

The Olympics and pigs...

 By [Harry Herber](#)

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I avidly watched the Olympic Games from a media perspective and was amazed at the new world of sports advertising.

It wasn't that long ago that clients were calling for novel ways of promoting themselves. And they weren't looking at the scope of possibilities that confronts them today. Things were far simpler, and even a simple sponsorship was seen as innovative and ground breaking.

Who can forget the iconic products that were created back in the day, like the Gunston 500, the Lexington PGA, Benson & Hedges (B&H) Cricket, the Rothmans July and Bankfin Currie Cup Rugby?

Sponsorships were seen as added extras and were often handled at arm's length by marketers and agencies. They were run by the sponsorship division and seldom truly integrated into the mainstream marketing campaign.

That is not the case with sponsorships *a' la* 2012. This is a whole new board game. Today, the marketing community has a smorgasbord of optional communication channels and methods available to them. And choice has exploded as media has grown both in depth and in breadth. Noise levels from direct competition is hardly the metric anymore - rather the total advertising cacophony has to be factored in. The sceptics among us will credit the noise level that exists today as the *raison d'etre* for the plethora of marketing theories and cutesy, catchy phraseology that is so commonplace today.

Making them gasp

Think about it. Three hundred and sixty degree communication, channel planning, thought integration - all of it as a result of sheer ad-noise competition!

So it was with interest that I read of sponsor activity around the 2012 Olympics. How the art of leverage and concept extension is today being applied in a manner so sophisticated that the managers of the Gunston 500 and B&H cricket would gasp.

But there was one golden thread through all sponsor activity that struck me, as a media man, and that was the massive reliance on what has become generically known as digital channels. Web activity is massive. Bespoke Olympic sites round the sponsorship theme are created. Social media is integrated into the communication as a matter of course. Interactivity and involvement are givens, not desired attributes or campaign differentiators.

So we find that anything and everything is thrown at the already bombarded consumer in an attempt to differentiate. We

see bloggers being employed by Samsung to relay their experiences, using the latest Samsung phone (I have to wonder why this would make me want to buy the product - I know and am familiar with smartphone technology. There has to be more to the story...). But wait, there's more - uploading video or text, competitions, viral videos, leveraging Facebook activity and the tracking of your particular hero's achievements are all ploys to get the consumer to answer the marketer's call of "Pick me! Pick me!" And given the magnitude of the event, the global focus on it and the associated massive investment, who can blame them?

The world of advertising's ugly head

It would appear from all this that the industry we work in is one that plays on a global stage. It is involved in massive undertakings, costing millions of dollars. Important, large, imposing, relevant. Yeah, well maybe, but then...

The real world of advertising rears its ugly head. And one realises what 90% of the task really is. It's not usually about the fabulous Coke initiatives happening on the world stage (Only true if you're the lucky 1% who work on Coke). It's usually mundane, often boring and sometimes pretty ludicrous.

Now, I've been following the trials and tribulations that beset the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in South Africa. And it worries me, only from the standpoint that if the industry can't regulate itself, massive litigation suits and government (God help us!) intervention will be the certain result. And then I read about Tesco and the ASA in the UK. Briefly here's the beef: the Tesco Butchers Choice Sausage ad showed pigs in a field and then wandering back to a barn, accompanied by a loving farmer. The ASA banned it as it gave the impression that "the pigs' movement was unrestricted", which was not really the case. It's truly bizarre that industry heavies are concerned in having such discussions. Honestly, is this business about the freedom of movement of pigs? For a sausage ad?

Where the pigs are doomed anyway?

Hell, bring on government intervention!

ABOUT HARRY HERBER

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