

Advertising paranoia not in consumer interest

In its traditionally muddled wisdom, the SABC had taken the decision to ban the latest Nando's television commercial because it seems to think it promotes xenophobia when, in fact, it is doing just the opposite. [(video)]

 By Chris Mberdyk: @chrismoerdyk 4 Jun 2012

This paranoia is an indication of just how much of a nanny state South Africa has become, with creativity being stifled and the consumer being more and more hoodwinked as an increasing number of decisions are being taken not to upset vocal minorities.

In the past month or so, I have come across numerous advertisers who have simply given up their traditional above-the-line ad strategies, simply because no matter what they do or say, the cash-strapped and muddled-minded [Advertising Standards Authority](#) of South Africa bows to the whim of a handful of crusaders who don't seem to like any sort of advertising of products that consumers put in their mouths and swallow.

Ludicrous labels

The [latest labelling regulations](#) that came into force on March 1 this year are a classic example of just how paranoid things have become. What happened was that, instead of someone doing their homework, both bad and good in food labelling was simply outlawed, along with a half-hearted promise to sort things out later on.

A bit like the transport minister deciding to ban all drivers from the road and then, in a year or two, choosing those who don't drink and drive or speed or park in the wrong places and slowly but surely allow them back on the road again.

It is a complete farce and by no means in the interests of the consumer.

Quite simply, because of this advancing paranoia about advertising and the fact that our archaic trademark legislation does not allow any comparisons to be made in advertising, consumers are left having to guess

take brand claims at face value when advertising is simply allowed to say that Brand X is the "best in the world" and pretty much nothing else.

So, right now in SA, the consumer is being left with less and less choice. Not only that but paranoid, over-zealous regulators such as the ASA are actually costing the consumer a fortune.

Money down the drain

The ASA now charges stiff fees for brands to appeal against rulings and, on top of that, when a single consumer complains about something and the ASA decides to look into it, the brand concerned has to pay a fortune in legal fees and has no recourse to any compensation whatsoever when it eventually wins its case.

The amount of money spent by brands either defending or appealing against ASA cases runs into many millions every year and, of course, the brands concerned simply just pass that on to the consumer. But, nobody ever tells the consumer this. They are simply encouraged to keep complaining.

Now it's got so bad that some media, such as the SABC, don't even wait for someone to complain to the ASA; it simply just bans the ad. This despite the fact it's also [cash-strapped and desperate for every possible cent it can earn through advertising](#).

When the SABC, through its narrow-minded stupidity, just refuses to accept advertising and ultimately shows an operating loss at the end of the year, consumers have to dip into their pockets as Government once again has to bail out the national broadcaster.

Dawning on them

Some media, such as newspapers and magazines, are slowly beginning to see the light as it dawns on them that many of their advertisers simply don't place ads with them anymore because of the ASA's penchant for banning ads.

They are getting increasingly annoyed at having to sit back and just implement those notifications that come in from the ASA instructing them to withdraw ads.

The bigger picture is that SA is fast becoming a nanny state of note as consumers blindly expect Government to protect them from everything imaginable.

What consumers don't realise is that by allowing Government to blanket them in cotton wool and for regulators such as the ASA to decide what is and what is not morally acceptable, they are paying through their nose for this luxury.

Freedom of commercial speech is now nothing more than a dream.

For more:

- Google News Search: [SABC Nando's ad](#)
- Twitter Search: [SABC Nando](#)

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK: @CHRISMOERDYK

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 af 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 moerdyk@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at @chrismoerdyk.
View my profile and articles...

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>