

The value of vernacular advertising

Talk to anyone in their own language and it goes to their heart... Ads24 explores the value of vernacular advertising.



Ads24 represents the Afrikaans titles Rapport, Beeld, Burger, Volksblad, Son and Son op Sondag as well as Sake24. What is perhaps less well known is that it also represents the Zulu titles Ilanga and Ilanga Langesonto. In addition it offers advertising on a number of Afrikaans local titles, bi-lingual English/Afrikaans titles and even a tri-language local title - The South Coast Fever - in English/Afrikaans/Zulu.

Through its experience in the industry, Ads24 says it recognises the value of vernacular advertising and promotes such advertising through initiatives like its annual Think Afrikaans competition and its sponsorship of the Pendorings Awards. In addition to this, Ads24 will be sponsoring the new Government Vernacular Advertising category at the 2014 Pendorings awards with the objective of enhancing and promoting Government advertising in the vernacular.

The Pendorings Awards is open to all vernaculars and even though the awards started out by focusing on Afrikaans advertising, it is becoming more inclusive. Franette Klerck, general manager of the Pendorings, told The Media Online (in the article in May 2013 - [Pendorings: Thorn in Creative Circle's side](#)) about how the Pendorings Awards has evolved over the past few years. Initially set up, 19 years ago, to promote Afrikaans advertising, it now boasts a diverse audience and an award for the best truly South African advert, in any language. "It was initially started to look after Afrikaans as a language in advertising, but it has changed and the changes are increasing every year," said Klerck.

'An important showcase to the world'

Tim du Plessis, executive editor of Afrikaans newspapers at Media24 said, "Pendorings is an important showcase to the world. With truly South African words, expressions, phrases and ideas, we communicate to a very loyal market that shows their appreciation for talking to them in their own language by opening their wallets."

Former President, Nelson Mandela said it best when he said that "If you talk to a man in a language he understands it goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language it goes to his heart".

South Africa has 11 official languages and there are sound reasons for this, yet local marketers appear to be baffled by the complexity of the socio-demographic landscape. Marketers tend to take the safe road and cater for majority understanding,

creating all campaigns in English. Mondli Nhlapo, Research Account Manager at [Yellowwood](#), suggests that perhaps they should instead be valuing the vernacular, creating campaigns in mother-tongue and cashing in on the ensuing return-on-investment (ROI).

Vernacular's value

"Good vernacular communication taps into cultural insight, nuance and context. It can help brands show that they understand and resonate with their consumers. It can build long-lasting and profitable relationships of trust with their market. Using vernacular languages in communication has the potential to add huge value to a brand. It can help global brands successfully localise and help local brands become more relevant to their target market. It highlights a high-level of engagement, respect and understanding of the targeted consumer. The emotional benefit that vernacular advertising brings to customers will have a positive impact on the overall brand equity," said Nhlapo in his blog.

"In our experience readers value vernacular advertising and place trust in it in a way that they would not necessarily feel about an English campaign, as it is not in their mother-tongue. We would like to encourage a wider range of vernacular advertising and would welcome more Zulu campaigns for Ilanga, which would speak directly to the hearts of their readers, instilling a sense of pride and ownership. This buy-in would outweigh the initial investment of creating a vernacular campaign. Vernacular advertising pays tribute to South Africa's rich cultural heritage," said Vimla Frank, Head of Marketing and Business Strategy at Ads24.

How innovation can emerge

Ads24 aims to stay abreast of global trends and would like to see cutting-edge advertising in South African newspapers that is in line with international standards. There is no reason that vernacular advertising should not be ahead of the game, it offers the opportunity to look at a campaign from a new angle and it is from this perspective that true innovation can emerge.

The drive for vernacular advertising to be given greater prominence is not purely a South African one. "The world is now becoming a global market for an ever-increasing and varied number of companies with a common aim: to sell their products to as many consumers as possible. However, the globalisation of the market also means that companies now days are addressing an incredibly varied target, with many different languages and more importantly, cultures. International advertising in the 21st century is not about ignoring or overriding cultural differences, but about understanding, accommodating and harnessing them in the service of global brand building," states an article called [Vernacular Advertising-Advertising Funda](#) on The Delhi School of communication website.

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