

# When do ads start irritating?

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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Brand loyalty is often inherited - handed down from father to son and mother to daughter, but... Here's a case of a daughter who for decades has been loyal to Harpic - something she learnt from her mother who, like all mothers, liked to have a sparkling clean lavatory pan with no germs within 100km.

But this weekend, my normally calm and collected sister told me that she would never again buy Harpic and had switched to Toilet Duck.

## Loving your lav

The reason was that she watches a soapie on SABC3 every day and at every commercial break, there is a commercial for Harpic. At first, she actually loved it and revelled in the fact that it was all about one of her preferred brands.

But after a while, the sheer intensity with which the ad was flighted day in and day out started getting her mildly irritated, then very irritated, then annoyed to the point of walking away from her favourite brand.

Now, I have no idea whether my sister's reaction was representative of a tiny minority of viewers or lots of them.

## Overcooked?

I am the same in a way, because I have noticed a trend where advertisers will buy into a popular series and then dominate the opening and closing billboards to the programme and each commercial break as well as liberally lace those commercial breaks with the same ad.

I have to admit to finding it increasingly boring, in spite of the fact that I am zapping through the ad breaks thanks to my PVR.

Now, the only reason why I am extremely hesitant about leaping to the conclusion that because my sister and I become irritated with this endless repetition everybody does, is that many years ago I had a long hard look at the infomercials. Those ads everybody says they hate.

I discovered through hard factual evidence that the reason infomercials were a lot longer than the usual TV commercials and also incredibly repetitive, was simply because that was what the advertisers had to do to get viewers to react. To get viewers to actually absorb the message.

I also know that frequency and repetition are two critically important components of all advertising.

## Overkill may be good

Add to that the fact that getting the attention of the consumer these days has become increasingly difficult and it might well be that what might appear to be repetitive overkill is actually what is needed to get a message to sink in these days.

The problem of course, is that it is extremely difficult to research consumer reaction in cases like this. The lie factor is generally so big that it tends to negate the validity of the data.

I believe that this conundrum is an example of just how difficult things are in the advertising industry these days. With massive competition for consumer attention, frequency is critical but overdoing it might come at a price.

I would love to look at the comparative sales stats from the Harpics of this world to try to get an idea of where the line should be drawn in the sand.

## ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on [moerdykc@gmail.com](mailto:moerdykc@gmail.com) and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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