

Lack lustre campaigns are bane of advertising

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19 Mar 2012

The Nigerian advertising terrain is currently undergoing a serious setback as a result of unethical practices and poor creative works, which is making it difficult for ad copies from the market to compete on the global stage.

If anything is causing concern for practitioners in the advertising sector, it is the fact that consumers are getting bored with communications material being churned out of the market. As things are, it is obvious that ad practitioners are either, not aware of the sophistication of consumers or deliberately ignore it. That this is happening at a time brands out of Nigeria are gradually squaring up with the competition and major players in the global market, makes the issue worrisome.

A survey of the market has, however, revealed that there is a terrible decline in the growth of creativity that is not in lockstep with the knowledge acquisition of consumers. In a way, it is believed that advancement in technology, which ordinarily should complement practitioners' creative ingenuity, is leading to laziness in this clime.

The way out according to the managing director of TBWA/Concept, Kelechi Nwosu, is for practitioners to raise the bar in the area of creativity if they are keen at attracting global attention. He also sees training as one of the ways to make creative works relevant and contemporary.

Speaking to *THISDAY* on why the creative efforts coming out of Nigeria are not yet enjoying global acceptance, especially in winning international awards, Nwosu said the industry is in a recession, as there is decline in creativity and originality of what is coming out of the market.

"The industry is expanding everyday but we are not growing as expected. What many practitioners do is to make use of the works that had been created in some markets and localise it for their clients. We have not had a lot of great ad works that could command international respect. We have a general decline in terms of talents across both the agency and clients' world.

"If you have that decline, it means that there is less marketing and creativity on both sides. Clearly, that will affect the quality of work we do. And it is our responsibility, all of us, to acknowledge what is good work and how we can work hard to improve the level of creativity.

According to Nwosu, agencies and clients are very lazy, and this has made it difficult for the industry to produce something innovative. "On the one hand, the clients are not willing to push the envelope, they feel comfortable in their comfort zones. The attitude is this is the way we have been doing it, do not rock the boat. So a combination of those two things is a disaster to creativity outflow."

He however maintained that apart from the pitching process, which he said is not sometimes based on merit, agencies are not winning international awards because they are scared of taking the unusual route and clients do not want works and communication efforts that are tied to the nation's culture.

He also believes that the testimony to the poor works coming out of the country is the fact that agencies from the market are not winning global awards for creative efforts at the yearly [Cannes Advertising Festival](#) and other similar initiatives held worldwide.

While acknowledging that the industry is experiencing a recession, as there is a dip in advertising, he argued that with that uncertainty, people are not likely to create more works.

Asked if the pitching process had contributed to the decline, Nwosu said, "If it is a good pitching process, it means that creativity is rewarded. If it is not a good pitching process, it means creativity is not rewarded. If creativity is the kernel potential an advertiser is looking for, that is a good strategy. It means that the work that will come out of that agency will always be good. If the agency's work was not chosen based on merit, what will come out will not be consistent and be of poor quality."

Also speaking on the issue, creative director of TBWA/Concept, Jide Alade maintained that the Latin Americans had been winning awards because their communications is tied to their culture or society. "They have beaten everybody in the last five years at Cannes because they use their culture to do things. But here in Nigeria, a lot of our clients run away from what are cultural. We are Africans; we cannot run away from it. When last did you see a masquerade in a commercial?"

To impact on the public sector and look beyond the multinationals and other corporate organisations, the creative director stated that it is high time, advertising agencies started approaching government institutions for the packaging of their communications output.

At this point, the managing director interjected and cautioned his fellow practitioners on the need to take into consideration political factors before they could work with ministries and government agencies. He said, "The public service demands a certain mindset and a certain set of skills, as there are always political considerations in most decision making processes in the public sector."

He, however, called on government functionaries on the need to realise the importance of communications advertising. "To people in government, adverting is based on needs. It does not have to be like that. The United Kingdom government is the second largest spender in advertising in the UK. No matter what, they are always sensitising the people."

Speaking on his agency's activities in the industry, Nwosu said the journey has been good and exciting, though there have been ups and down. "It has been an exciting journey. We have worked far and wide in terms of the clientele in different categories."

The agency's affiliation to an international body, he said, has brought about some benefits. "The benefit is that we are in a community, the community is a network or family where creativity is upheld at a very high level, that in itself challenges us regularly to live up to the standard of that community.

"Secondly, there are proprietary tools and methodology that we learn from them in that our work is different and relevant. We are probably the making sure only agency in this country that has an active participation in their global network, in terms of working processes and exchanges."

Providing insight on this, Nwosu said, "There are a couple of affiliations in Nigeria but the way we work with TBWA, there is hardly any month when there is no exchange - either they come here or we go over there. And we have to share businesses together. There are a couple of our businesses that are network provides and we are heavily involved and in tune with global trends and global standards. And we are able to bring this to bear on our businesses. We are proud to say that we can draw from that trend to leverage on businesses for our clients."

Asked if he could recommend affiliations to upcoming agencies, his response was in the affirmative because, "it is a pride that we belong to a larger family. There are opportunities to learn from different parts of the world and they too learn from you. Our creative director, Jide, for example, spent months or so in TBWA office in New Zealand, they learnt from him and he learnt from them. That is part of what the network is about.

"One of our colleagues, our planner, just came back from Paris, she learnt from them and they learnt from her, there was an exchange. Affiliation is good; there is no doubt about that. But it might have its demerits. For instance, if you are affiliated to an organisation, they lose a business centrally, you might lose that business, but the merits outweigh the demerits."

He added that one of the gains of the network is the Africa conference of the network, which is a physical networking of top agency people from TBWA offices across Africa. This conference, to him, gives members the opportunity to interact, share ideas and smell each other.

"It is not about using personal emails and exchanges. We sit together and talk about our problems. We look at our visions and challenges and see how to solve them. So it is an opportunity to share stories, ideas and experiences. It is held every year in the different parts of Africa, and we were opportuned to host one three years ago.

"The advantage it gives to us, when we share learning is, I come back with new things that I cascade to my team. It will be difficult to have every member of the agency to travel to South Africa for that conference but when we do have this conference, usually we cascade, because at that conference, you actually show works, we show works from us that you want to share. So it is a learning opportunity, and then we come back and cascade to your people," he said.

Source: allAfrica.com.

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