

The logo that stands above the crowd (of logos)

Just watching the cornucopia of sport on our TV screens last weekend, I couldn't help recalling the brand cynicism a decade or so ago of Ron Mather, creative director of the Australian advertising agency, The Campaign Palace.

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#) 7 Jun 2013

He complained about logos taking over our lives.

Look at Formula 1 racing cars, he said. They look like a hoarding on wheels.

Logos are everywhere you look these days - they cover cricket fields and cricketers, tennis courts and tennis players, basketball courts, ice-rinks and even the T-shirt and baseball cap of that ordinary guy in the street.

I agree with Mather. The world is so crowded with logos that people can't possibly notice all of them anymore. In which case millions and millions of rands are pouring down the drain.

Questioning the whole concept

What is important now is to question the whole concept of the use of logos as part of that most fundamental of business strategies - advertising.

It started with well-known sportsmen wearing sponsors' logos on their clothing. And has grown like Topsy to the point of self-destruction. Just like famous people being seen to be using products. Celebrities were given watches, cars and all sorts of goodies in the hope that these endorsements would encourage the public to aspire to the products.

And, sure it worked for a while. But now, with everybody doing it, marketers have a huge problem getting their money's worth by getting noticed amid the clutter. Not to mention what happens when celebrities such as Lance Armstrong get nailed for doing something dishonest and drag those logos down with them.

In essence, in terms of media visibility, it is no good just being an also-ran these days. One has to try and do something competitors can't.

The best example

The best example I have seen popped up on billions of the world's TV screens just after the funeral of the Princess of Wales. The scene was Aberdeen airport and the Queen and Prince Philip were on their way back to Balmoral.

The Royal plane landed, stopped and within seconds the royal limo drew up. The Queen and her husband came down the steps, walked past the limo to a Land Rover Discovery parked nearby.

Prince Philip's body language was obvious. It was clearly his car. "I'm driving," he seemed to tell the startled fellow behind the wheel. The Queen in the meantime had gone round to the passenger side and, after telling the bodyguard to get in the back, she joined Philip in the front. Off they went with the TV camera showing Philip at the wheel, waving to passers by.

The ultimate endorsement

Now that's what one might call the ultimate endorsement - a little scene watched by a billion or so TV viewers worldwide. Unique. Head and shoulders above the clutter.

And it wasn't pure chance either. Land Rover is by appointment to four members of the Royal family. And they are very much aware of the importance of royal recognition for the products they endorse. Unlike a lot of showbiz celebrities and sports stars that treat sponsored cars as nothing more than freebies.

Many years ago I was part of the organising team for Queen Elizabeth's visit to the Land Rover manufacturing plant at Rosslyn, Pretoria.

She and Prince Phillip spent about 45 minutes at the factory, the highlight of which was when the Queen unveiled a plaque commemorating the occasion and prominently featuring four royal warrants - those 'By Appointment' coats of arms featured on products endorsed by the Royals.

After the unveiling, Prince Philip joined the Queen on the podium and said to the bevy of Land Rover management standing nearby: "Four royal warrants! Four warrants! Are you entitled to four warrants?"

Before anyone could explain, the Queen turned to her husband and curtly, with a touch of exasperation, said "Oh, of course dear.... there's you and me and Charles and mother..."

She knew, without having to think about it, exactly who Land Rover was by appointment to. Like everything, she takes her commercial responsibilities very seriously indeed.

A business strategy lesson

Not every company can get this kind of endorsement. But every company can take a business strategy lesson from it. And that is, think very carefully before simply tossing your logo to the wind.

It is pointless, not to mention expensive, being an also-ran these days. If you can't stand head and shoulders above the rest, if you can't come up with a strategy to make you a front-runner, don't race.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

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