

And they do work. The ads that appeal to a white or a black person will, in most instances, also appeal to a person of Indian descent. Unless, of course, it's in another language.

Completely wrong execution

Hats off to Bidvest in thinking that it should have a specific ad to the Indian Diaspora; however, in its execution, it got it completely wrong. Don't ever speak in a condescending tone and manner!

So how could Bidvest and its agency have improved it?

Simply, using groupings from [AMPS](#) and TGI would have given them an understanding of the audience. Plus a visit to Chatsworth Centre in Durban or Trade Route Mall in Lenasia would have provided them with the opportunity to observe their

target audience and simply just to hear them speak. Even people from India don't speak English in the way the ad portrays it..

The creative team may argue that this is a fun and tongue-in-cheek way of getting a message across. Maybe so, but it's still offensive and an outdated way of marketing a message. And, if radio were the main driver of the message, it should have been made simpler and less odious.

Ensure insight is correct

I have no doubt that it has given a few people in the boardroom and recording studio a few laughs but, unfortunately, it just does not work. All I can say to Bidvest is ensure that your insight into your target market is correct next time.

Bidvest Bank Shubh Yatra (Happy Travels). This ad is a definite DOUBLE ZERO.

ABOUT COLIN RAMPARSADH

Colin Ramparsadh, the owner and CEO of Media Mutation. Colin has spent 30 years in the ad industry, working, among others, at Y&R, Leo Burnett, Saatchi & Saatchi and ZenithOptimedia. Email him at colin@mediamutation.co.za, read his blog at <http://colinramparsadh.wordpress.com/> and follow @colinramparsadh on Twitter.

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